

Training Topics to Support Self-Directed Services

Self-direction is a Medicaid service option where people with disabilities and their families select, purchase, and manage their supports using individually set budgets. They also typically recruit, hire, train, and supervise their own staff. While self-directed services enhance quality of life, it is important to explore additional supports people using self-directed services may need.

In 2020, people participating in New York State's self-direction plan were surveyed about their experiences with self-direction, including a question about training topics that they would like their fiscal intermediary to present. The topics suggested fell into five key areas: person-centered thinking, support skills, community living, health and wellness, and self-direction procedures. While some training topics may be specific to staff (i.e., staff professionalism) or natural supports (i.e., self-direction procedures), other trainings were more general in focus.

Person-Centered Thinking

Respondents wanted to:

- Understand characteristics and needs of specific disabilities and common supports people may receive.
- Use person-centered thinking and planning to learn about the individual's strengths, interests, and personal goals to better support the individual.

Direct Support Skills

Respondents wanted staff to:

- Develop knowledge and skills in order to directly support people with a particular disability or support need.
- Use positive behavior supports to decrease negative behavior, increase positive behavior, and increase communication.
- Learn about competencies and ethics of direct support professionals so staff can better support the people they serve.
- Training for themselves on using best practices for managing staff.

Community Living

Respondents wanted to:

- Know "how to find and keep a job" that is a good fit for the person.
- Know current housing options, funding supports, and how to prepare for the future to maintain or change housing.
- Understand safety issues and responsibilities of living independently.
- Develop skills to teach and support activities of daily living.
- Develop skills to build relationships and access community resources and activities.

Health and Wellness

Respondents wanted to:

- Know how to find or provide emotional support for people with disabilities.
- Develop skills to support a healthy diet and exercise habits for people with disabilities.
- Develop the skills to manage medications, perform first aid and CPR, handle specific medical needs of the individual, and support people in managing their own healthcare.
- Understand safety concerns and measures in the home and community as well as “what happens in an emergency.”

Self-Direction Procedures

Respondents wanted to:

- Learn the rules and procedures of self-direction, related information, and ideas for successful self-direction during onboarding.
- Understand budgets, allowable expenses, “how the pay system works,” and how to request reimbursements.
- Understand how to complete timesheets accurately.
- Learn about how to prepare for the future, including options available, steps to take, and considerations for planning.
- Keep updated on any changes to self-directed services.