

## Fostering Self-Direction and Consumer Control in Youth and Adults who use Augmentative Communication.

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People who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), live and receive support services within different service models depending on their needs and the availability of service options. Some use informal supports (e.g. family and volunteers); others use services that are provided by agencies (e.g. group home, outreach attendant services) and some use direct-funding models (e.g. hire their own service providers). Most service agencies are becoming increasingly responsive to the needs of individual clients and many describe their approaches using terms such as consumer-directed, consumer-centered, client focused or consumer driven. People who use these services are usually referred to as consumers and their relationship with their service providers is often described in terms of empowerment, self-determination, self-direction, or self-advocacy.

For people with disabilities, this is a welcome trend, albeit a frequent source for frustration as they negotiate and receive services from organizations that may be at various stages in their interpretation of this service philosophy. The real life experience of many consumers is a daily struggle between what they actually need and what their services allow them to have or to do. People who use AAC, regardless of where they live or the types of support they use, report that they frequently lack control over their services (Collier et al. 2006).

This workshop will explore recurring themes raised by adults who use AAC and who use support services in their communities. Such themes include residential options, attendant services, accessibility to health, social, and legal community services, abuse experiences, equality and human rights. Rooted in the philosophy of the independent living movement, using a framework for fostering self-determination and a perspective from people who use AAC, this workshop will share information and resources to foster self-direction, advocacy and control in youth and adults who use AAC.

Initiatives and resources will be shared that support people who use AAC to learn about their rights and safety; to advocate and negotiate their home and community services; to access community services; to direct their attendants and to fully participate in their communities. In addition, participants will acquire information that they can use to support community organizations to extend their services to consumers who use AAC.

### **Learner Outcomes:**

Participants will learn about:

- self-direction and advocacy contexts for adults who use AAC;
- characteristics of people who are self-direct their services;
- strategies to promote self-direction and advocacy skills in youth who use AAC;
- communication supports for self-directed services and advocacy;
- community accessibility supports for people who use AAC.