National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems

Webinar Transcript: "Exploring Core Competencies for Information and Assistance (I&A) Professionals in Self-Direction"

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SPEAKERS

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Alixe Bonardi 00:00

Okay, we are going to get started. And I would like to extend my welcome again to this webinar exploring core competencies for information and assistance, I&A, professionals in self direction. My name is Alixe Bonardi, I am a light skinned woman with light brown, straight hair, and I have a bookshelf behind me. Next slide please.

Alixe Bonardi 00:35

I along with my co-director of the National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems Bevin Croft, welcome you to this webinar. And we want to once again express our appreciation for the support for the funding of this program. This is funded by the Administration for Community Living and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. And all these webinars are free and open to the public. So welcome. Next slide, please.

Alixe Bonardi 01:09

The goal of NCAPPS, our center is to promote systems change that makes person-centered principles not just an aspiration, but a reality in the lives of people across the lifespan are really a broad swath and we have been delighted to be able to reach as many people as we can through these webinars. Next slide please.

Alixe Bonardi 01:35

I will be handling just a few logistics here for this webinar. Participants are muted during the webinar. But please do use the chat feature in Zoom to post questions. And I'm already seeing that people are saying hello and welcome to each other in chat, which is wonderful. Please go ahead and continue to use chat throughout this webinar. There will be time at the end for questions and answers. So, take your time to add in questions. The webinar is live captioned in English and also live interpreted in Spanish. Live English captions can be accessed by clicking the CC button at the bottom of your Zoom screen. And it looks to me like they are working adequately. We also have an external link that we can provide through chat if that is needed to a webs of webpage. Live Spanish interpretation can be accessed by clicking the interpretation button at the bottom of your zoom screen. Once in the Spanish channel, please silence the original audio so that you can hear. This live webinar includes polls and evaluation questions. And please be prepared to interact during those polling times. So, there's your fair warning. Next slide please.

Alixe Bonardi 03:02
After this webinar, we welcome any follow up questions and feedback about this webinar or other questions you have at our web email address, NCAPPS@hsri.org. Please note that this email address is not monitored during this webinar, our team is working really hard to keep this webinar going. And this webinar will be recorded along with a version of the slides, a plain language summary and any other materials resource materials provided by our speakers. These will be posted on the NCAPPS website. Next slide, please.

Alixe Bonardi 03:47
So, getting into the content for today's webinar, we would like to start with, with an initial poll to hear from you who's here. So, getting started, please take your time and answer this these questions. What about what is your connection to today's topic? You can select all that apply. We know people fit into many of these categories. And I will read the categories. I participate in a self-direction program. My family member participates in a self-direction program. I'm interested in enrolling in self direction and the case manager support broker or in a similar role. I am a state employee. I'm a federal employee or I work for an organization that provides fiscal management services or other note that please go ahead and if you're indicating other, we'd love to hear in chat. What category you put yourself in. So, thank you. We've got a number of responses still coming in. We'll give people another few seconds to respond.

Alixe Bonardi 05:04
And it looks like we're almost I think we're just about there in terms of responses. So, we can share the responses now, majority of folks responding or saying that their state employees, or case managers support brokers are in similar roles. We have a few people joining us here interested in rolling and self-direction. This is fantastic. And we hope you can learn from this, certainly, and people who are participants in self-directed programs. And additionally, we have federal employees and people who work for fiscal management services. And I see a number of comments coming in to chat for quite a number of people who also identify in other participating roles, which is wonderful. Thank you. Next slide, please.

Alixe Bonardi 06:08
So today, we have four speakers that are going to be joining us for this panel discussion, and I'd like to briefly introduce them before we pass it over to our speakers. Molly Morris is the director of engagement at Applied self-direction where she works with states, participants and provider organizations to create and enhance self-direction programs. Erica Andres is a senior training consultant at Applied Self-Direction. She has spinal muscle muscular atrophy, and

lives in a self-directed life and has directed her own care for over 20 years. She has also been an information and assistance professional for eight years. Pat Wright is a teacher who started self-directing in 2007. She serves to Minnesota State committees and joined the International Society for psychological treatment of psychosis, following her son's hospitalization and diagnoses, and diagnosis in 2009. Nate Turner has spent more than 15 years advocating for people living with disabilities in Ohio, while navigating an array of Medicaid and self-directed supports. He shares his lived experience through membership with several organizations, including a project enhancing self-direction in Ohio, with Self Advocates Becoming Empowered. We are delighted that all of you are with us. And next slide, I would like to turn it over at this point to Molly and Erica.

Molly Morris 07:52
Thank you so much, Alixe. This is Molly Morris. I am a white woman with short blonde hair, and I have a bookshelf and a floral curtain behind me. I'm Molly Morris with applied self-direction, I'm so thrilled to be here to discuss all about information and assistance in self direction with you today. But first, just to introduce the organization that Erica and I are a part of, we work with Applied Self-Direction. And our primary mission. And focus is all about advancing self-direction. Whether that's supporting states, financial management services providers, or participants, we really do. All of our work is focused on helping self-direction to grow. And we deeply believe that everyone who needs long term services and supports should really have the option to self-direct and get to make meaningful decisions about their future and their life. Next slide, please.

Molly Morris 08:52
So critically important in self direction is information and assistance. This is our focus and topic today. You know, if you're here, I assume you're familiar with self-direction. So, I'm not going to spend a lot of time introducing what self-direction is. But I will say most people who are familiar with self-direction know they're kind of two main services and self-direction to help people who direct their own services. There's financial management services, so that arm that helps you to manage your payment and taxes. And then there's information and assistance. It's really about supporting the individual who's self-directing to be successful in their role. So, we're going to talk a lot more about that today. So next slide, please.

Molly Morris 09:32
So really, my job and today's presentation is to make sure everybody knows and understands what information and assistance means. And an important note in our world with all of this lingo and long-term care, you sometimes hear the term Information and Referral slash assistance. This is a different concept than that this isn't about referral to services. This is about a type of support you receive if you self-direct. So today I'm going to refer to the 1915 C

waiver Technical Guide, definition of information and assistance, primarily because most Medicaid funded self-directed programs are through a 1915 C, but of course, there are other waivers as well. But I think this definition covers nicely all self-direction programs. So, information and assistance is a service or function that really assists the participant or participants, family or representative in arranging for directing and managing their own services. The person who is in the role of what I'll refer to as like an ion, a provider assists in identifying immediate and long-term needs, they help develop options to meet those needs. They help access identified sports and services, and really provide practical skills training to independently direct and manage waiver services. And I'm going to talk a lot more about this. But some of the practical skills training could include providing coaching on recruiting, hiring, and managing your own workers. And also dealing with communication and problem solving all the different kinds of issues that can come up when you're acting as your own employer or managing your own budget. And the person who is in this is a support role is really helping ensure participants understand their roles and responsibilities and self-direction. So that's the CMS definition. But let's dig a little more into this on the next slide.

