

# **The Yellow Book**

## **Implementing Choice, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition**

Services for Adults with Developmental Disabilities in Dane County

### **WEB VERSION**

(text only)



Dane County Department of Human Services  
Adult Community Services Division  
1202 Northport Drive, Madison WI 53704  
608-242-6200

Material in this book is accurate as of its date of printing. As Self-determination develops, changes to procedures may occur. Please contact the Dane County Disabilities Unit for the latest updated information.

*December, 2003*

# **The Yellow Book**

## **Implementing Choice 2nd Edition**

*Services for Adults with Developmental  
Disabilities in Dane County*

**November 2003**

### **Written by**

Donna Winnick and Monica Bear  
Developmental Disabilities Program Specialists

### **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to the agencies and individuals  
who contributed photographs for use in this publication,  
including DAWN, Disability Advocates: Wisconsin Network  
(DAWN website: [www.dawninfo.org](http://www.dawninfo.org))

### **For additional copies**

See it online (text only) at Dane County's website  
[www.co.dane.wi.us/humanservices/reports/reports.htm](http://www.co.dane.wi.us/humanservices/reports/reports.htm);  
use it online or print your own copy.

For a printed copy, send your request to  
DCDHS/ACS - DD Unit  
1202 Northport Drive  
Madison WI 53704

or call us at (608) 242-6200

..... TheYellow Book

## **Introduction**

**This handbook is for you if...**

- you are a person with a developmental disability and you are eligible for Dane County services
- you are a friend or family member of a person with a developmental disability
- you work in the disabilities field
- you care what happens to people with developmental disabilities

**T**his handbook explains how the Dane County Developmental Disabilities system works. It will walk you through the process of being actively involved in creating quality support services. Dane County uses **Self-directed Services (SDS)**. In Self-directed Services, people with disabilities (with help as needed) control and direct the

supports they receive as much as possible. This handbook talks about how to have choices in your life—where you work, where you live and who helps you out.

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Implementing Choice. In the 5 years since Dane County first began using Self-directed Services, we have learned much and made many changes and improvements in our system. Based on our experiences with SDS, we are able to give you a more realistic and practical view about the benefits and limits of our service system.

These are hard budget times. It seems that there are less and less resources available to help people. Waiting lists continue to grow. It is more important now than ever for people with disabilities and their advocates to have a loud voice regarding what they really need, and to have opportunities to speak out. SDS helps to give you a voice.

If you have any questions about the process you can call the Dane County Developmental Disabilities Unit at (608) 242-6200.

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Guiding Principles .....</b>	<b>4-5</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Living Your Life .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Getting Started .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Choosing a Support Broker .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Person-Centered Planning .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Designing Supports .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Chapter 6: Paying for Services .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Chapter 7: Creating Quality .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Chapter 8: Commonly Asked Questions .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Glossary .....</b>	<b>47</b>

Words that are underlined and italicized in the text are defined in the Glossary.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES of SELF-DETERMINATION**

### **Dignity and Respect**

All people have the right to be treated with dignity and to be respected as a whole person. All people have the right to “the dignity of risk.” Many of our greatest lessons are learned when we make choices that we later realize were mistakes. The network of support makes risk possible by providing safety and supporting growth.

### **Choice and Control**

People have the right to choose what they will do with their lives. When people need help, friends and family can be most effective in assisting them to broaden their experiences and to exercise their right to make their own choices.

### **Relationships**

It is essential that relationships are maintained and expanded. Paid services can isolate people. Relationships provide everyone with strength, support and security. The development of new relationships is crucial.

### **Giving and Community**

Everyone has the ability to give to his or her community in a meaningful way. When we give of ourselves, we feel a sense of belonging. Community membership includes having your own home, a job, involvement in your community and making a difference in the lives of others.

### **Dreaming and Planning**

All people have hopes and dreams for the future as well as goals they want to achieve. A supportive team helps people identify these dreams, then creates a plan to prioritize and realize these dreams.

## Fiscal Responsibility

When there is control over how funds get spent, there is also responsibility to live within a budget. There is an obligation to those waiting for services as well as others needing government funding. Making things happen does not always require money. To find the best quality for the most reasonable price, people are able to purchase in and out of the service system.

## The Role of Professionals

Professionals become partners with the people who hire them. They assist people in understanding what their choices are and realizing their dreams.

## Choice Has Limits

Public funds will not be used to support choices that are illegal or harmful to the person or others. The choices must be available to all.

