

# GET A LIFE !!!

## A Consumer Handbook for Self-Determination

The information in this booklet is to explain a little more about the option of self-determination and to help you decide if this option is right for you.

### **Self-Determination** is:

**Freedom** to plan the life you want and to have the supports that you need

**Support** to arrange the resources and people to help you live in and be a part of your community

**Authority** to control a set amount of money in order to purchase those services and supports that you need

**Responsibility** to be an active member of your community, and in using public funds wisely for getting what you need

The first thing you must do is to find out a lot more about what this means. Read **all** the information you have been given, question the people you work with at CMH, and take a look at the forms and paperwork that comes with the choice to use the self-determination model.

# WHAT WE BELIEVE

## Our Philosophy about self-determination

We believe that people with disabilities or mental illness should have the freedom to live the life they choose. We believe that good planning helps create options that can help you meet your needs and realize some of your dreams. We believe that it takes a little work and some common sense to support you in achieving those dreams and goals. We believe that people with disabilities and mental illness should have control over their resources. And we believe that people should be responsible for their decisions. We call this self-determination.

During the planning process you will be involved in at your CMH, the people you want to help you can create a budget for the services that will be provided. This planning process and budget may include some new options that you hadn't thought about before. Your budget shows how the supports you want and need will be paid for. It may include things like where you work and want to live, where you want to spend your free time, and what you do to be an active member of your community. Services and supports included in your budget must be Medicaid approved. It is important that the budget consider available individual and family resources as well as community resources before public Mental Health resources can be used.

You will have control over the individual budget that you create during the person-centered planning process. This means that you can choose what services will meet your needs, and who will provide those services. You can choose the people you want to work with you, and if you are not satisfied with them, you can choose other people.

# THE PAPERWORK JUNGLE

The hardest part in using self-determination is the hassle of paperwork. It is absolutely necessary that you organize and keep track of the paperwork that is involved. It is the KEY to being successful with the self-determination option.

Here is a summary of the forms you will need to know about

1. Self-determination agreement
2. Purchase of Services agreement
3. Self-determination employee and staff guidelines
4. Fiscal Representative Agreement
5. etc.....

## **Paperwork tips**

- keep all your paperwork organized in a folder or binder
- ASK the people at CMH to help you understand all the forms if you have questions. Know what all the forms are used for.
- Make sure you do the paperwork as it is required. Don't save the paperwork to do later.
- Keep accurate records. Always keep a copy of all paperwork for yourself, and don't depend on others to provide you with a copy.

**Remember**, you are the one responsible to show how you have used public funds if you are asked by the county or stat

# FINDING PEOPLE TO WORK FOR YOU

Having the right people to help you is **CRUCIAL** to the success of your plan. There are a few things you should know about hiring staff.

The CMH probably has staff that are trained that you could choose from, or your CMH could tell you what other places have staff that provide the kind of services you need and who they might recommend.

You should consider your circle of 'natural supports'. There may be family, friends or neighbors that are already familiar with you that could be great resources.

The local college or school may have people qualified and interested in helping you. Your church or other community organizations could also provide resources for you. Or you might just place an ad in your local newspaper for staff to help you.

However you decide to hire your staff, you should interview them for the job they will be performing, just like any other 'employer'. The people at your CMH can help you come up with a list of questions to ask (and **not** to ask) during this interview. You should feel comfortable with them, and be confident that they have what it takes to do the job that you need them to do. You should like the person and have a good first impression of them. You need to feel that you could be a partner with them and could establish a good working relationship.

It is important never to decide to hire someone 'on the spot'. Take the time to think about it. If there is a connection between you and you want to hire them right away, waiting a day or two will only strengthen this feeling and boost your confidence, or you may have further questions you need to ask. It is perfectly OK if you decide not to hire someone you interview. Not everyone will be right for you. Whoever you hire, they will need to go through some basic training and meet certain basic qualifications. They must also pass a criminal background check. Your CMH or other agency you work with will help you make sure these requirements are met. The people you choose will be formally hired as an employee of the CMH or other agency you choose, and may work only with you, or may also work with other consumers.

