



INDEPENDENT FACILITATION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Kingston and District Community Gathering

Introduction

People from Kingston and District attended a gathering to explore the concept and practice of Independent Facilitation, with the desire to develop community capacity to deliver this alternative service relationship.

Participants included people with disabilities, family members (parents and siblings), staff from agencies, and one staff member from local school district. Organizations represented included:

- Community Living Kingston
- Extend-a-Family Kingston
- Brockville and District Association for Community Involvement
- Kingston and District School Board

Most people attending had very little previous knowledge or experience with the concept and practice of Independent Facilitation. People came because of their wish to take advantage of every opportunity to expand their knowledge and understanding of anything that might support their life, or the life of someone they love. The group articulated that as a whole, things in Kingston tend to seem hidden from families. Communication is poor and families do not often find out about or have clarity on services and offerings in the community.

A few families present had experienced “facilitation” as it has been offered by Helen Sanderson Associates (HSA) through a fee for service option for Person Directed Planning, utilizing MCSS Passport funding.

Understanding What Independent Facilitation Is In Practice: The Ongoing Journey Across The Gap Between Current Reality And A Desired Future

Since most people attending had very little knowledge about the practice of Independent Facilitation, the focus for the first part of the day was on deepening understanding.

PETER ZICHY'S STORY

The story of Peter Zichy in Windsor was shown using the video, "My Life, My Choice" (www.inclusion.com/dvdmylife). Peter's story captures:

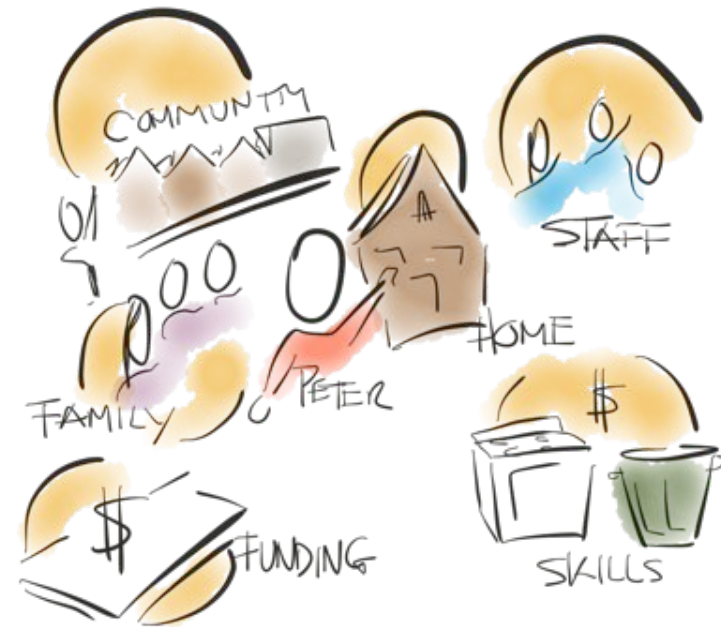
- the experience of being sent to live in an institution during his adolescent years
- returning to live in his family home for most of his adult life where he had little responsibility for his life and decisions
- his mother passing away at the age of 74
- his brothers and sister living far away
- Peter's decision that he wanted to stay living in his family home
- the need to mobilize support to enable Peter to live in "my home":
 - funding
 - staffing
 - community connections
 - developing Peter's capacity to take responsibility for taking care of his own life and decisions.

In a situation such as Peter's, there are many parts that need to be able to be moved and connected to one another so that Peter's life can work. Before deciding what services are necessary, and where the location of his home will be, someone needs to connect with Peter, to listen free from the constraints of service delivery models and his family's limited understandings of what is possible. The "independent" aspect of Independent Facilitation relates to this, someone who is not confined or "encumbered" by the limits of service deliveries it exists in agencies, or the reality that families often list ideas because of the time and effort it will take for them to

act on these ideas without support from the system. The Independent Facilitator is the person's listening post, who hears their story, circumstance, desires, and needs, and assists in mobilizing the supports necessary.