## Self-Determination is Not Abandonment

Self-determination is not an excuse for abandoning someone in an unsafe situation on the grounds that he or she “chose” it. There are limits to the level of risk society will allow people to take with their own lives and physical well-being. It is not acceptable to offer a “choice” of either excessive restrictions or no support at all. Self-determination means becoming more creative in helping people find ways to learn decision-making and manage their actions.

## Whatever It Takes

An answer of “No, we can’t” is replaced by “How can we make this happen?”

There is a commitment to help people determine their dreams, respect their dreams, and help their dreams come true.

\* \* \*

## Chapter 1: Living Your Life

What is the Good Life? Most people say it's about the basics- a pleasant home, a decent job, health, safety, having caring people around you, and feeling good about yourself. Within Self-directed Services, you can choose services that will help lead you to your version of the Good Life.

- S**elf-determination and Empowerment mean
- ▶ Making your own choices
  - ▶ Speaking up when you are not happy about something
    - ▶ Having control over your own life
    - ▶ Being willing to try new things
    - ▶ Figuring out what you do and don't like
    - ▶ Asking for help when you need it
    - ▶ Knowing the whole story, and
    - ▶ Taking responsibility for your decisions

Having control and making your own decisions is powerful. Everyone needs help in different parts of their lives. You can



choose the people who will help you meet your life goals. When your helpers are working for you as part of your team, you know everyone has the same goals. Those goals are based on the things that are important to you.

**Many of the things you want in your life will cost money.**

You will need to buy some of the help you need. Other goals you have will cost little or no money. You may have some money from the county to purchase support in your home or at work. Determining how money is spent is especially important when there isn't enough money to go around for everyone who needs it. Using money carefully helps people gain control of their money and their futures.

## Chapter 2 Getting Started

**H**ow do people with developmental disabilities receive help to buy services?

1. People with disabilities, parents, teachers or other interested parties call the **Developmental Disabilities Intake Unit at Dane County (242-6440)**. An Intake worker will ask for permission to gather written information about the person with a developmental disability.
2. The Intake worker will meet with the person with a disability and talk with the family and/or the person's *advocate*.
3. The Intake worker uses written information and a personal interview to determine *eligibility* for developmental disabilities funding.
4. If funding is approved, the Intake worker will calculate an *individualized rate* for the person.
5. The Intake Workers know many of the resources in the community. They are able to provide people with information and ideas about other places to look for help.

## Waiting Lists

There are long waiting lists for help from Dane County's Developmental Disability Unit. You may be on one of the waiting lists. Why do they exist? Simply, there are more people who need services than there is money to help buy what they need.

You may wonder why some people receive assistance and others stay on the waiting list. Dane County staff must make these decisions, and they are very difficult to make. If you have a question about your place on the waiting list, you can always call the Intake Unit and discuss it with them.

Long waiting lists are another reason that everyone must use money carefully. If we can save just a little, we can help someone else move off of a waiting list.

## Chapter 3 Choosing a Support Broker

The first step to directing your own services is choosing a support broker. You choose and hire your support broker with help if needed from your family and/or guardian. The county's Self-Directed Services (SDS) Coordinator can also help. The SDS Coordinator can tell you how to contact brokers, answer your SDS questions, schedule interviews and/or help you prepare for interviews. Once hired, your broker will work with you to find the help you need. The broker works for you. If you feel your broker does not meet your needs, you can choose a different one. The SDS coordinator can help you make a change.

Choosing a broker can be a big job. Sometimes it helps to have a friend or relative join you at the interviews to hear what each broker has to offer. Sometimes it is easier to make important decisions when you have help. The more a support broker knows about the support you want and need, the easier it is to figure out which broker will be the best person to help you.

*making choices can lead to  
accomplishing your dreams*

**Before interviewing a broker,  
try to figure out:**

- What type of people do you get along with? Calm people? Energetic people? Quiet or talkative people? People your own age? Younger? Older?
- What type of people do you trust to help you?
- Do you want the broker to be your friend or just get the job done?
- How do you want the broker to work with your family, friends and service providers?

- Is there information you want to keep private?
- Are there things you want to do by yourself?
- What questions can you ask to make sure you hire a broker you will work with well?

