

Self-determination and supporting families

The Division of Developmental Disabilities' Self-Determination Initiative is based on the belief that: *'Individuals are the primary decision makers in their lives, pursue what is important to them, and have a meaningful role in the community'*.

The principles of self determination (Freedom, Authority, Support, Responsibility and Confirmation) as they pertain to family support are reflected below:

Freedom: Families have the freedom to make choices about the things that affect their lives and to help their family member with a developmental disability learn about making responsible choices for themselves.

Authority: Families have the authority to make decisions about things that affect their lives and to make changes when necessary to better suit their needs and the needs of their family member with a developmental disability. Families have authority to determine how to best utilize available funding in order to support the needs of their family member and to determine how funds will be spent on needed supports and services.

Support. Families should be able to select the types of support and services they and their family member with a developmental disability need and desire. Families should also assist their family member with a developmental disability to learn about and advocate for the various supports and services they need and desire in their lives.

Responsibility. Families are responsible to use public funding and resources to assist them in meeting their needs in a wise and effective manner. Families also have a responsibility to help their family member with a developmental disability to become knowledgeable about and utilize public funding and resources in an efficient and economical manner.

Families also have the responsibility to assist their family member with a developmental disability to understand and exercise their authority and rights when necessary.

Confirmation. Families and their family members can strive to become involved in the systems they utilize and to provide feedback for improvement purposes. For example, becoming mentors to other families/individuals, participating in advocacy and leadership opportunities, and actively working within the systems as partners.

Additional resources:

<http://jeffline.jefferson.edu/cfsrp/products/materials/Families-determination-manual.pdf>

<http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/naturalsupports/pdfs/FosteringSelfDetermination.pdf>