ENGAGE...

A BRIEF LOOK AT COMMUNITY LIFE ENGAGEMENT

GUIDEPOST 3:
Use Social and Human Capital to Decrease Dependence on Paid Supports

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INTRODUCTION

Community Life Engagement refers to how people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) access and participate in their communities outside of employment as part of a meaningful day. (See *"What Is Community Life Engagement?"* in the box on page 3.) The Community Life Engagement team has been conducting research to identify the elements of high-quality Community Life Engagement (CLE) supports.

We have created a series of four Engage Briefs to examine the guideposts in detail.

Guidepost 1:
Individualize supports for each person.

Guidepost 2:
Promote community membership and contribution.

Guidepost 3:
Use human and social capital to decrease dependence on paid supports.

Guidepost 4:
Ensure that supports are outcome-oriented and regularly monitored.

In addition to further description of the guidepost, we present examples of how this guidepost is being implemented by service providers. These examples are drawn from expert interviews and from case studies of exemplary providers of CLE supports.

WHERE THIS INFORMATION CAME FROM

The information in this series of briefs came from two sources: expert interviews and case studies.

EXPERT INTERVIEWS

A series of 45- to 90-minute semi-structured telephone interviews with experts in the field of Community Life Engagement were conducted. Thirteen experts were chosen based on their level of expertise and diversity of perspectives. They included researchers, state and local policymakers, service provider administrators, self-advocates with IDD, and family members. Topics covered included the goals of Community Life Engagement, evidence of effective implementation of CLE, barriers encountered and strategies used, and the role of CLE as a support to other outcomes, including employment.

CASE STUDIES

Case studies of three service providers with a focus on high-quality Community Life Engagement supports were also conducted. The three service providers were selected from 38 initial nominees based on a number of factors, including number of individuals served, geographic location, quality of CLE services, and interest in participating in the research study. Across the three locations, the project team interviewed a total of 51 individuals: 23 provider administrators, managers, and direct support staff; 7 community partners; 16 individuals with IDD; and 5 family members.

SITE VISITS WERE CONDUCTED AT THREE LOCATIONS:

WorkLink, a small San Francisco-based provider of day and employment supports to 38 individuals

LOQW, a larger provider of day and employment supports (600 individuals served) located in Northeast Missouri

KFI, a Maine-based provider of residential, day, and employment supports to 66 individuals

USE SOCIAL AND HUMAN CAPITAL TO DECREASE DEPENDENCE ON PAID SUPPORTS

Interviewees agreed that a key aspect of high-quality CLE supports it he goal of decreased dependence on paid supports. This requires attentiveness to building both human capital and social capital.

Human capital refers to the specific skills an individual can bring to their job and to community experiences. Social capital means the individual's network of relationships with other people and the value inherent in that network. This combination of human and social capital may serve to decrease individuals' dependence on paid supports, while helping them to be actively engaged in the community.

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CLE activities within this guidepost can emphasize:

» Teaching skills to build human capital through modeling, the use of time-limited supports and peer-to-peer activities.

» Building individuals' human capital by teaching specific skills for community access and employment, with the intention of fading supports.

» Building individuals' social capital, which can be used as natural supports. This can be created at the workplace, through personal interests, and involvement in faith-based communities.

» Considering the importance of the quality of relationships.

Teach skills to build human capital through modeling, time-limited supports, and peer-to-peer activities

Modeling
Support staff can help individuals to build human capital by directly teaching specific skills around daily living and community access, as well as skills that can be used for finding and maintaining employment. One direct support staff member cited modeling as one effective approach to basic skill building and development:

> *"you've got to start off with pretty much full modeling, doing their laundry for them, having them look over your shoulder saying, "This is what you do." And you just kind of have to judge where the person is at. If they have the basics down, then you start--then you go into the more advanced stuff."*

Time-limited supports
One provider administrator described how her agency provided time-limited one-to-one supports to teach individuals new skills that would then allow them to participate in community activities with less ongoing support. Another provider offers a weekly group, where individuals can work on independent living skills such as cooking and managing a community garden. This initial investment in building human capital makes it easier to fade supports in the longer term.

Peer-to-peer activities
Another provider administrator described how they emphasized that individuals "learn to take the buses, learn to problem solve, all those things in the community." The same service provider sometimes used peer-to-peer strategies, such as having a person with more mastery of a particular skill (such as riding the bus) teach someone who was learning that skill. Another administrator described this as beneficial in multiple ways:

> *"[The individuals are] also learning about teamwork and leadership skills, and we find that having them help out each other versus having us talk to them about everything really builds their self-confidence, and also is maybe to an extent less embarrassing if their friends are helping them with something than if we're helping them... So we find that we can really use the peer connection..."*

Teaching human capital skills that increase community access and fade supports
In general, transportation skills were cited as another key area of learning, which increases human capital as it relates to both community access and employment. As one provider administrator explained:

> *"We help them to figure out how are they going to get someplace using their resources so that they're not reliant on [our staff] to get there. We do...with some people who are more significantly disabled, provide support and assistance in getting people places...the community instructor will go to the person's house and pick them up. But they take public transportation. They don't pick them up in their cars or anything."*

A state agency administrator described Community Life Engagement as being *"a great companion and wraparound service so that people who are working can continue to develop skills in the community. ... a way to support people to really just continue to build skills in natural settings."* The skills gained can range from soft skills, such as being at work on time or communicating well with coworkers, to hard skills, such as chopping garlic or operating a cash register.

