Agenda

• Introductions
• What is Supported Decision Making
• Why is Supported Decision Making Important
• How We Can Foster Supported Decision Making
What Is Supported Decision Making?

PERSONS MAKING THEIR OWN DECISIONS WITH SUPPORT AND ADVICE FROM OTHERS AS DESIRED OR NEEDED

• Supported decision making means that people with disabilities fully enjoy rights and receive support to exercise rights
• Not substitute decision making but supported decision making
Supported Decision Making

“Gaining autonomy through gaining support”

Dr. Patricia O’Brien
“Purpose of the convention is to

Promote

Protect

and

Ensure

the full equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and promote their inherent dignity.”
Margaret Jenny Hatch
Capacity redefined (CAACL):
That the understanding of the information relevant to the decision to be made and the appreciation of the reasonably foreseeable consequences of such decision or lack of such decision, may rest either,
within the adult herself or himself, and with decision-making supports and accommodations as needed; or, alternatively,

within the understanding, appreciation and fiduciary duty of the person or persons duly appointed to support the adult in exercising her or his legal capacity
A fundamental principle:-

• Every person, no matter how severe his or her disability, can maintain control over his or her life solely by means of the commitment that other people are willing to make to that person’s well-being: people should be enabled and supported to maintain that control.

• That is the essence of the concept of supported decision making
Supported Decision Making –
Rights and Models

* Rather than “replacing” the person in the decision making process (as does Guardianship)

• Supported Decision Making shifts the focus of the question
  - from the “competency/capacity” of the person
  - to the “competency and integrity” of the decision making process
• In other words, the issue is no longer
  “Is this person capable of making decisions?”
• It becomes:
  “How do we effectively provide the support this
  person requires to ensure that only the best and
  most appropriate decisions are made; that they
  would be the decisions he or she would make were
  he or she able to do so; and that they are recognised
  as being his or her decisions?”
Big vision of Personal Decision Making

- People make their own decisions about the small and big areas of life with advice and assistance from trusted others as is needed/wanted

- People with disabilities fully enjoy rights and receive support to exercise rights to make decisions

- Decisions are informed by: life experiences, cultural practice, and trusted people
Different Forms of Supported Decision Making

- Advocating for oneself with advice
- Use of mainstream measures and supports e.g. lawyers, community information or advocacy organizations
- Formal: supported decision making group, micro board
- Semi-Formal: circle of support
- Informal: Intentionally developed relationships e.g., family members, friends, service workers, citizen advocates – chosen by the person -- people who the person trusts and has chosen who will provide information, advise, and if need be make decisions with the person’s permission
Who Does Supported Decision Making Apply To?

People who are:

- Societally devalued

And

- Impaired in their cognitive ability to make decisions and or need assistance to exercise their legal rights
Definition of Devaluation

The attribution of low, or even no, value to a person or group

By another person or group

On the basis of some characteristic (usually a difference that is perceived as a negative)

Dr. Wolf Wolfensberger
UNIVERSAL NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF DEVALUATION TO DEVALUED PERSONS/GROUPS

Society devalues certain qualities & conditions
OUR SOCIETY TODAY PLACES HIGH VALUE ON:

- Wealth, material prosperity, material goods
- Health & Beauty of body
- Youth, newness
- Competence, independence, intelligence
- Productivity, achievement
- (Adult) individualism & unrestrained choice
- Hedonistic / sensualistic pleasure
  - Dr. Wolf Wolfensberger
ACHIEVEMENT

It is hard to fail, but it is worse to have never tried to succeed.
GROUPS WIDELY DEVALUED IN WESTERN SOCIETIES

People who are impaired in
- Senses: Vision, Hearing
- Body: Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy, Paralysis, Severe / Chronic Sickness, Near Death
- Mind: Intellectual Disability, Mental Disorder/Illness

People who are seen as being very disordered in their conduct or behavior
- Activity Level: Hyperactive, Lethargic
- Sexual Orientation or Conduct
- Self-Destructive, “Substance” Dependent
  - Dr. Wolf Wolfensberger
MINORITY GROUPS WIDELY DEVALUED IN WESTERN SOCIETIES

• Socially rebellious
• Committed crimes
• People who are poor
• People who have few or unwanted skills (e.g., are illiterate)
• People who are unemployed
• People who are rejected for other reasons, for example, due to:
  – Age: Unborn, Newborn, Aged
  – Race, Nationality, Ethnicity
  – Religion

• Dr. Wolf Wolfensberger
UNIVERSAL NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF DEVALUATION TO DEVALUED PERSONS/GROUPS

Society devalues certain qualities & conditions

Persons perceived as identified with these qualities become devalued (i.e., cast into devalued status)
Are then rejected
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Cast into devalued roles
HISTORICAL ROLE PERCEPTIONS OF INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS WHO ARE DIFFERENT AND / OR DEVALUED

1. Non-Human
   - Pre-Human
   - No Longer Human
   - Sub-Human: Animal, Vegetable, Object
   - “Other”, Alien

2. Menace, Evil, or Object of Dread

3. Waste material

4. Trivial or Object of Ridicule

5. Object of Pity

Dr Wolf Wolfensberger
“When the death of a disabled infant will lead to the birth of another infant with better prospects of a happy life, the total amount of happiness will be greater if the disabled infant is killed.”

