My Home My Choice

Developing new responses to the
housing needs of people with
intellectual disabilities

Project Goals

- Develop supported living arrangements that maximize individual choice, control and inclusion
- Develop and share knowledge, tools and resources to enable community service providers to transform their organizations
- Explore and develop new funding and financing partnerships and arrangements
- Develop innovative approaches to support and demonstrate to the broader community how social and economic inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities can be advanced via community commitment and partnership
- Mobilize and utilize existing and new housing development in the community, as well as financial and social capital to meet the overall aim of inclusion.

Project Objectives

The overall purpose of this project

- To increase the capacity of community based residential service providers to assist adults with intellectual disabilities and more complex needs to move from group home arrangements to supported living in the community.

- Repurpose / Close the Back Door

Project Objectives

- Specific objectives include:
  - To enable adults with intellectual disabilities who have significant needs to move from group home arrangements to supported living in the community.
  - To develop the leadership and organizational capacities of local service providing agencies of group homes to successfully transition from group home provision to enabling supported living in the community.
  - To increase knowledge, leadership and commitment of service providing agencies more generally to adopt philosophy, policy, financing, organizational development, human resources, labour contracting, housing and community development approaches which enable a shift in service provision from group homes to supported living in the community.
  - To identify and quantify the key factors that must be addressed in agency transformation (from delivery of traditional residential services i.e. group home living to capacity to support individuals in a more individualized manner).

Project Outcomes

- Six community agencies (in British Columbia, Ontario (2), Nova Scotia (2) and New Brunswick) to transition some/all of their services from group home provision to supported living in the community for adults with intellectual disabilities who have more challenging and complex needs;

- Establishment of necessary financial and community partnerships;

- Twenty to twenty-five (20-25) adults in a planning process to move from group home arrangements to supported living, with at least some of those adults having actually made the transition (3-4 adults per community agency); Repurpose facility

- Identification of 'readiness criteria' for community agencies to make the transition, and identification of key factors, conditions and stages in making the transition in service provision;

Project Outcomes

- Community Service Provider Leadership Forums in each of the 4 provinces with other community service providers

- Leadership development information tools, resources and curricula for broad dissemination to disability organizations, service providers and governments about the transformation process, and required enabling organizational and community conditions;

- Literature review and review of best practices in service transformation.

- Identification of current options funded by provincial/territorial governments for people with intellectual disabilities, rates of utilization and waiting lists – where this information is available.

- Dissemination of project resources online – through website, YouTube, and other social media.

Year 1 – Outcomes to Date

- Project partners selected and confirmed
- National meeting held in July 2013
- Key success indicators identified for each agency
- Site visits made to local agencies / conference calls
- Development of MOU for each agency
- Development of preliminary workplan / direction for each agency
- Attendance at System Transformation workshop (Kendricks – AACL conference)
- Research report and literature review of best practices completed
- Initial development of documents that identify 1) the conditions that position an agency for effective transformation, and 2) key steps or stages in the process of transformation

Year 2

- MOUs signed / Funds provided to each agency
- Refinement of workplans and success indicators
- Begin person centred planning process and development of individualized plans
- Establishment of necessary community advisory committees
- Hosting of community leadership forums
- Identification of necessary funding / reallocation of funds to enable transition to more individualized options
- Affirmation of non replacement and repurposing of facility

Key learnings

- Start by working with a small number of people, engage fulsome planning for life in community and a home of their own – commit not to backfill vacancies - close the facility.

- One person at a time / start from scratch

- Individual work with people informs, energizes and drives the organizational change process

- Start with people who will pose a challenge – in two ways: people with more significant needs for support – and people who want something very different

Sources of / reasons for transformation

- Technical innovation vs values based transformation
- Gap between service provided and needs and desires of people using them
- Agency systems, structures and services become rigid and entrenched
- Families wanting something different
- Witnessing benefits and greater possibilities
- Cost
- Crisis
- Change mandated at systems level

Key factors and strategies

- Culture change and a shift in service philosophy, common values base
    - Paradigm shift...
    - Involves: changing dynamics of power and control; new staff roles and responsibilities, new domains of individual decision making (finances, leases, hiring and mgmt. of staff); new needs for 'horizontal' communication and management; increased community relationships
    - Shift is from programs-driven, menu driven approach to personalized approaches to supporting people;
    - Cultivating a common commitment based on values of individualization, maximization of self-determination and increased power and control
    - Needs a broad base of support throughout the organization
    - Mission, vision, values statements – at least needs to be increasingly visible

Key factors and strategies

- Planning with 'one person at a time' as the instrument for organizational transformation
  - Rigorous, authentic planning for a life in community, rather than a factor of transformation;
  - Simultaneously working on change at individual level, and harnessing the impact of that to drive organizational change;
  - Needs to be a process of the agency opening itself to people's larger visions and aims
  - Beginning with people more challenging

Key factors and strategies

Planning with 'one person at a time' as the instrument for organizational transformation (cont'd)

"When we first began to talk to people about what they want, they were often referring to program language, like 'supportive living', 'host family', and things like that. There was some probing necessary to ask the real questions like, 'What neighbourhood do you want to live in? What are your connections in that neighbourhood?' When asking these real questions, we got real answers from people'.

"People in existing group homes and their families, began to realize that other things were possible. People began to realize that the people in the group homes didn't have to be 'ready.' Perhaps they didn't have to know how to cook, take transit, etc. There had been such a focus on readiness."

