



Self-Directed Services

Module 1: An Introduction to Self-Direction

Welcome to the first training entitled: An Introduction to Self-Direction. This is the first video in a series of seven.

An Introduction to Self-Direction

Self-direction is a way for participants to receive services that ensures the participant has choices about the services and supports they receive. In today's training, we will:

- Further define self-direction
- Explain what the participant's role is in self-direction
- Explain who is the Employer of Record and what their responsibilities are
- Explain how self-direction provides choice and control
- Explain the differences between traditional services and self-direction
- Discuss the hallmarks of self-direction
- Share the key components of self-direction
- Explain the timeline of self-direction
- Describe what self-direction looks like across the country

Erica's Story

Before we start, I want to share my story about self-direction. I began self-directing after college when traditional services did not accommodate my lifestyle and schedule.

When using an agency in college, I was unable to choose who came in and out of my home. I wasn't able to set the schedule of when the workers came. The schedule was set by the agency and was dependent on when workers were available.

I often couldn't go out with friends or do things, because I couldn't get up in time or I couldn't stay up that late. Imagine a college student that had to go to bed by 9 PM.

I then started using the Wisconsin self-direction program. I was able to recruit, interview and hire workers that I met and liked. I set my own schedule for the workers. A schedule that worked for my workers and me.

Self-direction has allowed me to live in my own apartment, own my own business and just live life to the fullest.

What is Self-Direction

Self-direction is a way that participants can choose to receive services where they decide when, how, and from whom their services are delivered.



Self-direction comes from the concept of self-determination—that everyone has the right to make meaningful choices about their own lives, including living in a way that honors their needs, preferences, and goals and taking risks in order to fulfill needs and achieve goals.

Self-direction is when the participant is truly in the driver's seat, and they are making decisions about their services and supports. The participant is not alone in this process, they have support from within the services as well as family or friends.

Participant's Role in Self-Direction

Choosing to self-direct means the participant chooses to take on certain responsibilities, including:

- Understanding what is meant by self-direction
- Accepting core responsibilities of self-direction
- Working with the Support Coordinator to create a person-centered plan
- Openly communicating with Support Coordinator
- Working within program guidelines

Participants also must be the employer which means

- Recruiting, interviewing and hiring workers
- Setting the schedule for workers, including vacations and last-minute schedule changes for call-ins
- Submitting payroll for workers, including ensuring Electronic Visit Verification punches are accurate
- Managing workers including disciplinary actions and firing
- Other duties include ensuring spending is within the budget and receive
- Receiving and responding to notices sent by the Financial Management Services Agency and/or the State of Alabama

Employer of Record (EOR)

The role of Employer of Record or EOR in self-direction is very important. The Employer of Record is the person that is the legal employer of the workers. The Employer of Record can be the participant, or a representative appointed by the participant.

The Employer of Record's job is to:

- Hire, train, manage, schedule, and in some cases, fire workers
- Make sure that spending does not exceed the budget
- Review and approve each worker's hours worked before they are sent to the Financial Management Service Agency

What is Self-Direction

In self-direction the participant is in control of their choices. They decide what services to self-direct, when they are received, who is providing the service and how services are delivered.



Traditional Versus Self-Directed Services

Self-directed services are different from services through an agency. In traditional services, the services are provided for the person:

- The support coordinator determines the needs and what services meet those needs
- For support services, the agency recruits and manages the workers
- The program and the agency will set the tasks for the worker
- The agency sets the salary, benefits and the schedule for the worker
- The program or agency are also responsible to set the training requirements

However, in self-direction, the participant is the center of everything. The participant is in control of making their own decisions. The participant:

- Makes decisions about their own needs and the services that meet those needs
- Recruits and hires workers of their choosing
- Sets the job tasks and the hourly rate
- Trains the worker or arranges trainings

Hallmarks of Self-Direction

Self-direction has distinguishing characteristics that are at the core of the service. These hallmarks include:

- Being able to pick what services best meet the established needs
- Having the freedom to set the schedule according to needs and preferences
- Using community resources in new and different ways
- Honoring the dignity of risk by assisting participants to try new things, even if there is risk involved
- The flexibility and creativity to have authentic choice and control- the choice and control to hire the worker that is a perfect fit for the participant

Key Components of Self-Direction

Two key components of self-direction include employer authority and budget authority. Both of these allow the participant to make important decisions about their needs and how goals are accomplished.

Employer authority empowers the employer of record to interview, hire and manage their own staff. This includes the ability to hire friends, family and people who like and care about the participant.

Budget authority allows the employer of record choice and control over what goods and/or services to purchase within their spending plan. They can also select their worker's rate of pay within parameters set by the state.

Other key components of self-direction are being person-centered, which means the participant is at the center of their services, making important decisions with support as needed.



And the individual budget. This is the budget that is specific to the participant and their needs. This budget is created to ensure the participant can purchase the supports and services they need.

Final key components of self-direction include the support coordinator and the Financial Management Service Agency or FMSA.

The participant gets support from the support coordinator who assists all parties to work together for the participant to have the best outcomes.

The Financial Management Service Agency helps the Employer of Record to process employer paperwork, employee paperwork and payroll. The Financial Management Service Agency also ensures tax reporting is done accurately and completely.

We will talk more in-depth about these two roles in upcoming trainings.

Timeline of Self-Direction

First, as part of the person centered-planning process, the support coordinator informs the participant about self-direction including what it is and how it works.

Next, the participant decides what services they want to self-direct. After this is decided, the support coordinator creates a budget amount from the standard authorization. Also at this point, the participant decides if they will be the employer of record or EOR or if the participant wants to appoint a representative on their behalf.

Finally, the Financial Management Services Agency receives the approved budget and sets up the Employer of Record as the legal employer. The Financial Management Services Agency also helps in the hiring process by setting up any workers as employees for the participant. At this point, the participant can begin directing their care and receive support from their workers!

Self-Direction Enrollment and Program Size

Looking at self-direction across the country, there is at least one self-directed program in each state with a total of 260 self-direction programs available. There are 1.2 million people enrolled in these 260 programs. Each program serves a range of 1 to 300,000 participants.

Self-Direction by State

As we mentioned, each state has at least one self-directed program. Here we see the number of participant's using self-direction in each state. The lowest number being fewer than 1,000 participant and the highest being more than 500,000. Alabama has between 1,000 and 4,999 people self-directing their services.

Thank You!

Thank you for watching training one: An Introduction to Self-Direction.