# FINDING PEOPLE TO WORK FOR YOU

## Creating a job description

You will need to write specific job duties and guidelines for the people who will be working for you. They must agree to and follow any home rules you have.

It is recommended that this information be as specific as possible. It should spell out the expectations and goals for what you want from your staff. You should highlight the activities and things that are fundamentally important to you.

There should be no confusion or question about what you expect from your staff. The more specific you can make these guidelines for staff, the easier they will be to follow and thus more likely you will get what you expect.

You will need to go over these job descriptions and guidelines with staff. You will need to provide the people who work for you with an orientation to you, your home, your schedule, etc.

**DO NOT ASSUME** anything. The people who work for you may not share the same values and philosophy that you have. Openly discuss what you are trying to achieve. Be clear with them about what you expect, the importance of being reliable and prompt, whether they take a break for meals or eat with you, etc.

# WHAT ABOUT THE MONEY ?

## WHO HANDLES THE MONEY ?

You need to decide who will be the main person to handle the funds that are included in your budget. There are a lot of legal issues about employing people that you will need someone to take care of, like who will make sure that taxes are paid, IRS forms are complete, worker's compensation and disability is addressed, etc.

YOU will also need to decide things like: How much your staff will be paid, and how and what they will submit to get paid, and how often. Either your CMH will have a person to do this, or they can suggest someone, or you may recruit and hire your own 'fiscal intermediary'. Keep in mind that whoever you decide to handle the 'money stuff' will need to be familiar with employment laws and regulations. They will also most likely charge a fee to provide these services, which needs to come out of your budget.

When you are deciding who will handle this important job for you, here are some questions to ask yourself:

Do I think this person cares about me and my plan?

Are they willing to take the time to explain things to me in ways that I can understand? Will they be available when I need them and are they OK with me asking questions?

You should feel that this person will be accountable to you and treats you with respect

# KEEPING TRACK OF THINGS

## How's It Going? (monitoring your plan and budget)

Remember, you have already decided how much, how often and what your staff need to do to get paid. It is ESSENTIAL that you also keep an accurate record of who worked, when, and for how long. A daily planner, calendar or schedule that you keep handy is a great way to keep track of staff work schedules as well as any changes that occur (like staff illness, changes in your plans, etc.).

Although your fiscal representative will also provide you with monthly summaries of your budget status, you also need to keep track of your monthly expenses. Be careful never to go over your monthly allotment, and make sure that you count the fees that your fiscal representative will charge for their service. You must also make sure that any adjustments you make in your budget are within the guidelines and consistent with your outcomes. You must also inform your CMH worker of any changes that are made.

You should think about whether or not you want to have regular 'staff meetings' with all of the people who work for you, so everyone is working together. Your friends, family or CMH person could help you with this task. You should keep a place for 'notes' to yourself about what you want to discuss with the people who work for you. Any little issue that is bothering you should be discussed openly before it becomes a big deal.

# SELF-DETERMINATION AT A GLANCE

- Discuss your philosophy and goals with the people you work with at CMH
- Request and read (and reread) all of the information that CMH has about self-determination
- Know what your rights and responsibilities are when you choose self-determination
- Decide if this option is right for you
- Sort and organize your paperwork and duties ahead of you
- Develop and plan and budget with the people and CMH and whoever else you want to be a part of your life
- Decide who will be your fiscal representative
- Decide who will provide the supports you need. Recruit, interview and hire the staff that you want
- Finalize all arrangements and agree on a starting date for your plan
- Keep track of how your budget is being followed
- Enjoy the life you have chosen in pursuit of your dreams!

## Important things to Remember

1. Planning must occur within the funds available for support
2. CMH funds must be used according to the Michigan Department of Community Health and Medicaid guidelines
3. Anyone who provides supports must meet some basic qualifications
4. Natural is better
5. You have authority over the funds available for your supports
6. Everyone involved in planning has a responsibility to use and manage funds wisely
7. Things Change

# ALL ABOUT SELF DETERMINATION

FREEDOM

AUTHORITY

RESPONSIBILITY

SUPPORT

For more information: See your case  
manager/supports coordinator

Or Call:

Northpointe Customer Services

1-800-750-0522 Or

NorthCare Member Services 225-7254