Key factors and strategies

- Key agency decisions to ensure transformational change and expansion of personalized options
  - To assure true change as opposed to 'a different program'
  - 1. Halt expansion of existing models – no new settings
  - 2. Planning for life in community with all new people
  - 3. Don't backfill vacancies – and close/sell/repurpose the facility;
  - Phased replacement of existing programs with individualized arrangements

"Agreeing not to backfill was the most important factor early on. Only by agreeing not to backfill did we begin to transform."

Key factors and strategies

- Focus on relationship and network development
    - Inclusion is not as much a reflection of 'place' as it is of relationships;
    - New orientation toward individual network development, maximization of use of generic community resources and natural supports – rather than agency being 'provider of all things'
    - Potential for isolation a major concern. Kendrick: "possible to disappoint people one person at a time"
    - Encouraging hospitality - highlighting the fact that the person's home is their own:"

Key factors and strategies

- Critical reflection and evaluation
    - Create space for critical reflection
    - External evaluation
    - Creates a 'learning organization' open to growth and development
    - Bringing in innovation and infusing agency with new ideas
    - Opportunities need to be made routine and commonplace
    - Regular evaluation and reflection on outcomes – including by service users

    "By providing regular opportunities for reflection we acknowledged that 'becoming person-centered' was not an end point that we would ever reach."

Key factors and strategies

- Opportunities for training and education
  - Being part of a learning community / community of practice
  - Sounding board for challenges, troubleshooting problems
  - Beyond 'training' to staff engagement and development
  - Not just staff: Board, service users, families
  - Can serve to build excitement, place for discussion of fears/anxieties, generate shared values, learn about innovative new ideas
  - Immersive learning experiences – exchanges between organizations

"There is a consciousness raising value in learning from good examples. People can be challenged by connecting to a powerful example of something being done that they have never seen before and may have never understood to be possible. This gives it authenticity and feasibility."

Key factors and strategies

- Values-based leadership development
  - Leadership development based on values of….(inclusion, self-determination, individualization, increased power and control)
  - Training on/accountability to mission, vision, goals
  - Succession planning – ground not well prepared for next generation of leadership: "effective leadership development needs real world leadership challenges,"
  - Deep and shared ownership of the 'reasons why' for transformation – not just at the level of 'slogans'
  - Dialogue and rigorous examination of concept of home

Key factors and strategies

- Engagement with policy makers and funders
  - Enroll policy makers in the challenge and at an individual level
  - Build excitement and support for the direction
  - Approach with 90% of the problem worked out
  - Reputation for cost-effectiveness and quality
  - Ongoing dialogue, and inviting policy makers/ funders / regulators to take part in events, trainings, learning opportunities that can help share the vision

Key factors and strategies

- Sustaining progress
  - Is a continual process needing refinement, refreshment, reflection and renewal;
  - Outcomes need to be evaluated – don't assume people's needs are being met, that needs haven't changed,
  - Don't assume that process is achieving the change we were looking for - needs to be measured
  - Accountable to the mission and goals

Challenges faced

- 'Choices,' family expectations and influence
- Family resistance and fear of change
- Staffing challenges
- Potential for greater isolation
- Resurgence of segregated 'alternatives'
- Funding and flexibility
- Continuum or stages thinking

Challenges faced

- Dealing with existing assets;
  - Ownership/liens
  - Transfer equity to affordable housing
- Organizational structures
  - Separate housing corporation as vehicle for investment;
  - Freedom from stipulations and regulations, waiting lists
- 'Alternatives' to group homes
  - Not one model, but many different situations ranging from leasing, condo, home ownership
  - Home sharing, 'Good neighbours' schemes, housing cooperatives
  - Needs to be rooted in principles of personalization, starting from scratch and 'one person at a time' – "the magic number is one…"

  "Homesharing, done well can work for some people. Not always done well, and doesn't work for all people"

Conditions necessary for Agency Transformation

- Commitment to individualized person-directed planning on a 'one person at a time' basis;
- Process for cultivating common values and a shift in service philosophy within the organization;
- Broad ownership among board, executive, families, individuals and other key stakeholders (but do not wait until 'everyone is on board')
- Decision to plan with all new people for supported living in the community, and agreement not to backfill vacancies;
- Focus on facilitating relationship development and maximizing use of natural supports and generic community resources;
- Space for critical reflection and values based training and development;
- Connection to a community of practice;
- Creating or refining a process for evaluation of outcomes;
- Productive relationship with policy officials and funders;
- Leadership is engaged.

Key steps or stages in the process of transformation

- Invest in values-based education/training and leadership development – among staff, but also among board, families and individuals;
- Start with a small group of people who want something different. Beginning with some people who will pose a challenge to the agency is a good strategy for 'learning by doing';
- Use process of individually planning with people for a life in community as an instrument for informing the broader organizational changes needed;
- Halt expansion of existing 'models' and 'programs';
- Plan for a life in community with all new people seeking support;
- Commit not to fill vacancies as people move out of group homes, and commit to closure/sale/repurposing of the asset;
- Make a decision point for an organizational commitment to a new direction;

Key steps or stages in the process of transformation

- Create space for reflection on the process;
- Develop a method for evaluating individual outcomes;
- Continue to infuse the agency with innovative ideas, best practices and 'thought leadership';
- Provide opportunities for further staff engagement and leadership development;
- Give increased visibility to the values, principles, mission for the organization – initiate a process for adapting these if needed;
- Sustain progress by initiating methods for continual evaluation, reflection and refreshment and renewal;
- Celebrate successes/victories;

THANK YOU

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