### **Some questions you might want to ask your broker:**

- Do you have experience supporting people with lives similar to mine?
- If people want a change in their life, how have you helped people make those changes?
- If people want things to stay exactly the same, is that okay?
- How many people do you work with?
- How often can I expect to see you? What if I need some extra help for a short time?
- Do you have a good relationship with Support agencies?
- How have you been an advocate for the people you work with now?
- How do you handle situations when people on the team have different opinions or might not be getting along?

- How would you help me understand my budget?
- How would you help me plan for my future and help me achieve my goals?
- How can I find out what the people you support think about you?
- How often would you want me to tell you how you are doing?
- How do you learn about the things support brokers are supposed to know?

## Things to keep in mind when hiring a broker:

- A broker can be a teacher, sibling, friend or other interested person. A broker can also be a full-time professional broker.
- A broker cannot be a parent, guardian, spouse or legal representative.
- A broker cannot be an employee of an agency that provides services or supports to you.
- A broker cannot get paid to provide other services to you.
- A broker must live locally.
- A broker must be willing to affiliate with a support broker

agency, undergo a criminal background check and complete that agency's minimum training requirements.

- A full time broker works with approximately 21 people and typically spends an average of 5-8 hours on a person's behalf each month. This includes face to face time as well as phone calls and paperwork. The time spent with your broker will vary from month to month based on your needs.

***Support Broker:*** A person who provides information, helps people develop personal support plans and budget, gets needed supports within that budget and provides on-going monitoring and coordination of those supports.



## **A broker needs the skills to . . .**

- Develop a person-centered plan
- Coordinate paid and unpaid supports in a manner that fits the person-centered plan and stays within a person's budget
- Help prioritize needs and wishes so a person receives the support most important to them
- Investigate community resources
- Assist in connecting people to their communities
- Represent people when dealing with service providers
- Create options for additional support when needed
- Develop informal as well as formal supports
- Be a good advocate
- Be a good listener
- Be a team player who can work with people, families and support providers
- Diplomatically represent different viewpoints while maintaining a person's priorities and following their wishes
- Resolve conflicts respectfully

## **Once you have hired a broker . . .**

1. The broker will get to know you and your family
2. The broker will help you make a plan that balances the support you need and want with the money that you have to

spend. This plan will also help identify your goals and hopes for the future.

- 3. Using your individual rate, the broker will complete an Individual Financial Plan (IFP) which shows how you will spend your service dollars. The broker will help you complete service agreements /vouchers to make sure that your support providers get paid.
- 4. The broker will meet with you and your team regularly to make sure the plan is working or to help you make the changes you want.
- 5. The broker can help if the people on your team disagree about the best way to help you.
- 6. You can change your plan as often as you want, but your broker must help you update it at least once a year.
- 7. If you are unhappy with your broker you can call the broker's supervisor or the Dane County SDS coordinator. You can change support brokers, just like you can change provider agencies.

## Chapter 4 Person-Centered Planning

Aperson-centered plan helps you identify your preferences, needs and priorities. The support broker will help develop a plan with you (and your guardian, if you have one). You are encouraged to invite others that you like and trust to help you. This might include your family, friends, co-workers, paid professionals or circle of support. Together you will also discuss ideas for implementing the plan and changing it when necessary. This is the time to dream, the time to develop a vision of what you want in your life.

Your support broker will help you to develop, implement and change your plan as needed. They will write down the plan and share it with the people on your team. The plan will state what support you want, who will provide the support, when it will be provided and how much it will cost. The plan should also include things that you want that do not cost money. Some free things that are important to people are time spent with family, favorite foods, favorite activities, church membership, club

memberships, favorite neighborhood hang-outs, the way people like their home decorated or how their personal care is completed. All plans need to address health and safety.

Some people assume that people with severe disabilities may not be able to be involved in the decision making process. People must be offered to be as involved in the decision-making as possible. A broker's job is to guarantee that occurs. Having a strong circle of support or support team can help ensure that a person's needs, preferences and priorities are met.

The person-centered plan is reviewed regularly with you and your circle or team. This helps make sure your plan describes your support needs accurately. At times you and members of your support team may disagree about support needs or personal goals. This often happens when a person wants to try something new that other people think sounds too risky. A good broker will help you express your opinions, while listening respectfully to the people who are important to you. The broker can help you resolve these conflicts to make sure that your support needs are met and the people important to you continue

to work as a team. A strong team helps people try new things but looks out for health and safety concerns.

A ***Person-Centered Plan*** helps you identify and prioritize your preferences and needs.

