

Self Direction Education Project's Guiding Principles

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Self-determination is based on a set of universal human principles.

These principles are:

- **Freedom** to decide how to live one's life in a manner that maximizes the capability to reach one's goals and dreams,
- **Authority** to control the dollars that are available to purchase services and supports that enhance freedom to achieve goals,
- **Support** needed to make informed decisions about services and supports needed to achieve the goals,
- **Responsibility** for using dollars wisely, decisions that are made regarding goals and how to achieve them, and the people who provide support,
- **Participation** of people with mental illnesses in the design and implementation of programs supporting people to reach goals.

Self-direction is a term derived from self-determination philosophy that operationalizes the principles of self-determination around four general categories:

- **Person-centered planning:** A planning process directed by the individual, intended to identify the strengths, capacities, preferences, needs and desired outcomes,
- **Individual budgeting:** The total funding amount for service and support under the control of the service recipient and a process of allocating the budget dollars across the services and supports necessary to achieve the recovery goals as determined in the person-centered plan.
- **Self-direct supports:** A system of functions that assist consumers to develop, implement and manage services and supports including:
 - Information on self-direction principles and practice,
 - Conflict-free assistance with person-centered planning; developing and managing the individuals budget; identifying and securing necessary goods and services; recruiting and managing support workers; creating emergency back- up plans; training participants and support workers; and understanding billing and documentation,
 - Performance of payroll responsibilities, purchasing of goods and services, tracking and monitoring of expenses, and identifying over and under expenditures,
- **Quality management:** A process that builds quality into the design of the program, including processes for discovering problems and opportunities for improvement, remediation of problems and program improvement.

As a result of SAMHSA's meetings held in April of 2003 and March of 2004, the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) developed the following recommendations for the Self-Direction Education Project:

- *A paradigm shift* is needed at system, collaborative and individual levels,
- *Focused Technical Assistance and Training* is needed for States, providers, consumers and other system stakeholders,
- *Need to share models* including those from other disability systems as well as practices, tools, legislation and regulations,
- *Learn from and leverage* existing state/local self-determination models,
- *Bedrock principles* should include self-directed recovery, real choice in service delivery, reliance on peer and community-based approaches, and focus on healing the whole person rather than treating a disease,
- *Individual and cooperative market-based mechanisms* should be explored, such as individual direction of service dollars, buying cooperatives, etc.,
- A focus should be on *peer/community-based approaches* to service delivery,
- *Tailored approaches* are needed to meet the needs of the mental health and substance abuse systems and the needs of different populations,
- *Greater participation of consumers and their families, inclusion persons of color*, is needed in policy development, program and research design, and service delivery and evaluation,
- *Shifts in Federal, State and local funding mechanisms* are required to support self-determination, and greater collaboration with Federal and State agencies and other organizations to accomplish this,
- *Train* people in mental health recovery in skills necessary to engage in shared decision-making and self-directed mental health care,
- Implementation should occur *in conjunction* with Federal and State agencies and other organizations,
- *Develop educational programs* to empower consumers and family members to lead self-directed lives,
- *Expanded training and capacity building* for consumers, their families and providers are needed, including increased numbers of certified peer specialists.

In addition to the above, the Final Report of the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, "Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America," recommended expansion of models of "self-directed services and supports for people with mental illnesses" (p.40).