

Florida Statewide Quality Council Community Connections Quality Improvement Initiative

2014-15 Quality Improvement Initiative: People receiving services want valued social roles and friendships with general community members. Friendships and valued social roles have a strong positive impact on both physical and emotional health and well-being.

Statement of Problem: More than a third (36 percent) of adults with I/DD receiving services in Florida report feeling lonely sometime or often. In addition, 76 percent have not had an opportunity to participate in self-advocacy meetings or events. (Source: National Core Indicators, Florida data 2013-14, Adult Consumer Survey)

Quality Improvement Project: Share resource with providers and support coordinators with how-to steps for supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to develop broader social networks. Dr. Amado's manual and activity workbook, *Friends: Connecting people with disabilities and community members*, are free to view and download at link: <http://rtc.umn.edu/friends/>

Strategy 1: Share *Friends* resource with QC members.

Status: Completed. Delmarva staff distributed to QC members in 2014.

Strategy 2: Create an email announcement introducing *Friends* resource and distribute to providers and to support coordinators. Delmarva will post manual and activity workbook to their website and ask APD regions to disseminate announcement to providers and at their monthly meetings. Distribution of announcement to support coordinators will be through XXXX?

Status: QC members to review draft email announcement below at October 2015 QC meeting.

Strategy 3: Form a learning community of providers, support coordinators, and other interested stakeholders using *Friends* manual. Schedule periodic calls to share experiences, discuss progress, barriers encountered and possible ways to remove barriers. Dr. Amado could be brought in on occasion to facilitate next steps.

Email Announcement to DD Service Providers (DRAFT):

Hello Provider,

Supporting people to establish social connections with community members is now an expected outcome of services and a responsibility of service providers. Research shows that people with friendships and relationships are healthier and more satisfied with their lives and services.

You are committed to this, but supporting people to create personal social networks is not easy. How to actually do it? What resources are out there proven to work, particularly with people with significant disabilities or communication differences?

The Florida Statewide Quality Council, which includes volunteer providers, self-advocates, and waiver service coordinators, consulted with a national expert, Dr. Angela Amado at the University of Minnesota, Institute for Community Inclusion. Angela has been researching and consulting on relationship development for people with disabilities for decades. Angela published a free how-to manual and workbook with practical suggestions on how to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to create personal social networks with community members.

Angela's manual, *Friends: Connecting people with disabilities and community members*, and the accompanying activity workbook can be downloaded for free at: <http://rtc.umn.edu/friends/>

This manual is EASY to understand! Examples of practical guidance include:

- Focus on relationships not activities when developing service plan goals and in daily life activities. Shift thinking from planning an “activity” to “who is this person going to get to know there?”
- Routine is important to meeting people. Relationships grow from routines of:
 - Same place
 - Same time
 - Same people meeting over time
 - Around a shared interest

Angela's approach has been used successfully with individuals with a wide range of disabilities and forms of communication, including with people who do not use words to express themselves, and those who have blindness and deafness along with severe intellectual disability.

We hope you share the *Friends* resource with your staff and start using it. Also, let us know if you are interested in participating in a forum with others in the state using this manual. We are considering starting a learning community of users to share experiences.

We welcome your comments and feedback,

Florida Statewide Quality Council

Email announcement to Waiver Support Coordinators (DRAFT):

Hello Waiver Support Coordinator,

Supporting people to establish social connections with community members is now an expected outcome of services. Research shows that people with friendships and relationships are healthier and more satisfied with their lives and services.

You may be asked by providers how to support individuals to create personal social networks, or want to help a provider try another approach when establishing service plan goals. This email is to introduce you to a resource you can share with providers – and utilize yourself for consultations and service planning.

The Florida Statewide Quality Council, which includes volunteer providers, self-advocates, and waiver service coordinators, consulted with a national expert, Dr. Angela Amado at the University of Minnesota, Institute for Community Inclusion. Angela has been researching and consulting on relationship development for people with disabilities for decades. Angela published a free how-to manual and workbook with practical suggestions on how to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to create personal social networks with community members.

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Angela's approach has been used successfully with individuals with a wide range of disabilities and forms of communication, including with people who do not use words to express themselves, and those who have blindness and deafness along with severe intellectual disability.

This manual is EASY to understand and put into practice! Examples of practical guidance include:

- Focus on relationships not activities when developing service plan goals and in daily life activities. Shift thinking from planning an “activity” to “who is this person going to get to know there?”
Typical activity-focused goal – Elizabeth will participate in the Food Bank two times a month.
Relationship-focused goal – Elizabeth will participate in the Food Bank on Wednesday afternoons and meet two people who appreciate her gifts. She will be supported to ask those two people to do something else with her, e.g., go out for coffee or a meal, go for a walk, see a movie, etc.
- Routine is important to meeting people. Relationships grow from routines of:
 - Same place
 - Same time
 - Same people meeting over time
 - Around a shared interest

We hope you use and share this resource. Also, let us know if you are interested in participating in a forum with others in the state using this manual. We are considering starting a learning community of users to share experiences.

We welcome your comments and feedback,

Florida Statewide Quality Council