## Deciding on Supports:


The person-centered plan will document your support needs and priorities. It will describe the things that maintain or improve your quality of life. During the planning process, you and others will decide how to ideally provide these supports in a manner that meets your needs.

Everyone's plan is different. One person may choose to purchase support entirely from agencies that specialize in helping people with developmental disabilities. Another may choose a combination of an agency and a more informal support

such as hiring a co-worker to be a job coach. A third person may decide not to utilize agency support, but instead hire his or her own staff. The only limitation to choosing support is to stay within your individualized rate identified by the county (and not do anything illegal).

### **Things to think about when developing a plan:**

- What do you want your life to look like in the next 12 months? 2 years? 5 years?
- What do you absolutely need to stay healthy and safe?
- What support is most important to you?
- What supports cost money and how can family, friends or community members help?
- If you can't afford everything you want, what are your top priorities?
- If there are personal funds available, how can these help you get what you want?
- Can you get more of the support you want if you share staff save money, people have housemates, share home staff, go out with friends, share a job coach etc.
- Be specific: Decide who will help you do what by when. If



A person-centered plan should be a blueprint for a quality life.

- Ask support brokers about the different types of support that people use
- Contact county intake workers to obtain written materials such as *The Source* resource book
- Talk with people who receive support services and their families
- Conduct informational interviews with service providers
- Consider generic forms of services typically provided by service agencies. For example, a cleaning service may be a more efficient use of funds than paying a supported living

provider to clean your home. Many grocery stores have a delivery service where you can call in an order and pay to have groceries delivered.

- Think about community connections. Taking a neighborhood walk, finding a favorite hang-out place, volunteering at the community center or attending a local place of worship all create feelings of belonging to the community.



## Chapter 5 Designing Supports

**A**fter a support broker is selected and the initial person-centered plan is written, it is time to figure out who will provide the supports described in the plan. The support broker will help you with this.

## First Steps

- The person-centered planning process probably generated many ideas about how the supports should be carried out.
- Talk with your broker about who can help you reach the goals of your plan.
- Prepare to compromise. There can be problems in getting the right services.
- There are not enough support workers for all the people who need help.
- There may not be as much funding available as you would like.
- Someone else may get services before you get them. That happens when someone is having a crisis and needs services

in an emergency. Although it is frustrating to have to wait or share resources, your support broker will continue to work with you on your goals.

**Considering Your Options**

- Start by working on what you need. This may be different from what you want.
- Often there are things you want that you can't afford. Or perhaps you can't figure out how to do it. Then it's time to think creatively!

**Some ideas:**

- Pool resources with someone else. Maybe you can afford some of what you want; someone else might be in the same situation.
- Share resources. You might like to find a friend to do something with you. Perhaps you can share a support person to make that happen.
- Have a housemate. Perhaps you thought you wanted to live

alone. However it is almost always too costly to afford a place to live and support staff to help you by yourself. A housemate shares costs and can do things with you.

- Check on other funding resources. Social Security has programs that may help you work. So does the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, a state program. Section 8 provides assistance with affordable housing.
- Families and friends can help.

**About Provider Agencies**

*Provider agencies* are companies that specialize in providing support services to people with disabilities. There are lists of provider agencies available from Dane County, in *The Source* book, and in the phone book.

You can ask people you know if they know of any agencies. Agencies can send you information regarding their services, policies, philosophies, fees and their experience with specific issues. You may find that some agencies have experience or philosophies that meet your needs better than others.

Agencies have experience being service providers. If you need help in your home or at work, there is probably an agency that understands how to do that. However, sometimes people feel that an agency's policies or procedures may interfere with their choices or preferences. Then you may want to find or create more flexible connections and supports.

## **Interviewing Provider Agencies**

Chat with the provider for a few minutes. Tell them about yourself, including your interests, your job, your friends and family. Let them tell you why they like helping people and how they help people to be part of the community. Learn what their values are.

Questions regarding  
support staff:

- How are employees screened?
- How are staff matched to individuals?
- What training is available to employees?

- How are staff supervised?
- How are employees evaluated; will you have input in the evaluation process?
- How is backup handled when a staff person is absent?

Specific questions for Vocational Agencies (job-related):

- How do people get jobs?
- How long does it take to find a job?
- Who helps the people learn the job?
- What will you do all day if you lose your job?
- What if you want more things to do during the day?

Specific questions for Residential Agencies (home-related):

- How is health and safety ensured in the home?
- Who does the home upkeep, the cooking, and the cleaning?
- Who will help you plan your evening and weekend activities?