In Peter's story, there are many parts that need to be activated and connected:

- Peter's vision for his own life and his belief in himself
- his family's desire and ability to be supportive
- his home:
 - as a place to live
 - as a valuable asset that needs to be managed and maintained
- Peter's need for some support, and his decision that he wanted to recruit and choose people he can "trust":
 - to help him learn skills to take care of his own life
 - stay connected to what is happening in his daily life making sure he is OK
- accessing and utilizing funding that can enable Peter to live in his own home
- his neighbourhood and community where Peter can be engaged and supported.



An Independent Facilitator: is a person who can pay attention to Peter, and all of the parts that need to work together in his life; is resourceful in identifying resources and making connections, some available through government programs, others found in the community, and among friends and family; someone who believes that there are possibilities beyond what exists in the service system; an ally for Peter, assisting him in managing important relationships in his life; assisting Peter in identifying what he wants and needs; helping him find the resources and support that can best meet his vision and his needs. An Independent Facilitator stays connected with the person, their family and allies over time, enabling people to adjust and realign support as life changes.

A narrative summary of the of the composite picture is captured in the table below:

Desired Future	Current Reality
<p>Friends and relationships...people in their life who are engaged in freely given, mutual relationships, where people care about each another. There is a recognition that pets are also to be included in this relationship vision.</p> <p>A variety of socially valued roles...people will have multiple valued roles through which they can become known, examples identified: having a job; member of a book club; hockey player; volunteer.</p> <p>Belonging...places and relationships where people feel that they belong, and where they are missed when they are not there.</p> <p>Pursuing my interests...people have interests, things that bring them joy, and would be supported to pursue and spend time on things such as these: travel, music, gardening, technology. These are the places where people can develop skills that are valuable beyond these interests, eg. technology that lets people communicate.</p> <p>Goals and dreams to reach for...people want to be moving forward toward possibilities and experiences that are beyond what they currently experience.</p>	<p>System messages...the Ministry, agencies, programs, are all designed to focus on the “problem”, “disability”, “vulnerability”, leaving families and people with developmental disabilities weakened, and alone.</p> <p>“You can’t”...the entire system is built up “dis”ability, and seems to focus on what people “can’t” do, negating all of the capacities that they may have. Needing some support does not mean there are no capacities, but the system sends messages that this is the case.</p> <p>“You are not worthy”...people experience feeling that they are not worthy of the kind of support that they need, and that they should simply be grateful for what they receive.</p> <p>“You don’t belong”...the thrust of messages from the system is that people do not belong in the community, that there are “special” places and programs for people with developmental disabilities. The general public sees segregated programs, and believes that people “belong” there.</p> <p>“You have already been taken care of”...the general public is disconnected from the reality and circumstances of people with developmental disabilities and their families, and they simply believe that “those people” have already been taken care of with tax payer dollars used for programs and services.</p>

Desired Future	Current Reality
<p>My Home...people will have a place that they can call “my home”, somewhere they choose and have control over, that reflects who they are, where they feel safe.</p> <p>Places to go in “my community”...people will have places they go where they meet people, become known, spend time, become a “regular”. These are the places where they can meet people who become friends.</p> <p>Ways to get around...people will have access to transportation, or live in places where they can get around. They have support to get to the places that are important to them, for work, for family, for interests, and friendship.</p>	<p>Sitting at home with Mom...one mother expressed how her son is pretty much stuck at home with her. He has nowhere to go beyond the home and he requires support, and there is none.</p> <p>Mom is unable to do anything else...this same mother explained that not only is her son stuck at home with her, but she too is stuck at home because her son has no other place to be without support. She is unable to leave home to go to work, and this places a heavy financial stress on the family. It also affects the mother’s dreams for her own life.</p> <p>Planning on their own...many families feel that they are alone in imagining and planning for the future.</p> <p>Starting early...some families whose children have been included in school, know that they have to start imagining the future early, before their sons and daughters have completed school.</p> <p>Changes in resources at 18 yrs old...the world of resources and services change when people become adults: no longer eligible for SSAH (Special Services At Home); medical professionals (pedaeatricians no longer available). It is confusing, and a lot of work to learn entirely new systems, and find essential resources and services.</p> <p>Poor communication in Kingston...families feel alone and in the dark. For some reason people are not connected and don’t have reliable ways to learn about things that can help them.</p> <p>People feel alone...families feel they are separate and alone with their circumstances.</p>

