

DDS SELF DETERMINATION NEWSLETTER

Volume I

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Self Determination and Self-Direction *What's the Difference?*

Self Determination is for Everyone!

Promoting Self Determination should be the focus for all staff

The DDS Mission Statement has withstood the test of time and provides a solid foundation for all that we do. Connecticut DDS Self Determination Principles complement the mission and guide us as we continue to put the ideals of the mission into action.

Our mission challenges us to work together with the people we serve, their families, networks, support providers, and others to help people with intellectual disabilities to make choices, be treated with dignity and respect, develop relationships, experience community membership, and to enhance and use their skills and talents. **The Self Determination Principles further challenge us to focus beyond what is, to what could be.**

As we recognize people's inherent right to dream about their futures and to make decisions about their lives, we are challenged to help them create new kinds of living arrangements, new types of work opportunities, new configurations of personal assistance, and new ways to manage the people and resources that support them. Opportunities for developing a more self-determined lifestyle can be created through all types of DDS programs services and supports.

Self-directed supports and services provides individuals with an opportunity to hire and manage their own employees. Being an employer is a lot of responsibility. However, this responsibility (and greater control and authority) provides tremendous opportunity to create a desired lifestyle!

SELF DETERMINATION means taking personal action that leads to the creation of a desired lifestyle where one has greater freedom, control and authority over one's life. It also means getting the support one needs to live a full life and taking responsibility for personal decisions and actions.

SELF-DIRECTION occurs when an individual uses funds to hire and manage employees to provide specific services. Self-directed services provide greater opportunities for choice and control, but also requires increased responsibilities.

Everyone can live a self-determined lifestyle. Some individuals will achieve this through the use of self-directed services, others can become more self-determined over time through the use of more traditional types of services and supports.

What does Self Determination mean to you?

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Creating A Good Life Through Self Determination



Aida Fuentes lives a self-determined life when she gets to do things that she loves to do!

I love my life and everything I do! Wow, what a wonderful statement to make. If you ask Aida how she got to do the things she loves to do she will tell you it is because she knows what she wants and how to get it. She doesn't let anyone push her around and she knows how to speak up for herself. She never gives up.

Aida has a job she likes with real responsibility, people around her who listen to her, respect her, and support her. Aida works for the DDS Willimantic office as a receptionist for the front desk. She welcomes people, has them sign in, and assists them in connecting with the person they have come to visit.

Aida got involved in a self advocacy group many years ago and has been the Secretary and is now treasurer. She is very serious about her responsibility taking care of the group's money. She got some training through the Speaker's Bureau so that she could talk to groups and help others learn about their rights and how to get what they want.

She fought for years to have the department's name changed and is very proud that something so important that she has wanted for so long has really come true.

Aida started volunteering several years ago and she knows that by giving to others she not only makes a difference in their lives but feels she has a fuller life herself. Aida says, "Volunteering makes me feel good!" Aida has volunteered for The Willimantic Street Fest, Victory Days Home Tour, The Elks, Hurricane Katrina, People Meeting People and Special Olympics.

In her volunteering, she has helped the Willimantic Third Street Fest by setting up and taking down tables and making sure people in the beer tent have been checked for proper IDs. She has helped the Elks with The Haunted House during the Halloween season. Aida supported Hurricane Katrina relief by collecting cans and food to be shipped to the victims of the hurricane. She helps the People Meeting People self advocacy group by selling candy and she helped out the Special Olympics by collecting money for food. In the future, Aida is going to continue to do volunteering of all kinds.

Aida is successful with her work but what makes a difference in her life is being able to help other people. Volunteering is a great way to meet people and make friends. If you haven't volunteered, you might want to give it a try. It just might make you feel really good!

Aida was interviewed by Varian Salters
DDS Self Advocate Coordinator

You Can't Be Self Determined Without Self Advocacy

Everyone wants to have a great life. To make that life happen it takes planning and being a good self advocate. If you receive supports from DDS, you have the right to develop your own Individual Plan so that what you want in your life can happen.

Advocating for yourself makes a difference in your everyday life. Learning how to speak up and speak out for yourself will help you make things happen like: owning your own home, having a serious relationship – including marriage, and having a real job for real pay. Understanding your human and civil rights helps you become a stronger and more informed person to speak up for yourself.

Your Individual Plan provides you with a way to speak up for yourself. You need to make sure your Individual Plan represents who you really are and what you want in your life. Make sure you include what you like and dislike, what you enjoy, what areas you need support in, what goals you want to accomplish, who will help you with your plan, and who will help you make your dreams come true. All this is possible if you have the right people around you and they support you in everything that is important to you.

I have found it very important to know how to advocate for myself. In doing this, I have learned to use the following 10 Steps to Being An Effective Self Advocate:

1. **Believe in Yourself**
2. **Realize you have Rights**
3. **Discuss your Concerns**
4. **Get the Facts and Put Them in Writing**
5. **Use the Chain of Command**
6. **Know your Appeal Rights**
7. **Be Assertive and Persistent**
8. **Use Good Communication Skills**
9. **Ask for Help**
10. **Follow-Up**

To speak up and speak out for yourself, you should learn the 10 steps to help make a difference in your life.

