Leaders in Policy Advocacy Needs You in 2014

Self-Determination was a featured topic at the Leaders in Policy Advocacy (LIPA) training this fall. As part of this outstanding learning event, Kent County Michigan Partners for Freedom (MPF) Local Leaders Rachel DeMaagd and Jackie Finn presented with Oakland County MPF Local Leader David Taylor as a panel of self-determination experts. LIPA participants in training — adults with developmental disabilities and parents of young children with developmental disabilities — asked many fitting questions of the panel and appeared thrilled to learn of self-directed services being amongst the array of support options in Michigan.

If you are interested in advancing your advocacy skills and developing your leadership and live in the counties of St. Clair, Oakland, Macomb, Livingston, Jackson, Washtenaw, Wayne, Hillsdale, Lenawee or Monroe, contact Salli Christenson at the Arc Michigan at 800-292-7851, ext. 130 or Email at salli.c@arcmi.org by December 15, 2013.

Last year MPF provided self-determination training and outreach activities to 3,644 people. If you are counting, some people fit in more than one category...

Local Leader Shares Abilities at Expo

Each year, Ability Expo — the nation’s leading exhibition for people with disabilities — claims to bring life-enhancing products and services, education and resources to people with disabilities in cities across the United States. This year in Chicago, Genesee County MPF Local Leader and Owner of EZ Awareness by Design, Eric Thomas presented “Life After A Serious Injury:  Asking the Questions and Finding the Answers.”
Shared Living Arrangements that Support Self-Determination

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) issued a publication in 2013 that sets the facts about how two or more people who receive services and supports from the public mental health system can share living space. It also addresses the issue of sharing staff while maintaining the essential elements of arrangements that support self-determination. The fact sheet says:

- Individuals who use arrangements that support self-determination usually live in their homes with one or more roommates or with family members.
- When an individual chooses to rent his or her own apartment or house, he or she has all of the rights and protections of a tenant under state law.
- The separate individual budgets of roommates are never combined and each person maintains the right to hire and fire their own providers.
- Roommates may decide to share staff when doing so is prudent and works for both of them.
- Usually when roommates are using arrangements that support self-determination, they each arrange their own services and supports and hire their own providers.
- The provision of housing and supports should be separated so that an individual maintains the right to fire staff without having to move.
- When a person is using arrangements that support self-determination, all of the requirements for documentation of service provision and monitoring of services and supports by the Supports Coordinator or Case Manager still apply.
- While a landlord can provide both housing and support to a family member, when an unrelated person is added into the mix, adult foster care licensing rules may apply to the situation.

Specifically, when room, board and 24 hour “personal care, protection and supervision” are provided, the landlord needs to apply for and obtain a license to operate a group home and follow the licensing rules.
Hi there! Our friends at Michigan Partners for Freedom asked us to write an article about how anyone can use Facebook to connect with their legislators. Below are the steps we came up with. Please take a look; we hope you find them useful:

- Know who your legislators are:
  http://www.michiganvotes.org/find.aspx
- Find them on Facebook (see if they have a Page or a Profile). Like or Friend the page or profile with the most recent activity.
- Review your legislator’s posts to see what they have been up to. See if they have Coffee Hours posted so that you can attend and meet with him/her personally.
- Before commenting: think of a clear, targeted message and say why it’s important to you.
- After you have received a reply, make sure that you acknowledge that reply either with another message or a “Like”.
- Read your legislators’ posts once a week to see what they are involved with. Make comments when the posts are important to you. Read posts that other people have made and comment when you have something important to add or “Like” their posts.
- Though you may be focused on one issue (i.e. disability rights), you can also comment on other issues that you feel are important also.

Thanks for reading! We hope this helps you better connect with your Legislators!

Christy Jane Courtney is a Systems Navigator at the Arc of Western Wayne, and Jen Gossett is Region 1 Coordinator and National Core Indicators (NCI) Coordinator at the Washtenaw Association for Community Advocacy.
MPF Member Spreading the Word Far and Wide

Michigan Partners for Freedom co-founder and Community Support Specialist at Wayne State University’s Developmental Disabilities Institute (DDI), Angela Martin, recently spent seven days in Tajikistan. Her visit was a part of a U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs-sponsored Professional Fellows EMPOWER Program.

While in Tajikistan, Angela shared information about person-centered and family-centered supports, self-determination and community living while meeting with organizations concerned with the rights for children with disabilities and their families. Then in October, completing this two-way international exchange, representatives from the Tajikistan visited Detroit organizations including a MPF Wayne County Local Leader meeting.

Congratulations to the following MPF Local Leaders who presented at the Peer Conference late in October in Lansing.

Wayne County
Tonnieo Graves
Yuself Seegars
Robert Spruce

Oakland County
David Taylor

Kent County
Melissa Rozema

Community Integration for People with Disabilities: Key Principles

At the 23rd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) celebrations this past summer, a set of consensus principles reflecting the disability community’s shared vision of community integration were unveiled. The paper, Community Integration for People with Disabilities: Key Principles, signed by 26 major national organizations representing people with disabilities, family members, service providers, and state administrators, lays out a vision in which people with disabilities are afforded opportunities to live in their own homes, work in regular, non-segregated employment, and make their own choices (self-determination).

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How does Michigan Compare?

How do we know if what we are doing is improving the lives of people we support?

Specifically, how do we know if people are directing their services? Michigan undertakes many ways to see how services for people with developmental disabilities are doing. Last year we used the National Core Indicators (NCI) survey. The reported results are based on interviews of a randomly-selected group of more than 400 individuals served by the community mental health system.

Michigan rates “significantly above average” in the category of using a self-directed support option, or in other words “arrangements that support self-determination.” NCI defines Self-Determination as “people having authority and are supported to direct and manage their own services.” They report that 16% of those surveyed in Michigan indicated they use a self-direction option.

You can find the Michigan results at http://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/states/MI.

Community Integration for People with Disabilities: Key Principles

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General Principles: Individuals with disabilities should...

♦ have the opportunity to live like people without disabilities. They should have the opportunity to be employed, have a place to call home, and be engaged in the community with family and friends.

♦ have control over they own day, including which job or educational or leisure activities they pursue.

♦ have control over where and how they live, including the opportunity to live in their own apartment or home. Living situations that require conformity to a collective schedule or that restrict personal activities limit the right to choose.

Employment: …should have the opportunity to be employed in non-segregated, regular workplaces. Virtually all individuals with disabilities can be employed and earn the same wages as people without disabilities.

Housing: Virtually all individuals with disabilities can live in their own home with supports. Like people without disabilities, they should get to decide where they live, with whom they live, when and what they eat, who visits and when, etc. To this end, individuals with disabilities should have access to housing other than group homes, other congregate arrangements, and multi-unit buildings or complexes that are primarily for people with disabilities.

Choice: …should have the opportunity to make informed choices. They must have full and accurate information about their options, including what services and financial support are available in integrated settings.

Public Funding: Government funding for services should support implementation of these principles. Currently, public funding has a bias toward institutionalization, forcing individuals to overcome myriad barriers if they wish to remain in their communities.
Michigan Partners for Freedom is a grassroots coalition of people with disabilities, family members, advocates, organizations and other allies working together to build statewide demand for self-determination.

Michigan Partners for Freedom is supported by a grant (#2014030) from the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council to The Arc Michigan.

Join Us!
Michigan Partners for Freedom is looking for Steering Committee members with developmental disabilities.

MPF Steering Committee 2014 Meeting Dates

January 15  March 19  November 19

May 21  July 16

September 17