Molly Morris 11:31
So, you might be thinking about your own self direction program where you live in the state, you're in across the country. Who is this person, this is a provider who is working in self direction to help you to be successful. So, depending on the state you're in, each state uses different language to describe the person who fills this role and might be structured differently. So, you can see a poll just popped up on the screen, we'd love to know, what is the term in the state where you work? Who is this person who helps provide coaching and support to the person who's self-directing? Is it a case manager, service coordinator, support broker, support planner, recovery navigator, or some other term which we would invite you to share in the chat? I think, while people are responding to the poll, I'll just say, I think sometimes when we're working nationally talking about information and assistance, it can be challenging to have a shared language, because we all refer to this role really differently. But I just want to level set that we're all talking about the same function, even if there's a different title, or the structure in your state might be different than another state. So, we'll just give a minute for everybody to respond and reply to, "What's the title of the person who fills this role in your state?"

Molly Morris 12:55
We'll see those results here shortly. But while we wait for everybody to respond to the poll, oh, here it comes. Okay, great. So, it looks like the majority of people in the webinar today, it's a case manager who's filling this is a role. The runner up was 24% of service coordinator, and interesting 22% of you said other so this again, just points out how many different titles there are. And then 17%, use the support broker term. And then we also have a couple of you that use support planner. So, thank you all so much for sharing that I think it's really helpful for us to

know and understand what we're calling these roles. But regardless of your title, the primary responsibilities of somebody in an iron a provider role is going to really be that that coach and informer about what the program rules are, what are the responsibilities if you self-direct, helping to support the participant to create a participant a person-centered plan, and really just providing all guidance and resources on all aspects of self-direction and providing support and encouragement. Next slide, please.

Molly Morris 14:15
Now, we talked about titles and how the majority of people here today, you refer to the person who provides I&A, as a case manager, and that's not uncommon at all that in many states, kind of a case manager might have a traditional caseload, but they also work with people who self-direct. And I think it's important whether you're a case manager with a mixed caseload, if you are a support broker that only works with people who self-direct. This function of providing information and assistance is really a distinct responsibility from traditional case management. You know, somebody who is providing case management is really coordinating services. Whereas this is a role that's really about being a coach and empowering somebody to direct their own services. So, here's the mindset. Some things to consider in the mindset of providing is a this is going to ideally be delivered by somebody who fully understands, embraces and supports what it means to be self-directed, you know, this is, if you are from a background where you're not comfortable with the idea of self-direction of somebody being in charge of their own life and services, it's going to be hard to be successful and providing is a support. This is somebody who really understands the importance of independence and helps to cultivate it and doesn't try to take over and direct on someone else's behalf. This is a person again, who's going to work together on creating a person-centered plan, it's really a mindset shift from managing to empowering someone to be in charge. And it's typically going to require a pretty personalized approach, because everybody's coming to the table to self-direct with different goals and different needs, and different areas where they're going to need support for some people. Maybe you've never employed anyone before. And you need a lot of help thinking about that. Other folks might come to the table with some experience in that realm and need support in other areas. So, it's really going to be individualized, this is going to be somebody who cares a lot about the participants goals and their own personal outcomes. And is really there to help cultivate problem solving skills, not to solve for someone, but to do that with someone also to understand the difference between what's important to the person who's self-directing versus what's important for so it's not in your role as an IRA provider to say, this is what you need as someone who is self-directing, but rather to really listen to the participant or their family member who says this is what's important to me, this is what I need to be successful and independent. And in the eye and a role. This is a person who's really going to provide tools for continued success instead of just taking over and solving the problems. So next slide, please.

Molly Morris 17:11
Oh, yes. And we'd love to hear and this next poll, "Which of the following best describes I&A in your self- direction program?" Now that I've kind of defined what it is? "Would you say that I&A is consistently strong in the program that you're most familiar with?", "Does it does it depend somewhat on who your provider is?" Maybe you've noticed some inconsistency that some providers are stronger than others. Or maybe in your state, it depends on the geographic location. But some local areas have much more robust I&A than others. Or overall, this is really an area that you feel, "needs more support." And of course, you're welcome to choose more than one of these options, because many of these can be true at once. So, we'd love to hear what people are thinking not only through the poll, but I would encourage people to share over chat. If you are part of a program that you feel is especially strong in their I&A, tell us more about it, what makes it successful. And if you see a need for improvement and growth on I&A, tell us what you're looking for what's needed, and what your wishes are, I think we can have a great discussion about that. Great, okay, so this is really interesting. It looks like the majority by a hair 42% say this is an area that really needs more support. But we're also 40% of you said it really depends on your IRA provider. And that's something that we've applied self-direction really heard pretty often. And then 20% of you said it can vary depending on where you live in your state. And then we've got 19% of you who say I&A is consistently strong. So, we'd love to hear from everybody more about what that looks like in your state in the chat. All right, so next slide, please.

Molly Morris 19:05
So why are we even talking about this? Why does information and assistance and self-direction really matter? And I think you know, at Applied Self-Direction, we've talked a lot to people across the country who they themselves self-direct, or who managed self-direction programs are a part of these programs. And we've really learned that this is an essential part of making self-direction successful. Understanding and getting the support you need to know how to self-direct is so critical. And states do really vary widely and how they approach structuring information and assistance. States have a lot of discretion in terms of how they can design information and assistance. But we found when we started really digging into this work last year, that there aren't as many resources out there on this topic that we think there should be, so we wanted to start this conversation. So, what does the robust I&A system really look like knowing that states can make different design choices to get there. But we also know as states are looking to grow self-direction, particularly in response to the pandemic, states really need to have strong I&A systems in place so that people can be successful with self-direction. Most people don't just, you know, wake up one day and know exactly how to self-direct how to be an employer how to manage your own budget, that support is needed to be successful. And we have found that people will decline to participate in self direction if they don't feel like they

have the support to get started and to be successful over time. And information. And assistance is also really critical to help with program monitoring, ensuring their safeguards in place to make sure all the appropriate rules are being followed. And people understand really what their responsibilities are if you self-direct. So next slide, please.

