

OPPI Section Name: Autonomy, Choice, and Control

Overarching Principle: *Choice and control for people with disabilities are basic human rights. All people with disabilities should have control over all aspects of their lives, including which services they use, who works for them, where and with whom they live, how they spend their days, who they love, and with whom they spend their time.*

Why should organizations focus on this? When organizations work to ensure that people have control over every aspect of their lives, they respect the inherent rights of people with disabilities. Organizations that promote choice, control, and autonomy are also likely to adhere to policies and regulations that mandate that people control their services, days, relationships, goals, and lives.

Indicators in the Assessment <i>Our organization ensures and/or works to promote that...</i>	What the research says
Support and services focus on a person’s interests, goals, choices, and abilities.	A 2018 study (Friedman, 2018) found that states with higher rates of goals and funding allocated to participant-directed services supported more people to have complete control over their services and supports.
Decision-making about goals and major and minor life decisions rests primarily with the person.	When people with disabilities have the chance to participate in decision-making, including decisions about their education, work, career, free time, relationships, services, and their personal lives in general, they have a higher quality of life, are more able to realize their rights, and have stronger confidence in themselves (Friedman, 2018).
People with disabilities develop, manage, and are in charge of their service plans and budgets.	A critical review of systems practices identified strategies such as providing direct payments to people with disabilities (instead of agencies), individualized budgeting models, and more comprehensive aging supports that have led to greater levels of autonomy and life satisfaction among people with disabilities (Fleming et al., 2019) Other studies (Friedman, 2017) suggest that organizations structured for people with disabilities to lead decisions about what impacts them the most promote choice and control.
People with disabilities live where they want, in a home or apartment	States that utilize Home and Community Based support (instead of congregate and institutional

<p>they choose and control, on their own or with others they select.</p>	<p>services) more frequently reported higher rates of choice and control for people with disabilities (Houseworth et al., 2018).</p>
<p>People’s behavior is recognized as a way of communicating. We promote or use only positive approaches that are responsive to the needs of the person rather than focused on controlling their behaviors.</p>	<p>DSPs must care about their work with people with disabilities to effectively promote their autonomy and help them actualize their choices (Perner-Arrey & Copeland, 2014). Many positive preventative approaches, such as social problem-solving (Anderson & Kazantzis, 2012), social-communication interventions (Ingersoll, 2009), and interventions focused on improving DSPs attitudes (Hanzen et al., 2020), have helped people with disabilities have more positive outcomes, including increased communication, less distress, and being more involved in their communities.</p>
<p>People with disabilities make choices, even difficult ones.</p>	<p>Research shows that for many people with disabilities, the process of establishing choice and control in their lives is ongoing (Curryer, 2018; Tracy, 2015). It is essential for agencies to not only ensure that people have choice and control over decisions that impact their lives but that they offer ongoing support to make different and more choices over time.</p>
<p>People have control over the type, degree, and frequency of the services they receive so that people have access to the support they want and need but do not receive unwanted or too much support.</p>	<p>With greater command over the resources available to them, people with disabilities can exercise increased choice and control over the flexibility, timing, and content of the support they receive, as well as have more say in who delivers the different elements of their support (Glendinning, 2008).</p>

Where to Start

1. Make sure that employees working with or for people with disabilities learn how each person communicates to remove barriers to choice by avoiding making decisions for people and ensuring respect for the choices people make.
2. Challenge your and others’ assumptions about peoples’ capacity to make decisions for themselves and the responsibility of your agency to keep people safe. Often, we think that we have more control over a person’s life than we should. Explore the dignity of risk and rights people must control in their lives.
3. Adopt practices and train people in your organization on strategies like supported decision-making and informed decision-making so that people have the skills they need to support people in controlling their lives.