Owning the Process DVD Ready For Viewing

Michigan Partners for Freedom (MPF) has released a new DVD “Owning the Process: Individual Budgeting” which highlights meaningful supports in the public mental health system as a part of self-determination. It is available for viewing at www.mifreedom.org.

The ten-minute DVD connects the stories of five Michigan citizens who “own the process” and oversee the payment from tax dollars for the services they receive. Produced by Avalon Films in Royal Oak, “Owning the Process” was made possible through funding from the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC).

Sheryl Kuenzer, gubernatorial appointee and MDDC Chair says “I find this video to be very informative and the personal stories make for a very strong argument of the success of self-determination.” Kuenzer, from Manistee, serves as one of the more than 100 MPF Local Leaders from across the state. As a MPF Local Leader, she has participated in training about how to share her personal story while informing others about the tools of self-directed services such as individual budgeting.

“With our additional training initiatives this year, we are excited to share the news of this important tool of self-directed services in Michigan” says Jill Gerrie, MPF Project Coordinator. “Self-determination is a civil rights movement and with any movement of change we must have devices or tools to guide us. This video attempts to explain a difficult concept easily.”

To arrange a presentation by a MPF Local Leader near you, contact Jill Gerrie at The Arc Michigan.

Call 517.487-5426 or 800.292.7851 x114
Email Jill at jill.gerrie@arcmi.org

One of a Kind Guide

The Owning the Process Viewer Guide is designed to assist in understanding the concepts presented in this short DVD. In addition to 15 discussion questions, the guide contains a brief explanation of Michigan-style self-determination along with definitions of other important tools of self-direction. Many graphics and diagrams are included in the guide. The MPF Local Leaders in the DVD are also featured in this valuable publication — each telling about critical aspects of individual budgeting and their self-determination arrangements.

To download and print the guidebook, visit: http://www.mifreedom.org/images/ MPF_Viewing_Guide.pdf
Hello Partners,

As you may know, there are some changes coming next year in health care for people who have both Medicaid and Medicare health insurance (around 200,000 people across Michigan), while at the same time the Prepaid Inpatient Health Plans (PIHPs) are being reorganized.

Let me explain… First, Michigan received a grant from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (along with other states) to combine both health insurance systems into one for people who receive both Medicaid and Medicare. The whole process is often called integrated care for people with dual eligibility. The thought is that people would have better coordination between medical care and supports/services which would lead to improved health and lives. It is believed this would also make a system that would be easier to navigate. Some think it would also save money, but others disagree.

This is first being piloted in Wayne and Macomb Counties, and the entire Upper Peninsula, and is scheduled to begin in January 2014. If it works, the system would be expanded to the rest of the state.

There will be new Integrated Care Organizations (ICOs) that will be responsible for medical services. The PIHPs will continue to be responsible for the support services people already receive through Community Mental Health organizations.

People with developmental disabilities shouldn’t see much difference in services. All people with both Medicaid and Medicare in the pilot areas will be automatically enrolled in the new integrated care system, but can decide to opt out and continue to receive the services they now receive.

People in the new system will need to select an ICO for medical services in their area, and can pick the one in which their doctor participates. If their doctor does not participate, people can just opt out. Supports Coordinators can help people with these decisions. Right now, it looks like the benefit to people with developmental disabilities in the new integrated care system would be enhanced dental services.

Okay, now on to the PIHPs. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and others have wanted the Michigan Department of Community Health to reduce the number of PIHPs in Michigan for some time. With this new pilot program starting in January, it made sense to set up the new PIHP areas to match the ICO areas, which then reduces the number of PIHPs. Again, people should not see changes in their services and supports.

We will continue to keep you up-to-date as more details are available. If you have any questions, just give me a call.

Here’s hoping for spring soon!

Jill
Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council  Legislative Luncheon

MPF Oakland County Local Leader Ryan Gray presented “Advocacy with Legislators” in February at the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council legislative event in Lansing. With his associate, Angela Martin, Gray reviewed how contacting elected officials is an effective way to be heard and involved in local, state and federal policymaking.

A legislative Guide including a useful glossary with maps of legislative districts and suggestions on how to prepare your issues, send letters/emails, make telephone calls and how to arrange an in-person visit was distributed.

So Many Answers Left Unquestioned by Megan Jones

You could say I’m sassy
or a downright boat rocker
because I’ve always been one
to question your answers.
No “because I said so...”
“Because that’s the way it’s always been done,”
or “because that’s best practice”
have never been good enough for me.
Best practice gauged by who?

Not the people
who have to live with it!
We need the answers to be questioned.
I’m not a prepackaged deal.
You may think you want what’s best for me
but ask yourself this,
if you were in my shoes,
wouldn’t you want somebody to ask you,
what’s really best for you?

Printed with permission from author, Megan Jones, Poet and Advocate
Contact Megan: megan.megglady@gmail.com

THIS PAST YEAR, LOCAL LEADERS REACHED OVER 1,561 PEOPLE!