Successfully repeated tasks increase the confidence of the individual, which makes the fading of supports easier and much less jarring. As one individual said:

> *"When I got into the habit of knowing what my job was and knowing that I could do my job, they just faded out on me. And I didn't need a job coach after that. So now I'm kind*

of without a job coach… It works out pretty good. I know if I ever need any help or if I'm stuck somewhere where I'm not for sure on something, there's always a coworker that's right there that'll help me out."

Because many individuals have relied on paid supports for so long, they may have to be convinced that they can learn self-sustaining skills. As one direct support staff member said:

"People get very dependent upon their supports. And if they've had them once, it's really hard to teach them that you maybe needed that support and now you really don't."

Use social capital to create natural supports

As individuals make more connections in their communities, the social capital they are building can be used to create natural supports. Tapping into this social capital as a source of natural supports then leads to a level of interdependence with others in the community that helps with the enabling fading of formal, paid supports. One provider administrator described this process as *"not necessarily about the person becoming more independent [but] just as much about creating an intentional community around somebody."*

Creating opportunities for natural supports can enable individuals' participation in activities without a paid support person. This stretches service dollars, as well as permitting a more natural and sustainable interaction and participation between the individual and others in their community.

Social capital in paid and volunteer workplaces

Workplaces can be one important source of natural supports. One direct support staff member helped an individual create a photo album of her co-workers so that she could remember their faces and the tasks they performed should she have any questions about her job. A staff coordinator spoke about a connection that was made between an individual and his coworkers based on mutual interests that led to the inclusion of the individual in non-work-related activities:

"Some of the other guys there are really into sports and wrestling as well, and they actually pick him up from his house … and drive to San Jose when they have the big… tournaments, yeah. And so they like go, like this is at night or on the weekend, not work related. They have no obliga-tion to [him] at all and they're including him."

WHAT IS COMMUNITY LIFE ENGAGEMENT?

Community Life Engagement refers to supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to access and participate in their communities outside of employment as part of a meaningful day. It is also referred to as Community-Based Non-Work, wraparound supports, holistic supports, or community integration services.

Community Life Engagement activities may include volunteer work; postsecondary, adult, or continuing education; accessing community facilities such as a local library, gym, or recreation center; participation in retirement or senior activities; and anything else people with and without disabilities do in their off-work time.

Such activities may support career exploration for those not yet working or between jobs, supplement employment hours for those who are working part-time, or serve as a retirement option for older adults with IDD.

The same quality of connections can be made in volunteer jobs. Another provider administrator described an example of natural supports where repeated volunteering at the same place has lead to workplace friendships where long-term volunteers help direct the individual about which tasks are to be performed that day:

"She works in the kitchen, and she works with a bunch of other volunteers and it's the same people who show up every Thursday, so she's got [two friends] at this point because they've been coming for probably eight years… And so she walks in, they put their aprons on, they're usually like, "Come on… we're going to peel carrots today."

In this way, the social capital generated through ongoing community membership at the volunteer site was leveraged as natural support to decrease the need for staff resources.

Social capital based around personal interests

Community connections have also been made through encouraging the pursuit of individualized interests outside the workplace. Theater and art are noted as two areas with deep roots in most communities, with many opportunities for

participation. Taking an art class or working on a play are both ways to develop relationships. So is any activity that leads people to spend time at the same place or with the same people, week after week.

To quote one provider director:

"If you go to the same places all the time then you get to know people. You go to the coffee shop and get your coffee every morning; before long they know who you are, and it's not any different than the folks that we support."

Social capital in faith communities

Faith-based organizations were cited as another example of entities in most communities that offer numerous opportunities for community connections. A provider administrator described an individual being supported by social connections built within the church community, and how this created ongoing community engagement without the need for formal supports:

"One situation I'm familiar with is where one of the members of the church swings by to pick up the individual at their home and takes them to the church service and the following activities, then brings them back. And there's no staff."

Importance of focusing on relationships

However, presence at activities does not guarantee the quality of relationships or satisfaction of the individual. It remains important for paid staff to inquire about the quality and consistency of each individual's relationships, as well as any areas where skill building should be reinforced so that the individual can more fully and independently participate. One director offered an example of an individual who attends a

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weekly community activity:

"...she goes to Beano every week, and she's perfectly capable of looking at 26 cards at once and figuring it out. But because she does that and she gets there on her own, or maybe we even drop her off, we don't know, who does she sit with, who does she talk to. ... I think we at least need to be a fly on the wall to say, "Who does she have a snack with? Who is she communicating with? ... Is she even having any social relationships?""

WHAT'S NEXT?

This brief is part of a series of four, each expanding on one of the four Guideposts for Community Life Engagement. These briefs serve as a core element of the Community Life Engagement toolkit for states and service providers. The toolkit provides further guidance on how to design, conduct, regulate, and measure quality Community Life Engagement. For more information on the toolkit, please contact Jennifer Sulewski at the information provided.

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