

The Individual Habilitation Plan: The Role of the Family

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The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) is mandated to have a plan for each person receiving services from DDD. Over the past few years, DDD and agencies providing services to individuals with developmental disabilities have been working on trying to make the IHP truly a plan not developed **for** an individual but one developed **with** an individual and the important people in his/her life.

Who receives an IHP? All individuals who are deemed eligible for services by DDD must have some type of plan. When an individual receives residential services from DDD and lives in a group home, supervised apartment, supportive living, community care residence, or a developmental center, an IHP must be developed and updated yearly for that individual. Also, individuals receiving day services at a facility-based Adult Activity Center will have an IHP.

What is an IHP? An Individual Habilitation Plan is “a written plan of intervention and action that is developed by the Interdisciplinary Team. It specifies both the prioritized goals and objectives being pursued by each individual, as well as the steps being taken to achieve them. It may identify a continuum of skill development that outlines progressive steps and anticipated outcomes of services. The IHP is a single plan that encompasses all relevant components, such as an education plan, a behavior modification plan, a program plan, a treatment plan and a health care plan. (Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities, Division Circular #35, 1995).

Principles of IHP Development: The following principals are used as the framework for the development of an IHP to ensure that the supports and services reflect the individual’s desires and needs. The IHP should assist the individual in doing the following in his/her life:

1. Facilitate connections and relationships
2. Maximize independence
3. Enhance self worth
4. Encourage self-determination
5. Enhance physical and emotional well being

Who are the important people involved in developing the IHP? The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) develops the IHP. This team is a group of people who are involved in the individual’s life. The individual is the most important member of the team and should take as active a role as possible in developing the plan. The IHP does not belong to the IDT; it belongs to the individual who is receiving the supports and services. The family and friends of the individual are also members of the team, and have an important role in the development of the plan. When the individual is not able to communicate his/her thoughts or ideas easily, input from the family and/or friends will be sought. The guardian, if applicable, the DDD case manager, and other staff that work with the individual are also members of the IDT.

One person, the plan coordinator, is given the responsibility for the coordination of the plan that includes both the development and monitoring of the plan. The activities of the plan coordinator include but are not limited to meeting with the individual and other key people before the IHP meeting, setting the date for the IHP meeting in conjunction with the individual, conducting the meeting, assuring that the IHP document is completed and sent to the appropriate people, and monitoring the progress of the goals and objectives set by the IHP. The individual, himself/herself, may assume this role, or the individual can assist the plan coordinator in some parts of the role. In some instances, the DDD case manager may assume this role.

It is important for the family to know who the plan coordinator is and how he/she can be contacted. The family should also know who the other members of the IDT are and what their roles are with the individual.

What is discussed at an IHP meeting? The format of the IHP meeting may change depending on where the individual lives and the nature of the services he/she receives from DDD. However, the main purpose of the meeting is to develop supports and services that are based on the individual's specific desires and needs. Family members can request a copy of a blank IHP form. This may allow you to determine the main issues that will be discussed. Remember, all of the sections may not be relevant to your family member.

The main sections of the Community Services IHP are: Biography, Life Plan, Relationships, Residential, Work/School, Community and Recreation, Physical and Emotional Well Being, Clinical Information, Medication Administration, Guardianship Review, Financial Review, Transportation, Supervision, Additional Support Services, and Additional Important Information. (The first 8 sections of the IHP are to be completed by the Plan Coordinator with the individual, and other relevant members of the IDT, especially family members, before the meeting and discussed at the meeting.)

What is the role of the family? Families can play an important role in the development and implementation of an IHP for their family member. The following are some issues that a family should consider in the process:

- Remember that the IHP is not a family plan but the individual's plan.
- Families, who often know the individual best, should be willing to assist others in learning about their family member, while respecting the wishes of the individual.
- You may be contacted before the meeting to supply specific information to assist the plan coordinator in developing the IHP.
- Try to attend the meeting if at all possible. If you cannot attend, ask for feedback from the plan coordinator about what was discussed at the meeting. You should also receive a copy of the completed IHP.
- Do not be intimidated by professional titles. Make sure you are introduced to all of the people at the meeting and learn what their role is in your family member's life. Ask questions. Do not let professionals use abbreviations and acronyms without explaining them to you.
- Keep yourself and the other IDT members focused on your family member at all times. If you have concerns about some of the issues being discussed at the meeting, express them at the meeting. It is important that a consensus be arrived at about the supports and services your family member will receive in the upcoming year.
- Keep in touch with the plan coordinator throughout the year to make sure the important tasks are being completed. If you assume responsibility for a certain part of the plan, remember to follow through with your responsibility. Let the plan coordinator know what progress you have made.
- You might not be invited to the meeting if you are not the guardian and your family member has requested that you not attend. Respect the wishes of your family member, but work with the plan coordinator and your family member to determine if you have important information for input into the IHP.
- An IHP that is developed based on the input of the individual and the important people in his/her life can be an important tool in assisting the individual in obtaining the quality of life that he/she wants. The value of the family's role in this process cannot be underestimated.