

PERSON-CENTEREDNESS IN HOME & COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES (HCBS)

Insights from Organizations Doing It Well

Person-centered planning and service delivery are the foundation of high-quality HCBS. Person-centeredness means people have choice and control—over where they live, who they spend time with, and how they are supported to live in the community.

WHAT WE WANTED TO KNOW

- What strengths and practices support excellence in person-centered HCBS?
- How can these insights help HCBS providers do better?

WHO WE TALKED TO

We issued a national call for nominations of organizations providing exceptional person-centered services.

We interviewed people from four standout organizations—including CEOs, frontline staff, HCBS recipients, and family members—to understand their experiences and insights.

WHAT WE HEARD

Leaders shared key organizational strengths that help support person-centered care:

- Staff received competitive pay, benefits, recognition and high-quality training,
- Structures supported staff autonomy, flexibility, and team collaboration.
- Improvement was guided by feedback from staff, recipients, and families.
- Leaders used strengths-based approaches—focusing on the abilities and interests of the people they serve.
- Leadership, staff, and recipients were engaged in advocacy connected to disability rights.
- Open-door policies encouraged honest, frequent, two-way communication.
- Teams actively supported the dignity of risk, helping people take meaningful life chances.

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WHAT LEADERSHIP & DIRECT SUPPORT STAFF SAID HELPED THEM

- Having a personal connection to disability or lived experience as part of the disability community.
- Feeling valued and supported by the organization.
- Enjoying genuine relationships with the people they support.
- Working in a culture of trust, flexibility, and shared problem-solving.



WHAT RECIPIENTS & FAMILIES VALUED

- Support to pursue personal goals and interests.
- Trust that their voices are heard and respected.
- A sense that the organization is a true partner, not just a service provider.

EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE

- Partnerships with local employers, advocacy groups, and professional networks.
- Accreditation and conferences helped organizations stay current and connected.
- The Independent Living and Disability Rights Movements shaped values and priorities.

THE BOTTOM LINE: COMMUNICATION IS EVERYTHING

Across every conversation, communication emerged as the core driver of person-centered care.

WHAT EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION LOOKS LIKE

- **Core values:** Honesty, transparency, validation, reciprocity.
- **Active listening:** Reading behavior, tone, and body language.
- **Personalized support:** Deep understanding of each individual supported.
- **Feedback culture:** Embracing disagreement and continuous learning.

- **Empathy first:** Interpreting behaviors as communication, not problems.
- **Respecting families:** Seeing advocacy as love and commitment.
- **Customized conflict resolution:** Trust built through open, responsive communication.

SO, WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Lead with intentional communication. Support your team, listen actively, and create structures that let people be seen, heard, and supported—on their terms.

That's the heart of person-centered HCBS.