

Client Choice



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Serving Individuals with Developmental Disabilities
in San Diego and Imperial Counties



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Facts about

What is client choice?

Client choice is a decision that clients make about their life. This is a skill that can be supported and developed through practice. It is a fundamental right that flows from their very personhood. It is embodied in state and federal law and regulation.

Why is client choice important?

Making decisions are part of adult life. People make decisions from the time they get up in the morning throughout the day, until they go to bed at night. Client choice is becoming more and more important because of the changes that are coming to the developmental disabilities world: Employment First, Self-Determination, the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Rule, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). All of them are based on client choice.

Making Decisions

People make decisions in many different ways. No two people make decisions exactly the same way all the time.

People make decisions based on the following:

- ❖ experience
- ❖ education
- ❖ values and preferences
- ❖ self-interest
- ❖ cognitive ability
- ❖ expectations

Some people make snap decisions on the spot based upon emotions and impulse. This can lead to over purchasing and other regrets. Others think things through carefully weighing the pro-cons of all the options.

In general, the more informed and rational the decisions are the increased likelihood that the decisions will lead to a successful outcome.

A choice to do something often is mutually exclusive. A choice to do one thing may preclude doing something else. Also, with decisions there is uncertainty and risk.

What are some tips?

Hints for supporting clients making successful choices:

- ❖ Give clients time and space to make an informed and thoughtful decision that is right for them.
- ❖ Present information in an easy to comprehend and organized format, i.e. pictures and easy to read material.
- ❖ Nurture a climate of respect and safety to build a climate of trust and creative thinking.
- ❖ Make sure that clients make the decision and that are not imposed decisions on them. Many clients say things to please others and say things what they think others want them to say. You might get a quick “Yes” but in the long run get little or no follow through.
- ❖ Keep the conversation positive to help move past road blocks of fear, anger, histories, and negativity.
- ❖ Allow clients freedom to ask for advice.

- ❖ Appeal to times clients made previous successful decisions. Tell clients that success builds on success.
- ❖ Give clients the opportunity to make decisions and build up their experience and history of making decisions.
- ❖ Give clients the opportunity to test the waters.
- ❖ Make decisions as part of a group, so that clients don’t have to “go it alone.”
- ❖ Be nonjudgmental. Also, if successful outcomes are not achieved, support clients to look at options. Use the instance as an educational moment, but avoid labeling the outcome as a failure. This can demoralize clients.
- ❖ Encourage clients to take pride in the decision they make. Help clients see that the choices they make can dramatically affect their quality of life and make them happier. This can go a long way to improving their self-image and self-esteem.
- ❖ Help clients see new situations as opportunities for growth. It may be even appropriate to make the decision making process a game where the prize is a successful outcome.

Another thing to remember about choice is that it is not a single event fixed in one particular point of time. It is an ongoing process that needs continual recommitment to it, such as eating healthy and staying on a diet. Remind clients of the decisions they have made and committed to. This avoids the tendency of forgetting a decision and the decision being out of sight out of mind.