Molly Morris 21:03
Alright, so I'm going to briefly talk a little bit about some different ways that states approach, structuring information and assistance. But I'll note that as part of the information and assistance initiative that we've really worked on at Applied self-direction, we published a white paper that I think is going to be shared via the chat specifically about a series of roundtables that we hosted with experts around the country who gave us feedback about the pros and cons of different kinds of approaches. So, if you're here, from a state perspective, wanting to think more and advocate perspective, wanting to push for a certain type of structure, I'd really encourage you, one to ask us questions. I'm not going to get into too many technical aspects during my presentation, but also to review that white paper. But just to give you a sense of the different ways states can approach this in different states, some states I&A is actually provided by the case manager. And it sounds like the majority of folks today, that's the way it's done in your state. So, this can be done in conjunction with their other responsibilities. Again, a case manager might work with people in working with traditional agency services, as well as those people who are self-directing. In other programs, information and assistance is offered separately or concurrently with case management. So, it's offered by a separate person, the state may work with agencies that you know, maybe a Center for Independent Living, or an area agency on aging, where people who work at that organization are available to provide I&A. Some states also allow for independent support brokers or another type of professional who a person self-directing can select to work with as their own IRA provider. And sometimes states partner, maybe with a financial management services entity to in addition to providing the FMS, they also support I&A, or a managed care organization might be responsible for delivering I&A as part of their scope of work. And of course, you know, states could use a combination of these approaches. And there's a lot of considerations here, we get a lot more technical, but I'm just going to keep it at a high level for today. The next slide, please.

Molly Morris 23:18
In just a minute, I'm going to pass things over to Erica and she's going to talk a lot more about this. But the skills required for I&A states are take different approaches in terms of what's required. So, in some states, really minimal training is required. Whereas other states have pretty professional credentials and rigorous opportunities for further training certainly is a best practice, we think the more support the better. But something to keep in mind that there is a variety on this, on this matter. So next slide.

Molly Morris 23:53
And then, information and assistance gets reimbursed differently in different states. Most commonly, we either see a per member per month flat fee, which is part of the cost of the service, or a unit base. So, at any given month, the amount of time that's spent with I&A could vary. And so that allows for some flexibility there. Again, our white paper goes into some depth on the pros and cons of these different approaches. There's no one right way, but each pathway comes with different considerations. Next slide.

Molly Morris 24:28
And just to recap, you know, we really endeavored to look more deeply beginning last year and information and assistance at Applied self-direction, really to begin to understand what works well and what doesn't. And again, our white paper goes into more depth about some of those perspectives. We wanted to really help provide meaningful guidance to states and other stakeholders regarding what is the best way to do I&A knowing there are multiple ways to be successful and to really collaborate geographically knowing that different states have different approaches. And there are many ways to be successful. And our ongoing thanks to Centene for sponsoring this initiative in this work. Next slide, please.

Molly Morris 25:09
In addition to this white paper, I've referred to as part of our initiative, we also developed information and assistance core standards for professionals looking at to provide recommendations around what does an I&A professional really need to know in order to be successful? What do they need to do in order to be successful? What kind of help do should they be providing to participants? And how can states and program administrators really gauge how successful they are? So, with all that being said, I'm gonna pass things over to my fabulous colleague, Eric Andres, who is really our expert on I&A and is going to talk more about what the standards need to be for professionals and her perspective on all of this.

Erica Andres 25:57
Hey, everyone, I am Erica and I'm a white woman with short, dark brown hair with a pink flower in my hair wearing a pink sweater. And the wall behind me is a black metal tree while hanging with a small sign on the side that says Love. Now Molly has set me up to be so great, I sure hope I can live up to her expectations. And as Alex said, I was an I&A person for over eight years with the Wisconsin self-direction program. And I have been self-directing my own care for over 20 years well over 10 years in our current self-direction program. So, one of the major things I noticed both working as an I&A person and with I&A people is that there are certain personality traits that make for a successful I knew person. First, I believe that there are certain things that the people in the role need to believe the person be an eye of the eye and a person should have these beliefs coming into the position. First and foremost, they need to believe

and true person centeredness that the participant is number one, the participant knows best and is the true expert in their own lines in the eye. And a person is just there to guide and offer assistance to help the participant get the needed services. Just because the participant is not doing what the I&A person would do does not mean that the participant is wrong. I know that some of you listening right now are probably cringing and thinking about all the risks and the what ifs that are that can happen. And although I do agree that we do have to account for safety and risk, but not to the point of the I&A people are reducing choice and control and hindering people from living a full life. I have on my personal I partnered with five I&A people, which is actually pretty impressive for over 20 years of doing self-direction. The first two and my current is a person people were just really the epitome of person centered. They did, and still do empower me to make my own decisions to live my own life on my terms, they truly know and believe that I am the boss. And they are just there to provide resources and advise me as needed. And asked, they are there to update my plan and complete the necessary paperwork. I really feel like they are actually kind of trusted friends that I can ask for advice. My other two I&A people that I've worked with not so much in the one that I had before this one really not so much at all. Actually, to give you an example at the beginning of the pandemic, and it was actually super scary. I mean, it still is right but even more scary. And no one really knew what was going on or what was going to happen or even how the disease was transmitted and such. My past is a person decided that my plan wasn't safe because there weren't enough caregivers coming in and out of my home. Right lady, that's the point. It's a pandemic, I wanted to reduce the risk of transmitting the disease by reducing the amount of people coming in and out of my home. That's kind of how it works. She told me, I needed to have more people coming in and out of my home. I went to her supervisor who agreed that my plan was very reasonable. I would say if given the situation. My consultant came back to me and admonished me for going to her supervisor and going above her head. She actually said that she didn't think I respected her role of authority on my team. I thought um, yeah, you're right because you have no authority. I was so furious that she felt she had authority over me. She then tried to explain that she meant she had the authority to ensure that program guidelines were followed. I reminded her that I did her same job. Honestly, I was so mad at her that I'm sure I told her that I did her job better and do things better, so she could guarantee their program guidelines were going to be followed. So, I made sure to tell her that no authority was in events as you can demand, imagine, I switch consultants the very next day. Another thing that successful I need people must have coming in is a belief and self-direction. I'm not saying that people should say, oh yeah, it's cool for some people, but a true belief that anyone who wants to, excuse me, given the right supports can self-direct. I'm not, I'm not saying that everyone is going to be an expert like me right away. I'm just kidding. I'm far from an expert. I fully believe that everyone needs help to be successful in self direction. It is hard work. I'm not downplaying that at all. Excuse me, some people self-directing will need more help than others. Heck, I need help all the time.

Erica Andres 30:50
Sadly, too many times I heard when working with I&A people, I heard coworkers even supervisors say that this person doesn't belong in IRIS. I always asked how did they know that? What made you the decision maker for that? How have you helped to make it, so they do belong. And I am a person must believe that if needed, supports can be found and put in place. Anyone can self-direct, because if they don't, the risk and likelihood of gatekeeping is very real. I also believe that I need people must have enough cultural awareness. To be able to work successfully with people of diverse backgrounds. I am by no means culturally competent, none of us will ever be able to say that we are fully culturally competent. But I need people need to be aware enough to know that we are not comfortable. No, we are not, nor will ever be culturally competent. But we have to be comfortable enough to ask questions to be able to learn different customs values and beliefs and we willing to embrace those differences. It is also important to note that you know, two people are the same. That's why we are called individuals. So just because I know people partner with two people have the same background from the same culture even with the same disability, it doesn't mean it will be the same or need the same services. Next slide please.

