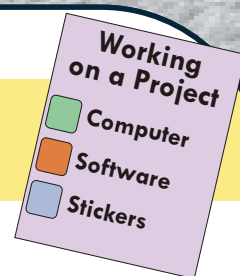


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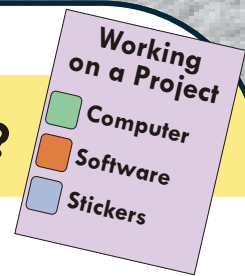
Folder #1 BEGINNING

Inspiration From
The Department Of
Developmental Services
Consumer Advisory
Committee



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WHY IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT?



Donald Roberts,
Chairman, DDS CAC

Why is This Project Important?

Our committee created this CD to help people with developmental disabilities be prepared and understand what is being said at meetings and be able to vote. When people with disabilities understand what is being said or written, they have real power to run their lives.

People with disabilities can take advantage of more choices when information is presented and communicated in ways they understand. It is important to remember that some of us are not able to communicate well using words, but are able to show people what we need by communicating in other ways.

People with disabilities cannot be an advocate for others as a board member or representative if they don't understand what they are voting for. It is not right to vote on something that is not understood, especially if it is a quality of life concern, or about spending money that will change people's lives. It is the responsibility of the board or committee member to make sure they know what is being said so they make good decisions - because it affects many lives.

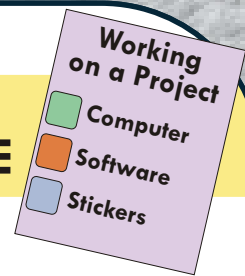
This CD will help people who support boards and committees know how to make changes, or adaptations to board materials so each member can understand the meeting business. It is important for regional centers and other agencies to make sure that board material is available in a way all members can understand.

We request you use this CD wisely and not put it away on the shelf. Make this CD and the adaptations a part of your work to help open doors for people to have a real voice.



We're counting on you!

FINDING OUT ABOUT THE PERSON THERE IS A SOLUTION FOR EVERYONE



Every person in this world is different. We are all unique. Even conjoined twins have their own personalities. There are differences in the way that we are treated. There are differences in our cultural and religious backgrounds. There are differences in our personalities. People have many differences, never overlook that. And then in many ways, we are the same. Remember this too.

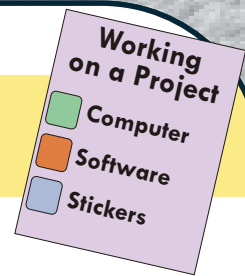


Some of the considerations are:

- What age group do I fall in?
- How will you communicate with me?
- What is my family history?
- Do you know my medical history?
- Do I have to take medication?
- Do I have a family?
- Where will I sleep tonight?
- What am I afraid of?

***It all boils down to
“do I matter to you?”
Do we matter to each other?
If so, the challenge to make adaptations won't
be a problem to commit to.***

GETTING TO KNOW WHAT PEOPLE NEED FOR ADAPTATIONS



With more people listening to people with disabilities, life can be very busy for them and there is a lot of hurrying around and asking what do we need. We have opportunities to try new things that we and others never thought we could do before. Most people have good ideas about the kinds of adaptations that would work best for them. A lot of people with developmental disabilities are used to adapting to any situation on their own. When you ask the question, you will learn how to support people better.

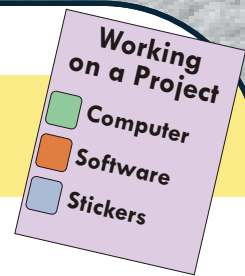
Huge goals aren't for everyone. We don't have to live up to other people's idea about what we should do. It can be overwhelming. I know people that don't want to say anything, because they aren't a leader in the self-advocacy movement or they are not on a Board of Directors.

It is a fine balance to find your voice and speak up for what you need, and continue to adapt to your own situation. It's a relief sometimes to step back from advocacy goals or retire from leadership positions to let others take your place.

For those of us who are asked to speak for others constantly we need to consider letting new leaders take our place. Adaptations have become easier with new technology and pictures, it is easier for new leaders to speak for themselves and others.

***Technology and adaptations will open the door
for new leaders to emerge.***

CONSIDER PEER TO PEER SUPPORT FOR ADAPTATIONS



Peer to peer (a person with a disability to a person with a disability) is the best way for people with disabilities to share information about the adaptations they need.

People with disabilities will relate to their peers in different ways than with professionals. We learned this with the People First of California IPP Buddy Program*. We learned people were open and honest with someone they thought was like them, instead of someone that did not share similar experiences. People were encouraged to know that a "Peer Buddy" was trained and available to support them at their Planning Meeting. We also learned that sometimes people with disabilities are afraid of losing services when they talk with a staff person or professional.

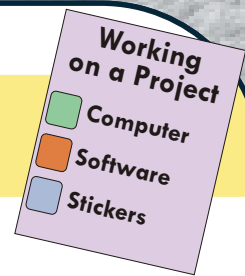
There are many people who live in an environment of constant program staff supervision and don't have family in their life. They really like and need to have an *unconditional person* in their life that they can talk to and will listen to them. A lot of people benefit from peer support when trying something new, like presenting material in front of a group. We have seen people learn how to speak up from watching their peers at a meeting doing a great job.

An adaptation can just be having a friend be there with you.

*People First of California
IPP Buddy Program and Trainer's Guide, 2005
(See Folder #6 for Resource Information)

Kim Rucker Gunches and Tom Michaels
DDS CAC Members, 2005

VALUING DIVERSITY



America's growing cultural diversity is one of the most important changes happening in our society today. Changing demographics motivates many nonprofit organizations to examine their policies, practices and structure to meet the opportunities offered by a diverse society. As boards of directors welcome the differences among people, they will make great gains in strength and effectiveness, both as individuals and as a team.

Simply stated, "diversity" means differences such as race, gender, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic class, religion, sexual orientation, skills and abilities, politics and family structure.

Boards and committees are often challenged when working to be more inclusive. Instead of reinforcing acceptance of people and their differences, they may look for a "checklist" approach for include all people, which can lead to continuing stereotypes of differences.

In strong, diverse organizations, individuals can add:

- collection of talents,
- skills,
- insights, and
- interests from their life experiences and origins.

This richness in their point of view, experience and knowledge can only contribute to building a more responsive organization and better served community.

Mark Starford and Sherry Beamer,
Board Resource Center, 2003