1,561
331 people with disabilities
649 community members
327 CMH staff
141 students with disabilities
113 family members

To download this document, visit:
This I believe… that during many struggles within social change, we testify inclusion all the while insulating ourselves with our own words, phrases and language. In the self-determination movement, we have not avoided our own lingo. We even have our own meaning for many words. For instance “individual budget”. In “s-d” speak, doesn’t this really mean “an allocation of unseen funding”?

How about “arrangements based on self-determination”? Doesn’t that mean self-directed services? Or “allies”? Aren’t those the countries that opposed the Axis powers of World War II?

How does one define an ally of self-determination? Is it simply someone who signs on the dotted line or is it that person who goes the extra mile and does more than required? Is an ally simply a friendly associate? Perhaps because this work so often feels like a fight, the saying “go to the mat” comes to mind. I believe that allies view the struggle as labors of love and as the forging ahead in the journey for justice in the face of opposition.

The Frederick Douglas saying comes to mind: “If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle.”

In self-determination, more times than not, that struggle stands within systems we’ve helped to create. We often profess choice but distress natural consequences based on professional and personal inconveniences.

The self-determination movement lost a fearless ally on February 23 when Cheryl Tromatter died. I believe we lost an ally like Frederick Douglas describes in his quote above. A true defender of real self-determination for people with disabilities. My work here in Michigan always intertwined with Cheryl. Starting way back in the 1980s with Autism Society of Michigan, through the good old days of Michigan Partners in Policymaking, and on to Atlanta when Michigan Partners for Freedom was formed. She supported the Academy in Midland when we determinedly worked with one person (and one support team) one at a time. How many of us can say our Project Grants Manager pitched in on a Saturday and not in their hometown? Cheryl risked her status as an objective bureaucrat by hanging with zealous advocates.

So, I am trying as hard as I might to not be trite, but against odds, Cheryl gracefully plodded on. She understood the moral and the physical underpinnings of disability rights advocacy. I learned a lot from her — showing up, standing tall, and speaking softly yet with incredible resolve.
Transition Conference

At the annual Michigan Transition Services Association conference in Frankenmuth on March 20, Bay Arenac County Local Leaders Josh Fetterhoff and Justin Ward’s presentation rallied great reviews. (See comments box to the right.) Each spoke about how he uses the tools of Self-Determination to manage supports and services and together shared how the five principles impact their lives. Ward told the group of educators, support personnel and parents, “Today I have control of the principles which support me in my everyday life. If I feel like I’m failing, I have the power to reach out for support to succeed.”

Fetterhoff shared “Just like I determine what is important in my life, it will be important for students to learn to make choices and determine what is important in theirs.

Students may have been told that they would never do things; that they can’t…

The truth is, the only person that can (and should) tell us what they can and can’t do, is the student! And they will need help discovering and letting us know what that is in order to be successful.”

At the Transition Conference, attendees said they learned the following from this session

- About Michigan Partners for Freedom, of which I was not familiar, they want to enhance the demand for Self-Determination.
- Self-Determination is unique to the individual. Happiness is directly related to choice.
- Resources for my students; better understanding of Self-Determination, the benefits and some of the misunderstandings. CMH not always “bad guy”; appreciate facilitator’s role.
- Client’s perspective on services available and group home living. Lots of helpful info.
- That a guardian isn’t as necessary as I thought. I need to listen to my students.

My Life is GOOD!

Three years ago at a MPF Community presentation in Southwest Michigan, James Ivey couldn’t get over what was being shared by others involved in self-determination. His life at the time felt dismal and out of his control and he wanted us to know. James stated that he wasn’t being heard and was growing increasingly depressed with each day.

Recently at another MPF Community Training sponsored by a Regional Inclusive Community Coalition, James appeared to be a new man! He said that after MPF opened his eyes to self-determination, he sought support in new ways and persisted in his quest for freedom. With the help of an independent facilitator recommended by MPF, James was able to get his person-centered planning on track with his wants and needs and therefore enabled others to see that his goal of having his own place was certainly within reach. Three months ago, James moved into his own home and says, “Thanks to the support I received from MPF, my life is good!”

Today James serves as the RICC Coordinator and is expanding his local leadership in enhancing demand for self-determination for others.
Leadership Training Opportunity

The Arc Michigan is pleased to announce an intensive leadership training program for adults with developmental disabilities and parents of young children with developmental disabilities. Leaders in Policy Advocacy, is a grant project funded by the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council and administered by The Arc Michigan. This project will support participants to develop their leadership skills and learn about the disability history, inclusive education, assistive technology, self-determination, systems change, access to employment, housing and recreation and more!

Leaders in Policy Advocacy training requires a commitment to attend some overnight sessions. There is no charge for the program, which will begin this summer in the Lansing area. The training will eventually be offered across the state. To apply or seek more information, contact Salli Christenson at 800-292-7851, x130 or salli.c@arcmi.org.