Erica Andres 32:16
In addition to certain beliefs that I any a professional should have; I believe that I&A professionals need to come in with certain skills that are very strong. These skills include creativity and the ability, ability to think outside the box. As I just mentioned, no two people are alike. And as an I&A person, so many situations will come up that need brainstorming and ideas. I always said that I was gonna change my title from IRIS consultant to idea guru. being accountable and dependable to the participant is also very important. The participant needs someone they can trust and rely on if the if a person says they're going to do something, they have to do it. If they're going to meet with the purchasing the I&A person needs to be there. My part my current Iris consulting, are always scheduled my appointment that when she leaves the last appointment, which is about three months ahead of time, and then she calls me in the morning have to ensure that I'm still available and available to be there for the meeting. communication. Communication skills are also very important in life and anyway, but also especially important in our DNA. Many times, the I&A person is the go between for the participant and their team. The participant expresses in need to them is a person and then I a person might communicate with a financial management services and even a service coordinator or case manager to make sure it happens. Why was that the I&A person must be able to also multitask and help with several different projects at any one time. I used to partner with between 50 and 55 people, I would be in the middle of paperwork for one person and another person would call you have to be able to change gears. Let me tell you how many of the lists posted ins and outs I have all over my computer. Going along with that you also have

to be able to switch gears from casual to business very quickly. When I first started, consultants were supposed to dress in business casual attire for participant meetings. We thought back against that and said that you couldn't create that that could create a power imbalance. Anytime my participants were selling bed or definitely in their PJs. When I came, I wanted to create a casual atmosphere. They my participants felt at ease to share things with me. I mean, we're talking about very intimate topics and care needs. So, I wanted to make sure that they felt relaxed and I and I didn't feel that was going to happen with me and dress clothes. I mean I never wore pajamas, although sometimes I wanted to, but it didn't always keep a sundress or card Get in my car, depending on the season, just in case, I need to go from a meeting with a purchase thing and then into a professional meeting that they wanted me to go to. Unfortunately, the job also requires some math skills we used to help with budget allocations and prorating. My coworkers used to say that they are in human services field, because they'd like to people, not math. Well, luckily, I like both. In software action programs, it's often that if a person and the participant working together in the participants home, not in an office with an I&A supervisor sitting right there watching. So, in I think a person needs to be able to have really good time management skills and work very much independently, they need to make sure that they can know what's on the list and what to prioritize what to do. I love that my present my current is a person and I, at the end of each meeting, create a to do list of what needs to be done. And I also love that even more that we're you're staying on the same page as to what's on the top of the list. Next slide, please.

Erica Andres 36:08
And finally, these are the core competencies that I believe I&A professionals should have before starting to work with participants, they don't necessarily have to have them coming in, or know it right off the bat. But these are skills that they should know before they start working with someone that you really need an in-depth knowledge of the philosophy and operations of self-direction, including the roles and the responsibilities. Honestly, if they don't know the roles and responsibilities, it's going to be really hard to help anyone else. And also, things change a lot in software and programs. And I understand that, but knowing the basics is really important. They should also have a thorough knowledge and understanding of additional resources that are available to the participants to support the plan. Now, I have to say that in my eight years of being a is a person, I don't think I ever, you know, learned all the resources that were available, there are so many things out there, it was really impossible to know them all. I was still learning them at the end of my time. But it is important to know as many resources as you can, the I&A people must also have a really good understanding of the necessary paperwork that's out there. And man, there is a lot of paperwork, I think a hiring packet for me is about 19 pages, thank goodness, there is a prefilled option. But it's really important that the IT person knows what paperwork is, is needed so that they can help you know that person and guide and get through it so that things don't have to get sent back and brought back and things like that.

Before I started doing paperwork myself, my consultant filled out a whole packet for me and gave it to me. So, whenever I was hiring people, I could just fill in what I needed was really helpful. And timely I am a people should have a comprehensive understanding of the key players in the program, and the roles each person plays. In Wisconsin, participants go to their IRIS consultant for everything, even though they're supposed to, it's confusing. Who does what and what you should go who you should go to, for one, I can't really tell you how many times I told people to call their financial agency because their worker didn't get paid, right? Because I don't actually do payroll. But also, I just want to note that it's an that so much of this knowledge comes from working and utilizing the program, which is why I think it's so important to recruit peers in the program to be I&A people. I'm going to talk about this a little bit more in the next couple of slides. And I think some of my other fellow panelists will also be discussing it. But just think of how much less training would be needed if people using the program. Were also the I&A people. Next slide, please.

Erica Andres 39:06
Besides qualities that I think are important, and I people another thing I think another thing I think is important is keeping participant counts to a manageable number. You'll notice I didn't say caseload because I'm not a case. And I really actually hate the word caseload. So, participant counts is my preferred choice. So, there's no magical number of how many participants should be paired with any if a person from the roundtables and from my experience, I would say the ideal number would be somewhere between 35 and 45. Or the actual number obviously depends on many factors. And these are the experience and the knowledge of the I&A provider and of the participants because when the if a provider or the participant or both are new to self-direction, things might take a little longer as everyone learns all this paperwork and steps Also, it's gonna depend on where the participant is in their self-direction journey. Because, you know, if the person is new, there's so much paperwork and so much information that needs to be provided that you could be hanging out with your participant or seeing them or calling them every week or every other week. But then once people are in the program, I mean, I've had to contact my participants once a month, and sometimes I left, you know, holding them down, just to find them to do that one-month contact. And then another factor will be the circle of support that the participant has and really needs. If the participant needs more help, and they don't have any other people to help them the I&A person may need to be around more to help. Next slide, please. And finally, my final suggestion is having a new provider specific to self-direction not to offend anyone here because I saw that most of you are case managers. So, but I've as I've already talked about, subtraction can be a large time commitment, and involves a lot of knowledge and time. If is a provider is only for self-direction, then the I&A provider will have the necessary knowledge and time to devote to people self-directing. So often, people who are self-directing are just added on to an already overworked case manager. Because of this, the I&A provider can be tempted to steer people

away from self-direction, because it's maybe a little bit easier or less time consuming for the I&A person. But if the if a person is solely devoted to self-direction, it will decrease gatekeeping because the I&A person will only have the time and truly believe in self direction already, or they wouldn't be working in this field. Also, they wouldn't be out of a job if they didn't believe in self direction. I can because of all of these reasons. I truly believe people with lived experience are the best candidates. Participants are going to learn so much more from the people that are actually using the program and living it every day. That is all for me. So now I'm gonna hand it over to Nate to talk to you.