“Killing a disabled infant is not morally equivalent to killing a person. Very often, it is not wrong at all.”

“killing...a chimpanzee is worse than the killing of a human being who, if there is a congenital intellectual disability, is not and never can be a person.”

Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (third ed. 2011)
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Teddy Bear To “Befriend” Elders
Lancaster News
“A Special Place for Kids”

A place to relate
HISTORICAL ROLE PERCEPTIONS OF INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS WHO ARE DIFFERENT AND / OR DEVALUED

6. Burden of Charity
7. Child:
   • Eternally
   • Once Again
8. Ambiguous borderline role of the Holy Innocent
9. Client
10. Sick / Diseased
11. Dying, Already Dead, as Good as Dead, or Better Off Dead

Dr. Wolf Wolfensberger
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Distanced from people with a valued status
ONE OF THE MOST COMMON RESPONSES TO DEVALUED PEOPLE IS DISTANCING, EITHER OF ONESELF, OR OF THE DEVALUED PERSON

A. Physical Distance
1. Physical Exclusion (e.g., architectural barriers)

2. Physical Segregation: Separate Facilities and Groupings, Institutions, Ghettos, Reservations

3. Physical Confinement: Prisons, some Institutions and Nursing Homes

4. Physical Ejection: Banishment, Expulsion,

5. Physical Destruction

Dr. Wolf Wolfensberger
ONE OF THE MOST COMMON RESPONSES TO DEVALUED PEOPLE IS DISTANCING, EITHER OF ONESELF, OR OF THE DEVALUED PERSON (cont’d)

B. Social Distance

1. Avoidance of Interactions (e.g., ignoring the presence of people)

2. Using Language, Negative Imagery or Other Actions that degrade people:

   1. Age Degradation
   2. Status Degradation (e.g., via impoverishment, brutalization, denial of normative rights)

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Cast into devalued roles

Distanced from people with a valued status

Symbolically “branded” as devalued
DARE TO SOAR

“Your attitude, almost always determines your altitude in life.”
Would you drink this?
Would you drink this?
Elderly people
COUNTY OF BELKNAP
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
NURSING HOME
Wheelchair® mixed nuts

INGREDIENTS: CASHews, FILBERTS, BRAZILS, ALMONDS, PECANS, SALT, VEGETABLE OIL.
OIL CONTAINS BHA AND BHT.

Call and cure a call to action.
Do you know of a paraplegic who can benefit from the services of the National Paraplegia Foundation?
For free information, contact National Paraplegia Foundation

152 W. Jackson Chicago, IL 60604

PHONE 312-346-4779
If Heaven Has A Lobby...
St. Paul Hermitage Is It

Support The
Sisters Of St. Benedict
Expansion & Modernization Campaign

787-3287 For Information
Or To Volunteer

To Seek Another's Good
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Subjected to all sorts of discrimination, controlled, abused, subjected to violence and even deathmaking
Why Is Supported Decision Making Important For People Who Are Devalued?

• Your thoughts?
Why supported decision making is important

- Decision making is at the heart of self-determination
- Loss of autonomy is very hurtful
- Our decisions reflect who we are to others
- Most people learn more from decisions they make for themselves than they do from decisions made for them by others
- Supported decision making is a natural, valued and powerful way of making decisions
Why My Daughter and Her Family Chose Supported Decision Making

• Mary wants to make her own decisions. She wants to be in charge yet needs support.
• Mary (like most of us) appreciates (most times) having trusted people in her life who can advise her.
• Mary is vulnerable to the negative attitudes and being controlled by others who think they know what is best for her. People who know Mary well, respect her, and have a good relationship with her will do the best job of assisting her to make wise decisions.
• People who know Mary will understand what kind and amount of support to offer her for decision making.
• We feel Mary will be “safer” within a circle of support than under guardianship
• People who know Mary well will be able to intuit and interpret for her
• Mary will have access to a circle of people who have experience with decision making
What Can You Do To Promote Supported Decision Making?

• Discussion and sharing of ideas
Concluding Thoughts

• If you don’t design your own life plan, chances are you will fall into someone else’s plan for you. (Jim Rohn)

• Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide. (Napoleon Bonaparte)