Other questions to consider asking:

- Discuss costs. If services are “packaged,” make sure all the

items in the package are needed. If not all the services in the package are needed, figure out if there is a way to pay for only those services you want.

- All agencies will have administrative costs. Administrative costs include items such as supervisory time, health insurance for staff, clerical and accounting costs, office space, equipment and so forth.
- Be clear about your expectations. For agency personnel to give you a realistic idea of how they can help you, they need to know what you expect.
- Get into details. For example, if you need support going to the doctor, who will take you? How are supports provided when your staff person wants to take a vacation? Can you choose your own staff?
- Talk to other people who have received services from the agency.

## Thinking About Supports Creatively

Assistance with a variety of life's activities can be purchased outside of a provider agency. You can create more flexibility in your plan, and find support for activities in

places other than provider agencies. You can also combine services from a provider agency and services from elsewhere. Here are some examples:

## What if you need to wake up at a certain time to get to work?

*You can have your residential staff wake you up...  
...or you can ask a neighbor to stop by and make  
sure you are up on time.*

**Or, what if you want to go swimming at the Y?**

*Your residential staff can take you to the Y,  
...or you could take a swimming class  
with a friend.*

## When your house needs cleaning

*Your residential staff can clean the house,  
...or someone can teach you to clean the house,  
...or you might hire a cleaning service*

## If you need a job

*Your vocational agency can help you*  
*...or you could pay a private job developer to find a job.*  
*...or a friend or family member might have some ideas.*

## **You may want to use co-employment to hire staff.**

Co-employment is the term used by employment agencies to describe a certain type of employment relationship.

- You are the employer and you will have employer-employee relationships with your staff
- You can set the wages yourself
- You can choose your own staff. For example, you can hire friends, neighbors or co-workers to help you at work or home
- You supervise and schedule staff, and perform other duties that provider agencies supply to their employees

Your support broker can help you figure out if co-employment would work out for you.

## **Hiring Providers**

When you decide where to buy supports, it is time to complete a Support Agreement/Voucher with the provider. This form works



like a check. You will complete one for each provider you hire. It states how much money the service you are purchasing will cost and how long the service will last. The Support Agreement/Voucher is always time-limited, usually for one year. If you use the same provider every year, you will complete the form once a year for that provider.

Your plan will list all the people and services providing support and how much each service costs. The total costs must be within the individualized rate.

The providers and others that you select become your partners in helping you get what you need. Frequent and honest communication will build a trusting relationship. Your support broker can help resolve disagreements within your team.

Think about people in your life who might want to be involved. Remember that everything can't be done at once. So work on the present, but keep planning for the future.



## Chapter 6 Paying for Services

# Where does the money come from to purchase supports for people with developmental disabilities?

The Dane County Department of Human Services receives money for services from a variety of sources—the State of Wisconsin, the federal government, and local government. There are many rules and regulations connected to these different funding sources. The most common funding source is the Community Integration Program (CIP), a combination of federal, state and local money.

## Purchasing supports using the individualized rate

Your individualized rate is the amount of money from the county that you can use to buy supports for you. The person-centered plan describes how this money will be spent. You, the broker and other team members develop an Individualized Financial Plan (IFP). This plan lists the costs of supports. The

county manager approves the IFP and the person-centered plan.

The budget you approve must be within the assigned individualized rate and meet safety guidelines. The county will then authorize the fiscal management agency to pay the money to support you, according to the budget and plan.

The money is available at a fiscal management agency. The fiscal management agency pays providers the amount of money you approve. The name of the fiscal management agency is Fiscal Assistance of Dane County, Inc. (FA).

You and your support broker approve payments by signing a Support and Services Agreement/Voucher. The voucher shows that you, the broker, and the provider all agree to work together to provide services, and how much the services will cost. The signed voucher is sent to the fiscal management agency, which then pays the provider of your support. The fiscal management agency tracks the budget and vouchers and makes sure that people follow the agreement. The fiscal management agency sends you statements showing how much of your rate you have spent and which providers have been paid.

## Chapter 7 Creating Quality

**Q** uality Assurance means that there

means that there are standards that must be met so that people can live safe and productive lives. The Quality Assurance process monitors services to help make sure that people's lives are going well.

## Quality Assurance asks these questions —

- Are people's needs being met?
- Are supports delivered with care, competence and respect?
- Do people have choice and opportunity in their lives?