To lead a successful life you need to be a good Self Advocate and plan ahead for the life you want to live. Make a difference in your life and Advocate for Yourself. **Take control of your life and make life happen!**

Written By Jossie Torres, DDS Self Advocate Coordinator

Community Connections



Making connections in your community is a great way to meet people, make meaningful and lasting relationships and to contribute to others. Meet Frank, a young man who lives on his own and works full time in Clinton. Frank is a long time and active member of the Clinton Fire Department where he uses his community connections to live a full life.

Frank is an active and involved member of the Clinton Community. As a member of the local fire department Frank has many contacts with people from all walks of life. Frank has numerous friends as a volunteer. He spends time with them on a regular basis and spends time giving back to his community.

The Clinton Fire Department is a focal point for the Town of Clinton. Not only do they keep people safe and protect them from fires they are also involved in numerous charitable activities that benefit the community in many other ways.

Frank is involved in every aspect of life with the firehouse. It serves as his social center, a place where he spends time with his friends who all share common interests and a common bond to be a vital and integral part of Clinton town life. He is fully included in social activities such as clam bakes, block parties, or just hanging with the guys..

Frank's connection with the fire department goes beyond providing Frank with a social circle and friendships. It also allows him to give back to his community in meaningful ways. Events such as spaghetti fundraisers and car washes allow Frank to make contributions to the entire town. By being involved in these activities, Frank gets to meet new people while doing good work for the people of Clinton.

Frank has a valued and important role in his town.

Here are some ideas on how to make community connections:

- **At Work** – Get to know your co-workers. By working at the same place, you've already got a lot in common. Do you have regular customers that you can get to know?
- **At Church** – Do you attend regular services? Get to know the people in your church. Volunteer to help out or join a committee.
- **At Local Businesses** – Do you shop at the same stores on a regular basis or go for a cup of coffee at the same place everyday? Who do you see there? Get to know them. Find out what you have in common.
- **In Local Civic Groups** – Think about how you can give back to your community. Do you have a passion in your life; an interest that you want to get more involved in? Find a group that has the same interest and join. Offer to help or volunteer in group activities.

Just In Time Self-Direction News

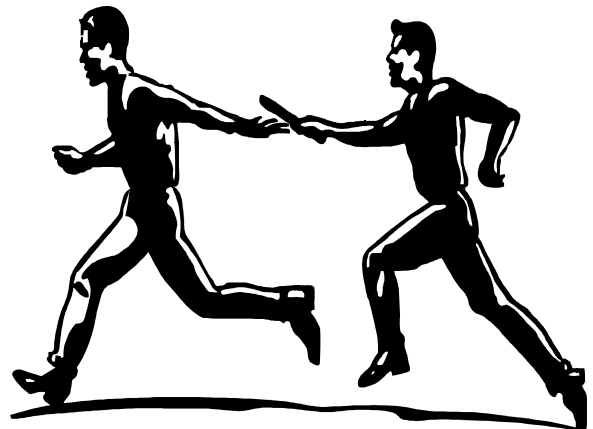
Many individuals and families are choosing self-direction for some or all of their supports. When an individual or family chooses to self direct their services (hire and manage their own staff) they are required to review and sign the Agreement for Self Directed Supports, which is located on the J Drive under case manager/table of contents and on the DDS website under self determination/publications. This agreement outlines the responsibilities of the employer under self-direction. The agreement is also used to identify any responsibilities where the employer will need assistance. If assistance is needed, it is required to be included in the Individual Plan as a support.

Fiscal Intermediaries will make a site visit for new employers only after they have received an authorized budget and signed Agreement for Self Directed Services. For a fiscal intermediary assignment call your FI liaison. (Cres Secchiaroli South Region 203-294-5087, Jeanne Dumphy North Region 860-263-2527, Pat Dillon West Region 203-805-7431). If the individual or family hires his or her own staff and chooses a Fiscal Intermediary let your FI liaison know which FI they have chosen. A fiscal intermediary change has to be reviewed by your FI liaison prior to making the change.

Any employer who wants to hire an employee with a criminal has to sign an acknowledgement, which indicates they have reviewed the conviction record and still want to hire this employee. The Fiscal Intermediary is required to obtain this acknowledgement and have it on file prior to the person's employment.

These changes will include a review of the background check with the employer by a Department administrator. Look for these changes to be issued in May of 2008.

The Department is in the process of finalizing changes to the prior approval process. These changes will include a new standard allowance, which means fewer items will need prior approval, and there will be a greater regional role in the decision making process. Look for these changes at regional training sessions in April and May.



NEWS FLASH!

Individual Service Agreements are now called the Agreement for Self Directed Supports.

If a consumer says that assistance is needed to follow and implement this agreement, the Individual Plan must document how these supports will be provided.

