

Beginning the Service/Support Relationship

Choosing services and supports is the foundation of being person-directed. A four-phase process outlines the key points in understanding options and making decisions. Some people choose to be assisted in this process by family members or someone they trust to help make decisions.

Quality in Practice

Phase 1 is **meeting with a representative of the support organization** who can talk with the person initially about general expectations for services/supports. The representative also provides the person with information about the organization: including its mission, types of services and supports it provides, resources, capabilities, what it doesn't do, and how the organization might respond to the person's expectations.

Phase 2 is **visiting the support sites** so the person can see what the supports look like. Visits provide the opportunity to:

- see how staff interact with people in the support setting
- ask questions of staff
- assess the physical environment for safety

Phase 3 is **talking with other people who are involved** in the organization's supports. This allows individuals to:

- learn about the organization from their perspective
- ask questions about what the supports have done for them
- ask what they like
- ask what they don't like
- find out if they would recommend the organization to others

Phase 4 is a longer **discussion with a representative of the organization** to learn in more detail what the person wants. Some typical discussion starters are:

- What are your goals?
- What do you want life to be like in the future?
- How do you want to live?
- How do you want to spend your time (work, school, recreation)?
- What supports do you already have (family, friends, other service organizations)?
- What do you want from this organization?
- What are your major concerns?

These are not formal assessments at this time, but rather dialogue to ensure that the focus is on the person and those things that are most important to him or her. These phases allow the person and the organization to learn about each other, discuss concerns, and determine if there is a match.

Some of the discussion points might be put in writing to confirm mutual understanding. If the person decides that the organization can support his/her goals and expectations, he/she decides to initiate services.