## How does having choice of services improve Quality Assurance?

1. You, and those who know you best, will define what quality services mean in your life. You will tell others if the quality of the supports is not acceptable.
2. Your person-centered plan and support agreement describe what results you want from your services. If those outcomes are reached, you and those around you will know you have good supports.
3. You will continue to purchase those supports that meet your needs. You will be able to take your money and purchase new supports if you're dissatisfied.
4. Your broker is hired solely to create quality supports for you, and can monitor services independent of the service provider.

## Your Quality Assurance Team

Your Support Team makes sure that things are going well in your life.

### Members of the support team include:

- Support Broker. The support broker is the primary Quality Assurance monitor. It is important for you, the guardian, and your family to have an open relationship with your broker. All of you should feel free to speak out and ask questions.
- Self-Advocate. People who are receiving services who speak for themselves are self-advocates. Self-advocacy is necessary for the quality of life they want. Sometimes people are shy about speaking up. Perhaps they haven't had the opportunity to make many choices in the past. Taking Part & Taking Power is a series of 4 classes that is offered to people receiving services. It helps people learn about decision making. The goal of the classes is *empowerment*--feeling confident that you can impact the direction of your life. Your support broker or the SDS Coordinator can help you learn more about these classes.
- *Family, Guardian and Friends*. People who care about you help keep an eye on how things are going. They are encouraged to be active members of your support team.

They know you in a special way, and often have a unique perspective.

- *Staff.* Most people have paid support staff who help them at work and/or home. Staff help people be more independent and have a fulfilling life. They are key team members because they are with the person every day. Staff are trained to provide services based on each individual's needs and goals. Most are employed by agencies that work hard to provide good services.
- *Working Together:* A good support team respects each team member's opinions. The team knows that sometimes things are very difficult, but they are stronger and smarter when working together. Each team member needs to value the role of the other members. Each person brings useful ideas to the group. Everyone knows that their job is to work together to reach the goals in the person-centered plan.

## Other Quality Assurance Support

- Some services are available outside of the individual plan. They are available if you need some specialized help.



- *Education and Training*
  - *Legal Advocacy*
  - *Specialized Transportation*
  - *Adult Family Homes*
  - *Respite*
  - *Counseling*
  - *Mobility Training*
  - *Independent Living Skills Training*
  - *Behavior Support*
  - *Sound Response*
- County staff is available to address complaints from individuals, families and guardians. A county manager is assigned to each person as a resource to you and your broker. There is a clearly stated county grievance process.
- County staff meets regularly with agencies to address agency and individual issues. Provider agencies are required to report any incidents that could jeopardize an individual's well-being. Background checks are required on all staff. County staff conducts regular evaluations of services provided by provider agencies.

- There is a crisis response system for people who need additional support in their home or another place to go during a difficult situation.
- The Quality Assurance Board (QAB) is a committee that mediates conflicts and oversees quality issues. The committee consists of county staff, people receiving supports and their representatives and others involved with people with developmental disabilities. Anyone can come to a QAB meeting to discuss an issue.

## *Chapter 8      **Some Commonly Asked Questions***

### **What happens to the money if you don't use it up?**

If you didn't need the total amount allocated for a year, your rate will be reviewed by county staff to see if it should remain the same or be reduced. Money not needed for one person's supports can be used for other people with developmental disabilities on waiting lists.

### **What if you need more money than the individualized rate for support?**

If you need more support, the support broker will inform county staff and ask for an increase of the individualized rate. The broker will attend an SDS meeting; this meeting allows the broker to explain to county staff why the increase is needed. This can occur any time of the year, and is also reviewed each

year when the person-centered plan is reviewed. County staff must approve all increases. Often, there is no additional money available.

### **Are there things or services that can't be purchased with the individualized budget?**

Obviously, purchases must be legal and cannot be unduly restrictive. Regulations do not allow the budget to be used for institutional care or a group home. CIP and Medical Assistance also have rules and regulations. An acceptable plan is one you develop with a broker and others who know you best, meets your health and safety needs, and is within your individualized rate.

### **What if you disagree with a support provider?**

A first step is to talk with the provider and try to work things out. Try to hear each other's viewpoint. If a problem continues, the broker can serve as your advocate. In that role, the broker will assist you in presenting your point of view and try to help solve the problem. Most problems can be resolved by talking openly about them. Some problems can be solved by talking it

over with someone separate from the situation, such as the Quality Assurance Board at Dane County.

