

Position Statement
Consumer Directed Support Services
DRAFT- 6/01/00

St. Paul Office
770 Transfer Rd.
Suite 26
St. Paul, MN 55114
651-523-0823 or
1-800-582-5256
Fax 651-523-0829
E-mail:
mail@arcminnesota.com

Bemidji Office
522 Beltrami Ave.
Suite 108
Bemidji, MN 56601
Phone and Fax:
218-759-0097 or
1-800-450-7338
E-mail:
arcnorthwest@paulbunyan.net

Moorhead Office
810 4th Ave. S.
Suite 141
Moorhead, MN 56560
218-233-5949 or
1-800-411-0124
Fax: 218-233-0853
E-mail:
arccc@rrnet.com

Background Information:

The service system for persons with developmental disabilities is in the process of going through some major changes. For the most part, the current delivery system involves a County acting as a gatekeeper for the person with a developmental disability and their family.

Counties are responsible for determining eligibility of services; evaluating service needs; sending requests for proposals; developing service budgets; selecting the provider; negotiating the budget and service package; matching people who will receive the same services; authorizing the services; and then authorizing payments.

This way of operating enables Counties to limit access to services, control costs and set up a preferred provider network. It also prevents persons with developmental disabilities and their families from being active consumers of services. .

At the same time, the service system is faced with a workforce shortage and a dispersed quality assurance system. Funding rules for certain services prevent persons with developmental disabilities from having more control over how funds are spent, thus creating more barriers for expanding consumer directed support services. In spite of these service system barriers, there are several examples of a movement toward consumer directed support services.

Consumer Directed Support Services allow persons with disabilities and their families considerable choice and control over how supportive services are provided and by whom. This service model imposes little or no restrictions on whom a consumer may hire to provide support services. Consumers and their families assume the responsibility of hiring and firing of staff, and personally direct necessary training and education about the individual needs of the consumer. Consumer Directed Support Services permits consumers to use licensed agencies, friends, and relatives for staffing purposes. It also allows for the purchase of generic supports that can be tailored to individual needs and preferences.

The State operates a family support and consumer support grant program, both of which give consumers more control and flexibility in using funding for services. It is also in the process of implementing a fiscal agent model for the Personal Care Assistance program. Some Counties use a voucher or cash grant program for respite care services. A small number of Counties are establishing individual consumer budgets, for a wide range of services, under the Consumer Directed Community Support Services component of the Developmental Disabilities Waiver program.

Consumers who participate in these programs invariably report being more satisfied with services, while Counties report that controlling costs is not more difficult.

Position:

Arc Minnesota supports changes in the service system to expand consumer directed support services encompassing the complete range of services available to people who have developmental disabilities. All consumers should be able to participate in consumer directed support services, regardless of payer or funding stream.

When implemented correctly, they enable consumers to have more control over the funding used to provide support services. Service systems and providers become more responsive to and creative in addressing individual needs.

Expanding consumer directed support services should also include the following:

- Availability throughout the state rather than in a limited number of Counties who agree to offer certain services.
- Providing access to technical support services such as fiscal agents, payroll services and employer of record services,
- Ensuring that consumers have access to sufficient funds to acquire the services needed and desired;
- Providing on-going consumer training and technical assistance so they may stay abreast of new developments in the field;
- Ensuring that the quality assurance process does not become more dispersed than it already is;
- Creating risk pools so that consumers do not become bankrupt in attempting to pay for unanticipated expenses;
- Assuring that as the shift in power occurs, the consumer is the primary benefactor rather than other parties within the service system.