Nathan Turner 42:19
Hi, everybody, good afternoon. My name is Nathan Turner, Black man in my early 30s. I have short black hair at work, but glasses and I have a black beard. I'm wearing a yellow shirt and a gray hoodie and I'm in front of white walls that I use he/him pronouns. Okay, next slide.

Nathan Turner 42:43
So, what I set the throughout the state of play for our I&A and support provider, Ohio because Ohio's developmental disability system where I received most required supports is very comprehensive, but historically, we really haven't hard, wide adoption of support broker for various reasons. So, we have three waivers in our developmental disability system, and only one of the actual highs support brokerage in it this office hours by funding waiver, and in other waivers that are more comprehensive. The I&A function is overseen by someone we call this service and support administrator which is a case manager, and they also perform the I&A function. And to just give you an out of enrollees use a self-directed supports, as a view 22 the boldest and bounds in this of our life funding Weaver is what does it for 481 participates. In the other two waivers, we have less than 30 combined. So overall, they're less than 2000. Authorize I'm sorry, 2000 claims or I apologize 2000 people using self-directed services in Ohio with a DD system. And I think that is unfortunately a function of how our DD system was created and are leading that work in in terms of needing to historically provide extra supports to people living with disabilities over time and not allowing them to take risks and assume more employer’s authority and budget authority and just be able to take more risks and make decisions about their lives and their supports. And my situation is a little bit unique because in my county where I'm from, everyone likes to say, our ad self-direct by our services, but I only really had the option to self-direct my services in terms of rule after 2018. So, I still, technically use your what would be more traditional model. But I wait to directly hire, and train and supervise all of the people that come into play. Oh, and I have detailed supports. And I've learned to work with you my only case manager to have to have a more self-directed relationship, in spite of not actually being on the waiver that requires self-direction. Next slide, please.

Nathan Turner 46:16
So, let's delve into why I think there's so little use of this support broker route with Ohio, as I previously said, the IO in the level would really depend on have self-directed supports until 2018. And I actually guides my waiver about two years prior to that. So, when I was enrolled, I did not have the option to self-direct. So, all of my current providers because I really believe in maintaining long term relationships with providers because it results in better outcomes for supporting me, and it results in better outcomes for wildlife. That there was an opportunity for me to work with a physical intermediary and have the option to self-direct until 2018. At that time, we added a service called participant directed homemaker, personal care to both the weavers. And that's all three of the waivers and in the self-empowered by funding waiver, the eligibility requires the person to self-direct one service to be eligible for that week. And there was at least some consternation related to the fact that the case managers believed that the protocol was duplicated in their responsibilities. And they will hint that they're already providing information and assistance. And in fact, both of the roles or brands have some similarities, but they're so different in terms of how they support a person and what specific things they do. Okay, next slide, please. And I want to underscore, as we've heard earlier in the presentation, self-direction has to be about living life. It's a practice and a philosophy and a structure within the home and community-based service. It's not required for somebody at the self-direction. But ultimately, I believe that folks are happier when they do. And they as I said, they have been around it can be fulfilled. The support broker rule itself can be fulfilled by a person living with a disability in collaboration with a case manager FSA, they can't actually reimburse for their time when they're their own support broker. Just a really different okay, next slide, please.

Nathan Turner 49:26
And finally, I want to delve a little bit into my personal experiences. So, I have been very fortunate to have NSSA and I&A professional consistently once Inglewood for about the past five years that I've developed a really strong relationship with her. A lot of the assistance she provides to me is similar to Erica's experience and there's a lot of paperwork authorization, but she helped me out of finding a true providers, you had to work. So, there's an internal process where the form that the SSP filled out that has specific characteristics that I need from providers. And I worked with her to add that form into the, you know, my needs. Ohio rules for support broker somebody to be their own person. But as I said, they don't get paid unless you perform the service for another person. And I had to work with my SSA, to figure out a communication style, different from the established procedures that we had.

Nathan Turner 50:57
I specifically asked her to add questions to a form that providers would fill out. And then I would have more detailed responses from them. And I would get fewer responses, but I would get better responses. I really appreciated that. The screening tool used by my caseworker to

recruit providers had to be changed to reflect my specific needs and expectations. And as I said, I get fewer responses, but they're better quality. And I really focus on long term relationships. And it's important for me to work directly with the provider. Since I don't use a fiscal intermediary, it's really me really working with that provider to bring up their strengths, while also keeping my goals in mind. And I and I really just work toward open and active communication, making sure that we are actively communicate with her that she understands my needs, they might providers understand my needs. And that also, I really try to help others sort of have the same flexibility. Because I believe peer mentoring is going to be a big part of the future in terms of embracing self-direction, and how promoting change within our system towards taking more risk and allowing folks more freedom with the supports. Okay, next slide.

Nathan Turner 52:58
And now I think we're going to turn it over to Pat Wright.

Pat Wright 53:03
Yes, thank you, Nate. Good afternoon, everyone.

Pat Wright 53:09
Let me start my video. All right. start my timer as well there. Okay, good multitasking. That's, I love it when it works like that. It doesn't always I am a senior White woman with shoulder length hair and wearing a multicolored shirt with a turquoise Shaw. And my background is fuzzy, there's a window there, maybe people can see the window. I want to thank the previous panel members, which was very good information. And it just illustrates how different we are as people that are self-directing, as well as the programs in the states that we live in. It's hard to capture 30 years of experience into 15 minutes. But I'll do my best here. So hopefully that'll make sense. And I'll try not to talk too fast so everybody can keep up. The three key points that I will be talking about is transitioning on to a waiver, which I did. Well, I got really sick in the early 90s. I had finished my master's in education, and I had two little kids I was ready to go out and have my career but that didn't happen like I thought it would. So also, just to say that we use different acronyms. So, if people have any questions about them, please put them in the chat. For instance, we use support planners, rather than support brokers in Minnesota. So, as I was saying, life is very stressful, and whatever causes these diseases is, and health issues and whatnot, but I had a life without disability. And in fact, I was very healthy. I was a hockey player in college. And I was very independent. I traveled for a couple of years in Europe when I was 18. And so, when I got sick, it was pretty devastating and overwhelming for me to be able to, you know, adapt to that lifestyle, and as well as, you know, all the services and all the help that I needed. And in the long run, you know, I can't believe who I would have been, had that not happened, because I have such a wonderful life now. But when I think back it, it was quite a transition. Yeah. And so actually, I went to Partners in Policymaking program. I

think a lot of people probably know what that is. Colleen Wick here in Minnesota started that. And when I was getting divorced in 2001, I really wanted to stay in my house, my kids were early teenagers. And it just felt like if I could do that, which I certainly couldn't do on the Social Security money that I had, didn't even cover the house payment, let alone everything else. So I was, you know, screen and I got on services for a traditional waiver in 2001. I had people assigned to me a case manager; I think I saw her like twice a year.