Opinion Page– Featured Guest

Written by Jennifer Carroll, parent

My name is Jennifer Carroll. My husband and I have four children. Our son, Jamie, has multiple disabilities and receive services from DDS. When we think about Jamie's future, in fact, the future of all of our children, our dream for them is to lead a self-determined life. Today Jamie is 13 years old and, because of his age, we must play a significant role in making decisions that affect his life. Through the supports and services provided to Jamie and our family by DDS, we have been able to begin to teach Jamie about self-determination and involve him in making decisions. Jamie has significant cognitive limitations, is non-verbal and needs support for most of the activities of day-to-day living. He is able express his opinion and make choices using an augmentative communication device at home and at school. He knows how to use his device to tell us what he wants and needs. He knows who the people in his support system are and how to



involve others in situations where he needs help. He certainly has his favorites! Jamie has a long way to go, and may never be able to live independently. He will always require some level of support. That is why we are thankful to DDS for the flexibility that comes with self-direction. It is important that Jamie continue to be part of the decision-making progress. Jamie's freedom of choice as he continues to work toward achieving his dreams and his active participation in the process will always be our priority. The support of his family and his community will enrich his life and provide him with many choices. Jamie loves sports and plays in a recreational soccer league that is offered in our community. Through that experience he is learning more about being an active member of the community. Jamie is lucky to have a circle of friends who include him and understand that his limitations do not define him. He is happy, he is accepted and he is working to become more independent every day.

In summary, the things that help Jamie to become more self-determined are:

- Access to augmentative communication technology
- Flexible supports and services
- Choices provided by family members and support staff
- Listening to and building upon preferences and interests
- Inclusive community life experiences
- Circle of family, friends and paid professionals who know and care about him!

Exemplary Self Determination Practices

All individuals served by the department will:

Attitudes and Values

- Understand and can effectively apply the DDS Mission and the Self Determination Principles to their daily lives

Individual Planning & Person-Centered Services

- Achieve desired outcomes through effective Individual Planning & Person-Centered Services

Freedom

Choice, Informed Decision-Making, Reasonable Risks)

- Have sufficient opportunities to make choices through exploration of lifestyle possibilities
- Have sufficient supports needed to make informed decisions
- Have sufficient supports needed to take reasonable risks, as desired

Authority

(Self Advocacy, Control, Fiscal Conservatism)

- Are able to Self Advocate for themselves and can practice self advocacy to the greatest degree possible
 - Are given the opportunity to control their resources to the greatest degree possible
 - Use the resources provided to them in a fiscally conservative and responsible manner

Support

(Roles & Responsibilities, Relationships, Reciprocal Community Contributions)

- Are able to identify the roles & responsibilities required to attain and sustain a desired lifestyle
- Are able to develop and maintain the relationships required to attain and sustain a desired lifestyle
 - Are able to benefit from their local community through reciprocal contributions

Responsibility

(Planning & Goal Setting, Problem-Solving, Self Esteem)

- Are actively involved in planning & setting individual goals for themselves
- Are actively involved in problem solving barriers that prevent attainment of a desired lifestyle
- Have opportunities to increase self-esteem through activities that demonstrate their individual strengths

UPCOMING EVENTS



MARCH 8, 2008
 is
**INTERNATIONAL
 WOMEN'S DAY**
 Women
 Celebrate
 Yourself!

We hope you enjoyed this first issue of the DDS Self Determination newsletter. We'd love to hear what you would like to read and learn about in future editions of this newsletter. We plan on having the following feature articles in each newsletter:

- Theme front page article. (*Our next theme will be "Employment and Self Determination")
- Self Determination Success Story
- Self Advocacy Article
- Community Connections Article
- Self-Direction Updates
- Opinion Column, Letter to the Editor, or Question and Answer Column
- Other Self-Determination Items and Event Updates

Please join us in creating future editions. Send any of the regional Self Determination Directors your ideas for articles, or contact Robin Wood at 203-806-8770!

The DDS Self Determination Newsletter Editors

2008 Calendar *Current Schedule of Self Determination Events*

For information & directions contact your regional Self Determination Director

Date	Time	Location	Presentation Title	Audience
3/5/08	6:00 – 7:30	Danbury DDS	Portability Public	IL Consumers/Staff
3/6/08	5:30 – 8:00	Danbury DDS	Portability	Family Forum
3/10/08	9:00 – 11:30	Waterbury DDS	Portability Leadership Forum	Private Providers
3/12/08	1:30 – 5:30	Stratford DDS	Self Advocacy	Family Forum
3/13/08	4:30 – 6:30	Waterbury DDS	Portability Public	IL Consumers/Staff
3/19/08	4:30 – 6:30	Stratford	Portability Public	IL Consumers/Staff
3/26/08	3:30 – 5:00	STS Pavilion	Self Advocacy	Consumers
3/31/08	1:00 – 4:00	Norwalk DDS	Portability	Family Forum
4/3/08	5:30 – 8:00	Cheshire DDS	Self Advocacy	Family Forum