If the problems are serious enough, you may no longer want to receive support from the provider. The service agreement describes the conditions under which you and the provider can stop working together. The broker can help you arrange for new supports.

It is often not easy to find a new provider of supports. That is why it is best to think carefully when hiring a support provider and to try to maintain open communication with the provider.

## Why do I need a housemate to help share costs?

Rates are based on the idea of shared costs. It is assumed that one staff person can assist at least 2 people at the same time. You will probably not be able to afford to live alone. Typically, people have housemates to share costs.

## **How do I find a housemate?**

A housemate can share costs, and may also become a friend. A housemate may be someone you know from school, church, a self-advocacy group or other activities. The support broker can be helpful in finding a housemate. Support providers may know someone they think you may like as a housemate. Someone at Dane County may have some ideas. It is important to let others know that you are looking for a housemate, and to have an idea of what your ideal housemate would be like.

## **How can you become a good advocate for yourself?**

- It takes confidence to speak up and express your opinions. The way to develop self-confidence is to have the opportunities to speak in front of others. We all learn from experience.
- Here are some ways people can help you have those opportunities: (1) Before meetings, review the agenda with them and let them know things you want to say. (2) After meetings, review what was decided and let the team know if

there are things you did not understand. Most people have questions about what happened at meetings.

- Consider taking the empowerment course, Taking Part & Taking Power.
- Let things move at their own pace. Don't be impatient with yourself as you learn to become a better self-advocate. Changes come with time.
- Take opportunities to make choices in your life. The more choices you make, the better you will get at it.

## How others can become good advocates for people with disabilities.

- Listen to the person with the disability. Think about how the person communicates, and ask questions in a way that is useful for that person. For example, if a person doesn't speak, use pictures or drawings to explain concepts. Continue to explore ways to pull the person into the decision-making process.
- Don't speak for the person, even if you think you know the answer. Try to control your own opinion.

- You may disagree with the decision of the person receiving services. However, it is their decision. Recognize that we all learned about decision-making by making some decisions that were smarter than others.
- Listen to others who know the person in different settings.
- Don't let someone's credentials or position get in the way of your knowledge of the person.
- Encourage people to explore opportunities, develop their own individual gifts, and let others have the chance to know them.
- Avoid the word "*CAN'T*."  
Instead, substitute "*How can we...*" or "*What if ...*"



## *Glossary*

advocate—a person whose only role with the person with the disability is to assist in presenting the person’s point of view and assisting the person in having informed choices

county manager/assigned manager—Dane County management staff available as a resource to people receiving services

CIP (Community Integration Program)—the primary funding source for support services in Dane County

circle of support—a group of people who care about a person with a disability and want to assist with support on a long-term basis

co-employment—an employment relationship through an employment agency that enables people with disabilities to hire their own staff

eligibility—meets conditions of Dane County and Wisconsin to receive funding for support services from Dane County Developmental Disabilities Unit

fiscal management agency—holds the money from the individualized budget and pays the bills to those providing support

*grievance policy*—the appeal policy available through Dane County Human Services.

*individualized budget*—the amount of money needed to implement the person-centered plan; will be within the individualized rate

*individualized rate*—the amount of money that will be sufficient for individuals to purchase their needed supports

*mobility training*—a program that teaches people to use the city bus

*person-centered plan*—a personalized blueprint for developing supports for the person

*provider agency*—a company that provides support services to people with disabilities

*quality assurance*—a set of activities intended to monitor standards regarding support services

*self-advocate*—a person needing support services who makes choices and decisions regarding his/her chosen lifestyle, independent of interference or undue influence from others

*services/support agreement and voucher*—the payment form pre-authorizing a specific type and amount of services that a person is buying

*Sound Response*—a program that provides technological support and backup to enable people to live more independently

*The Source*—the resource book produced by Dane County, available on the Dane County website: [www.co.dane.wi.us](http://www.co.dane.wi.us)

*specialized transportation*—transportation used by people who cannot access the city bus system

*support broker*—a person who provides information, helps people develop personal plans and budgets, and gets needed supports within a person's budget

*support broker agency*—a company that employs professional support brokers

*support team*—the paid and unpaid people who assist the person receiving services

*supports*—the help that enables a person with a developmental disability to live and work successfully in the community

*transition coordinator*—the person assigned by Dane County who helps students during their last year of school to transition into adult services