Pat Wright 56:57
So that was not very much. If I called her, she just was really busy. And I clearly got the message that you know, she was not. I was, well, anyway, we'll just say what it is, it was a time to, and I was told the biggest, most resourceful person doing I&A in my opinion in the state of Minnesota is a man that came from working with the state doing developing policy. And he is a trainer in our biggest County, the county that I live in. So, I met him. And as we were, you know, as I was getting information about going on self-direction, so now this is 2007, I'd had lifesaving surgery, I had very serious digestive issues was on IV nutrition, sometimes 90 pounds, and anemic and, you know, close to death a couple of times. So, I was of course, very overwhelmed just dealing with that. And then the thought of taking on a self-direction waiver was challenging. And at the same time, because the people that I were talking to about it were very friendly, very helpful, very supportive. All the things that we've been hearing are kind of key characteristics. So, at that point in time, in 2007, after this surgery, I was really needing special diet. And I was told to appeal, you know, Medicaid. And so, while that was in the legal department, they called and they said, you know, going on self-direction, you could get that covered. And so, I thought okay, I could always try it. And you know, if it gets to be too much, I can always get off of it the next year. So that was the beginning of, you know, quite a career and advocacy and disability policy. I met another woman that was working with Jerry and the three of us wanted to set up a state council for people who are self-directing. So, this was 10 years ago. It's quite a while ago. We did that. But we were met with mixed reviews at the state which was difficult. Well, meanwhile, my son had been hospitalized and diagnosed with a mental health condition. And so, I looked around I really wanted to find mental health services that were more holistic for him than just beds and meds, so to say. And so fortunately, I did find that, and I started doing a lot of advocacy there and they asked me to help set up a family network and so I did that for a couple of terms. And while I'm still involved with that, if I meet a lot of wonderful people and learn a lot myself, and fortunately, my son has been doing excellent the last couple of years. And so, let's see, what do I want to say next? So, this last fall, I was, I heard about the waiver reimagine here in Minnesota committee. And I thought that sounds interesting. They were they are putting turning four of the waivers into two. And I thought, well, that's going to affect me, it's going to affect my son. So, I want to be a part of that. So, I'm on that committee. And I also then in the spring was asked, invited on to the national, the endcaps meeting, because they knew I called up and was always wanting to

know what was going on. And, you know, an advocate. For a while I was a national advocate to after the state advocacy, the woman that was helping set that up with me, I handed that was out of the national participant, National Resource Center for Participant Direction, which now has, you know, transitioned into applied self-direction. So, I love how my life comes back from where I started.

Pat Wright 1:01:33
So right now, I'll talk about the key qualities of those helping those who have helped me become successful in self direction, in the last 17, in the last 15 years, I think when Erica has said, creating a circle of support, that that just hits the nail on the head that this is about having people that I know that I can call on that are resourceful and that anybody, not any one person has to know everything. But I've had three case managers. So, in self direction, they were pretty much involved in my situation much more than the traditional case manager before. And they were definitely much more coaches. The first one was not as familiar with county policy. So that was difficult because I had some issues coming up with the Medicaid forms. And he didn't know he instead of helping me through that I had to explain to him what was happening. And then also, the next woman, she was helpful in many ways. But there was a situation where all of a sudden, one year she said Well, you can't have that much for cleaning, homemaking services and had it was the same. So, I decided to appeal it. I was encouraged by my support planner. And so, we had to have an appeal. And in the midst of that, we just she said, well, you can call it support staff, I think. And so, it's like, Well, why didn't you just tell me that before all of this appeal. The case manager I have now is wonderful. We talk whenever something comes up, she sees me as valuable, she's resourceful. She is on board with a lot of policy changes that are happening. And I can go on and on about her. She's very timely in getting responding to my requests, which I do a lot of. So, then I've got I've had two support planners. The first one was very, very helpful. And I switched because she had had an accident her daughter and she was got very busy with her family, which I totally understand. And then I found another one and she is wonderful she can. My favorite thing about her is that she can translate whatever I needing into governmentese which is what I call it, because I can have some pretty private needs with some issues going on with my body if you think digestion, and I can talk to her about it, and she can just explain it all and see how it fits. And typically, you know I do I do get it. I don't think anything's ever been rejected because she knows how to write things out. So, I'm finishing up here. I have well I have three minutes left. Good. So, what else can I say? I mean Nate and Erica and of course Molly covered so much. So, it's fun to kind of come in at the end and feel like I can you know just add some of my experiences. Oh, the very important characteristic is being able to empower people with the dignity of risk. I think we've heard that term, which not everyone is able to do or knows how to do. And I don't think that's a judgement. I think it's just how people are trained people's philosophy, people's views, their experience, it can just be very different. So, thinking of creative options has been very

important for me, like I can have a sense of, oh, I need something here. And then I can talk to my support planner, or sometimes my case manager, and they can help me.

Pat Wright 1:05:45
[phone rings and announces caller named "Jerry"]

Pat Wright 1:05:46
I'm sorry, that's so funny, that's Jerry, he's that I&A a person I was just talking about, and he just called me. Oh, he must have, we must be on the same radar there. I've been told that some of my services are unusual, and across many categories. And so, people have been very helpful, about letting me know, like what's allowed, we have four service categories in, in our self-direction, and actually, our self-direction program in this state, our legislatures are saying, Okay, we want this to be offered before anything else, in terms of waivers and services. So, the state is kind of feeling under some pressure about that. But I think, I think from what I can see, the state is also embracing it, and it's time, and it's very healing for me to from where it was, and where it's going to be very well received and listened to and excited about the future of self-direction in Minnesota. So just to kind of finish up here, my son is now in a residential service. He's been on the waiver, traditional waiver for about five years. But he will be transitioning on to a self-direction waiver. Whether he will be living on his own or with a roommate, he will be inheriting my house. So, we're talking about, actually, we're talking with somebody over at the Arc about long term plans and estate planning and whatnot, which, you know, again, add that to the circle of support, because that's so important that, you know, our kids outgrow us, hopefully, and being able to provide and have those conversations. So, I hope I've provided some information. And thank you for listening. And if you have any questions, it's exciting for me that self-direction is growing around the country. So, thank you, everybody.

Bevin Croft 1:08:05
Thank you, Pat.

Bevin Croft 1:08:07
Hi, everyone. My name is Bevin Croft. I'm a white woman with blonde hair. I have bangs, I am in a room with pink walls and some brightly colored art on the wall. And there's a window behind me with the late afternoon sun shining in. I co-direct NCAPPS with Alixe. And I'm just so pleased to facilitate some Q&A with this esteemed panel. We have so much wisdom here. Thanks to those of you who have put questions into chat. We have a good bank of questions to start with. We haven't good 20 minutes. So, if you have other questions that you'd like to put to the panelists, please, please do put them into chat. I want to call up a comment that was put into chat earlier this afternoon. Kudos to everyone the conversation in chat, by the way, I'm loving all of the wisdom that's in chat, as well as on this panel. But ever made a note in chat

that I want each of you to comment on. She wrote support brokers and case managers are two distinct separate roles. Understanding this delineation and its importance is critical to successful self-direction. I'll drop it into chat again too. And really, I'd like each of you to respond to that. And tell me a bit about you know, from your perspective, what do you what do you see as the differences between I&A support brokers, and you know, kind of more or traditional case managers, Support Coordinator roles. So, whoever would like to go first.

