

OVERVIEW OF THE HCSCC SUPPORTED DECISION MAKING PROJECT

The HCSCC Supported Decision Making (SDM) Project is part of HCSCC's ongoing commitment to improving the safety and quality of services provided to vulnerable people with disability.

The HCSCC Charter of Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 12 of the Convention, "*Equal Recognition before the Law*", describes the right of a person with disabilities to make their own decisions, that is, "expressed wish" while utilising support of their choosing rather than "best interest".

In August 2013, HCSCC employed Ms Cher Nicholson to extend the work started with the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) SDM project. There will be two rounds of activity in the project. Round one commenced in October 2013 and closed in May 2014. The second round commenced in August 2014 and will close in May 2015 and will be independently evaluated.

The model is centred on a person with a disability, the 'decision maker', and one or more supporters. The decision makers are people with complex needs including physical and intellectual disabilities, with some being non-verbal. Some live in institutional settings and/or are dependent on disability services for most of their needs.

The supporters are preferably drawn from the decision makers natural networks, are of their choosing and are not paid workers. The decision maker supported by their supporter makes an agreement/commitment about what decisions they want to make and how support will be delivered. Informal and formal networks are co-opted to form a team around the decision maker to aid with the decisions and to help enact their wishes. The aim of the team is to connect and mainstream the decision maker outside of disability services. Their progression is then not dependent on finances or service provision.

The model works with what is possible rather than what is available in disability services. It aids in maintaining and renewing the social relationships of the decision maker. The model focuses on current and future opportunities for the decision maker, their wishes and dreams rather than their experiences, or the limitations of organisations that work with them.

Cher's role in the project is to train, mentor and coach disability service workers to run the SDM processes. Eight key disability service providers have taken part in the training and coaching/mentoring program. They are from both government and non-government services, a local council and two participants from overseas.

Paid peer consultants with lived experience of disability who took part in the previous OPA SDM project, assisted with the training. The trainees reported that meeting the peer consultants was a powerful way for modelling the practise of SDM. Similarly, the paid peer consultants reported that they felt affirmed and valued by the process.

A Community of Practise led by Cher was held monthly with key guest speakers and discussions to further the skills, experience and knowledge of the trainee facilitators.

The model allows all parties to measure success in a different way. Success may not be the enacting of a decision, but creating an environment where decisions can be made and rights have been upheld.

Future Directions for the HCSCC SDM Project

The first round of training has shown that a short intervention of three to four months can and did change the lives of decision makers. They required less support and opportunities grew for them to take their rightful place in the community regardless of their finances or service availability. They emerged from their disability to gain recognition of their citizenship to live real lives that are self-authored.

The aims of the second round are to maximize the impact in the culture and service change within two selected organisations. As well as five participants from each organisation, their work supervisors will also be trained. The two facilitators from those organisations who undertook the initial training, will support and coach from within. Cher will continue to mentor the trainees closely to maintain the integrity of the model.

A memorandum of understanding has been forged with HCSCC and the two agencies with the organisations, government and non-government working together wherever possible to share learnings.

The Community of Practise will continue with facilitators from the first round and grow with the trainee facilitators from the second group thus spreading the influence of the training.

For more information about the HCSCC SDM Project, please contact Cher Nicholson on 08 8226 8652, or email info@hcsc.sa.gov.au

Links

HCSCC report: http://www.hcsc.sa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/h_disability_public_report_march_2013.pdf

HCSCC context paper: "*Towards safety and quality in disability services: Confronting the corruption of care*": http://www.hcsc.sa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/h_towards_safety_and_quality_in_disability_services.pdf

UN Convention: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>

OPA SDM Project: http://www.opa.sa.gov.au/resources/supported_decision_making