Desired Future	Current Reality
<p>Support myself financially...people will be able to work to earn a living. One person said that it is her dream to not be dependent on ODSP.</p> <p>Not being defined by a label...people will be recognized for more than the label, they will be recognized for other things about them, their passions, their kindness, their interests, their work.</p>	<p>ODSP keeps people perpetually poor...having a disability and relying on ODSP makes people feel like they will always be poor and unable to reach for a better life.</p> <p>Lack of resources...some people feel that there is a lack of resources, money and people, to take advantage of good ideas.</p> <p>Scarcity mindset...the apparent or perceived lack of resources available leaves people with a “scarcity” mindset, a lack of hope.</p> <p>Community generosity...one person identified that there is a generosity among members of the community, when they are approached and asked, but many people do not perceive that there is generosity in the community, so they don’t ask.</p>
<p>Someone I can confide in...people, especially adults, will have people beyond their parents, who they can turn to, confide in, open up about their dreams and interests, talk about what they would like to do and accomplish, and plan to make it happen.</p>	

Independent Facilitation is the work of supporting people over time as they move across the gap between current reality, and a desired future where people can be happy, safe, engaged and recognized as valued contributing citizens. It is “Independent”, meaning that it is not attached to or limited by the constraints of the existing service system programs. It involves:

- meeting a person where they are at
- listening to the person - this involves discovering the way that they communicate, and paying action to things like:
 - what is important to them
 - who is important to them

- what would they imagine for their future
- what are their gifts, capacities, and contributions
- what brings them joy and happiness
- what kind of support they need
- getting to know their family, and helping the family listen to the person
- learning about their current reality
- facilitating planning for action to move toward a desired future
- support in finding and accessing resources that make it possible to move forward including:
 - funding programs:
 - disability specific
 - other focused (eg. housing, employability)
 - community resources available to all citizens
 - people, places, and groups that can offer participation and/or support
- supporting the person and their family in exploring decisions and the potential consequences and responsibilities that are involved.

Steps to Move Forward...

Participants viewed a video created by OIFN, with leadership voices of experience sharing what it takes to get this service offering up and running in their community. The video highlights 6 key elements of getting started:

1. Parents as the driving force for something different being offered that can be useful in customizing support. Family stories provide the inspiration and ideas for innovation.
2. It takes committed leadership, people who are willing and able to take on the work of creating something new in their community.
3. Family groups and networks empower families through sharing stories, experiences, resources, and connections.
4. Allies, in the form of individuals and organizations who can support the development of Independent Facilitation, without controlling it.
5. Build the capacity to deliver Independent Facilitation, through education, training, and mentorship with experienced Facilitators.
6. It is critical to be clear about what is important, the values and aspirations of Independent Facilitation.

ACTION STEPS

The group organized themselves around steps to begin moving on what it will take to get Independent Facilitation as a viable support option in Kingston:

- a small leadership group of people committed to meeting to explore options and direction
 - this group is looking into planning to connect with an Independent Facilitation Organization (IFO) that is currently operating in another community, possibly Citizen Advocacy in Ottawa. The group will connect with and explore the possibility of visiting the IFO, or have people involved in helping start the IFO, including family members, come to Kingston.
 - the desire is to meet with families to learn about their experiences with Independent Facilitation, and what they did to get started
- one parent will connect with Community Living Kingston, a group willing to play a role as allies, and who can host learning events for families and people interested in learning more about the role and practice of Independent Facilitation

- Community Living Kingston also has a family engagement initiative that most families said no to, because they were not clear what becoming involved meant. Community Living and families began thinking about a way to dovetail the two ideas together: family engagement around independent facilitation
- one person who is currently a Transition Counselor in the school district, identified that they would like to develop the capacity to serve as an Independent Facilitator.

UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

The group was encouraged to:

- sign up for updates and news about Independent Facilitation on the oifn.ca website (at the bottom of the Home page)
- Save the Date for the upcoming OIFN “Common Threads” Conference to be held Nov. 16-17, 2016
 - bursaries may be available for families and people with disabilities
- stay tuned for the next OIFN Forum to be held in Southern Ontario.



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