Erica Andres 1:10:10
I can go first. Yeah. So, I think that they are two distinct things. And that's kind of what Molly brought up in the, in that one slide, I think kind of goes through it a little bit, but also, the support brokers and case managers in mind. So, I should preface it by saying in Wisconsin, we have an Irish consultant, which would be the I&A equivalent of is the I&A percent. And the IRIS consultant is a person who does the plan with the participant doesn't need paperwork submitted to the financial agency, all of those things. If people coming into the program feel that they need a little more help self-directing, then they can have a plan service as a support broker, which would be that person that's like really on the ground with them doing things. So that is that Iris consultant is just someone who provides information and resources, right. So, if you need a new day program, that person would be Iris consultant would give you a list of maybe 60 programs that you could check out on your own and figure it out yourself, and then get back to them and tell them which one you want. And it's the plan. But a support broker maybe would be more the person that's going to each day program with you helping you think of questions you want to ask helping the student environment. And if it's a place you want to go to things like that. So, I think that for me, because of those two positions in Wisconsin, the I&A person, although I love my I&A person, she's phenomenal. She is really just a behind the scenes person, right? I sent her when I need overtime on my plan, I send it to her when I want to do service, I would send it to her. But the support broker is actually the person that would partner with me to maybe put an ad in the paper or go through job applicants or help me make up interview questions. And one of the things they didn't mention is that I actually am a support broker in Wisconsin, I'm a provider, I am signed up with Iris program to be a provider. And so those are the things that I was doing before I decided to join the local ASD team full time. But I was you know, putting ads up for people and sitting in on interviews and maybe helping to advocate for people on their behalf. If they just didn't know, you know, the right words to use or the right lingo, like Pat said, there's all sorts of abbreviations and lingo here, you know, right. So just maybe being more of a, an advocate in the role as just as opposed to just like providing a resource and letting the person go with it.

Bevin Croft 1:12:55
Great. Thank you, Erica. What's the Pat, would you like to?

Pat Wright 1:13:00
Yeah, I could say a few things here, the support planner role and the case manager role are very different. However, you know, I just saw a new chat, somebody mentioned that sometimes it is the same person in their state. In Minnesota, the support planner is who I go to, to help me write up the plan. And then when I need changes, she's the person also that I talked to about that. And then she can write up an addendum and the case manager approves it. Of course, it has to go through a state processes well. But you know, I mean, it'd be interesting to ask them, how they see their roles as different because, you know, when I need something, and I want to talk to somebody to get information, I feel like I could equally talk to either one of them. And maybe because the support planner is the designated support planner, although the case manager the same way and she's very generous with her time. And they both know about what's going on in the counties and the FMS and with the state and whatnot. So, they share a lot. I don't, I'm sure in other states, they do very different things. But there are a lot of crossovers in Minnesota.

Bevin Croft 1:14:28
Thank you, Pat. How about Ohio, Nate?

Nathan Turner 1:14:33
I think I would say that they definitely are distinct roles. I think, specifically for the SSA caseworker or any person in Ohio, you know, they're heavily they do they do it all, but they're focused on facilitating the development of the person-centered plan, monitoring for compliance. There sorts of things, I think, with the support broker. And I definitely agree that there's a huge, huge potential to refocus and strengthen peer mentoring to live the experiences of people with disabilities through support broker, because I think that's going to be a more consistent relationship, at least, I'm finding that a lot of the I&A folks have a lot of turnover in those jobs. And that since support brokers, again, you know, more directly work with a person and maintain a longer relationship, they're going to hopefully, get to know that person a little bit better, help them, you know, prepare for their meeting with their caseworker and kind of identify, what are the things that they want in their life? And how can supports help them get there, and that just says, do that as well. But I think, especially with lived experience, comes a really unique insight into the planning process. And I think that's where, you know, the huge differences between the case manager and his brokerage?

Bevin Croft 1:16:21
Okay, put a pin in that Nate, because I'm gonna ask about that. And Molly, you know, I'm here, you know, but what's the thing if you've seen one self-direction program, you've seen one self-direction program? I'm getting a feel for that here. But what do you think from your sort of national vantage point about this, about this distinction?

Molly Morris 1:16:40
Yeah, you know, I think everybody, all the other panelists have covered this really well, I would say sometimes, I understand things through metaphor or analogy. And you know, really thinking about the support broker role and function, really thinking of it as a coach, somebody who's an advisory role, providing support, giving the information that the person who's in charge needs in order to be successful. And I think one way to think about it to kind of check yourself on this philosophy. Philosophy is like, imagine if you're watching a professional sports game. And the coach jumped off the sidelines and started playing the game, that would be wildly inappropriate, it would be shocking, like, it's absurd. And I think it's the same level of absurdity. If somebody in a support broker or an AI in a role steps in and takes over, it's no, you know, the person who is self-directing is the expert. Of course, we all need support to know how to be successful in different kinds of roles. You know, the most elite athletes benefit from having a coach, but that coach's job is not to step in and take over. And I think really embodying that philosophy is just a really important takeaway.

Bevin Croft 1:17:54
Fabulous, thank you, Molly. I always appreciate a metaphor, or assembly, or whatever that was, thank you. Quick follow up question to whomever would like to answer it. In your experience, because as you as Dee mentioned, in chat in many states that these are the same, the same role. A case manager is, you know, functionally providing I&A services or support coordinator. And I think the poll showed that too, right? So, like about 40% of you, it's a dual role. In your experience, can a case manager where the traditional pardon the term caseload but number of people that they support at a given time? With that traditional number, can they effectively provide information and assistance? Do they have the time to be able to perform an ion a role? Just anyone who'd like you don't have to respond to that. anyone who'd like to,

Pat Wright 1:19:00
I like felt like, Erica, really did a good job of talking about that. As well as Molly, really, I by, you know, I suppose it could happen. I don't know that I would trust a case manager that I knew had this huge caseload of people that they were helping on their traditional and, you know, I don't know, maybe that's not fair to say. But, at least for me, the case managers that I had, you know, the traditional and the ones that were, you know, the self-direction ones were just so completely different people. And I don't think it would be impossible, but I myself, because of the experience that I've had, the ones that I'm you know, are only doing soft. I mean, you know, somebody who was working at the county, the largest county in Minnesota, again, was saying that when self-direction first came up in Minnesota, which I believe was it like 15 years ago, they were part of the 15 original states, you know, half the half the case managers left,

because they just didn't feel like that was appropriate, or they could, you know, whatever that was about I don't even want to say, but, you know, I, I believe things can be possible. So, I'll just leave it at that.

Bevin Croft 1:20:38
Thank you, Pat. And Nate, I saw you come off mute. There you go.

Nathan Turner 1:20:41
Yeah, thank you. No, I would say, especially in Ohio, we really try to keep these to the DD system. Since the services are administered locally, or I should say, are administered locally, we really try to keep those participant outs as low as possible and no higher than about 35. So, I think in Ohio, it's more about a culture and mindset shift toward dignity of risk, and really allowing your folks to make those decisions about you who's going to support them, and how much money are they going to give the provider and when, and, you know, some regulatory changes after I've been to the way this works are designed to give us more flexibility. But it's really about embracing that wide set shift and understanding that the vast majority of us are capable of doing this without adequate support.

Bevin Croft 1:21:51
Awesome. Yeah. Thank you, Erica,

Erica Andres 1:21:54
I think y'all probably know my stance on that answer. But I do also, I mean, just point out, right, I guess it depends on the person, as a case manager kind of made-up percent. As Nate kind of pointed out, like, I would like to believe that if I was a traditional case manager, and I'm helping people with soft direction that I would be like, well, yes, you want to do subtraction, I will take the time. And so, I think that there are just really a lot of people who actually truly believe in self direction, even though they do have people using traditional services on their, you know, participant load, too. So I totally, I do believe that you can I just think that for the poor person who's trying to do that job, it is just so much more to add on to people who are probably already very overworked because of the funding that's in place that they already are having to partner with so many people that then to add in the element of people's self-directing also, is just more to add on to their plate that is already, like looks like Thanksgiving dinner. Right.

Pat Wright 1:23:05
Thank you. Great.

Bevin Croft 1:23:07
Just one quick call before we go to the next question, which will be a little quick but Suzanne Crisp here, another wonderful national expert on self-direction. Hello, Suzanne. And another example she gave is a case manager keeps the trains running, whereas the support program makes sure the participant is ready to travel and helps to board if the person wants a detailed recording. So, another really nice metaphor. Well, thank you. That's, this is such a key piece. And I'm glad we were able to hash it out together. All right, I want to ask one more question. And I'll ask you all to keep your remarks brief to like 30 seconds or so if you can I know that we could do a whole webinar on this. Maybe we should. But this is around the role of peer support, the promise of peer support, and any best practice in peer support in providing information and assistance. So, people with lived experience, who intentionally use that lived experience in their paid professional roles. Have you seen it work well in support broker I&A roles? And what's your what's your stance? Maybe Molly, we'll go to you first and see.

Molly Morris 1:24:24
Sure. This is absolutely something that happens. I think particularly in self direction programs that serve people with serious mental illness, there tends to be more of an emphasis on hiring peers. And I will say just if you take away only one thing from today, whatever your respective role is, I hope you'll walk away with curiosity and interest in how to help support more peers to serve in this role, because I think there's nothing more impactful than getting this kind of support from somebody who's lived it.

Alixe Bonardi 1:24:59
What do you think, Pat?

Pat Wright 1:25:06
Well, I have to admit, I met a 12-step person from way back. And that's all about being a peer supporter with each other. And I've been very involved in the mental health world. And that's, you know, peer supporters. And, you know, my son, I have seen my son has AP team, Assertive Community team, and he has a counselor that is a peer supporter, and she's been with him for like, 1011 years, and she has just been able to be with him. He's been hospitalized 12 times just no matter what was going on. And she told me early on, and she said, well, you know, I don't have a lot of mental health training. And I said, Good, because then you don't have to unlearn a lot. So, yeah, I think having peer supports that really understand the process. That's what self-direction and is, you know, we are figuring out what we need, and having other people's support is, you know, very important, and to influence advocacy.

Bevin Croft 1:26:06
Yes, yes. Thank you, Pat. What do you think, Nate, you had a, you had some great stuff to say on this topic before anything else to add?

Nathan Turner 1:26:15
Always remember, life is about living, not about disability. And then if we're not at the table, where are the menu, I absolutely think that peer support is critical to strong Iron Age support broker programs. And these support systems really need to embrace the lived experience of people living with disabilities, because we're going to bring unique, unique insight and experience. And I think that one of the best ways to do this is to strengthen our collaboration with Centers for Independent Living.

Bevin Croft 1:26:50
Very, thank you. Thank you, Nate, for dropping that. Erica, you get the last word on this. And I'll turn things over to Alixe.

Erica Andres 1:26:59
I sure hope that it's been successful in peer support, because otherwise, that means I wasn't very good at my job. But yes, I definitely can see that, you know, when I popped into a participants home, and they saw me come strolling in with my wheelchair, right, they would kind of do a double take. But it definitely throughout the whole, a whole eight years, I kept getting, it's so great, because you understand what I'm going through, you understand what I needed. You really got it, you know, you're just you get it on such a different level than anyone else would. And I, you know, I did, obviously, and so I just think that I was able to, and I'm not trying to like, do my own horn or whatever, but just was able to get people to understand they could do more than they really thought they could I had several parents who thought their children would not be able to work because oh my gosh, contraband and developmental disabilities, so they just should be at day program all day. And that's where they belonged. But, you know, then they saw me and realize, oh, hey, we, you know, we could explore job opportunities or things like that, because people with disabilities can actually go out into the workforce and do things. So, I think that that did help. And that's why it's so important.

Bevin Croft 1:28:14
Over to you Alixe.

Molly Morris 1:28:22
I think you're muted, Alixe.

Alixe Bonardi 1:28:30
Sorry about that. I wanted to express my gratitude to our partners at Applied Self-Direction and last word to you, Molly, and we will be bringing up a post-webinar evaluation, which people can certainly respond to in the moment. But over to you, Molly.

Molly Morris 1:28:46
Thanks, Alixe. I think just to end I just want to again, thank everybody for coming here to give focus and attention to this really critical topic. I think all of us on the panel, really agree that we hope you will walk away with a just deepened understanding about what information and assistance is, what it can look like, and whatever your respective seat is at the table in the world of self-direction that you have a desire to help make sure in your self-direction program. Information and assistance is as strong as it possibly can be. And that we can work together as a national community to continue to talk about what can make this service really the best possible, including hiring peers. But thank you everybody for being part of the conversation and hope to have many more conversations about this in the future.

Alixe Bonardi 1:29:35
Thanks, Molly. Thanks, everyone, and we look forward to hearing from you and don't forget to scroll down. There are more questions in the post webinar evaluation. There's a total of six questions and we look forward to hearing from you and follow up. Follow up conversations and in future webinars. Take care everyone.