



Ontario Independent Facilitation Network Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1) Who is OIFN?

The Ontario Independent Facilitation Network (OIFN) is a [Community of Practice](#) that includes people with developmental disabilities, family members and/or loved ones, independent facilitators, and other allies who are interested in supporting people to live meaningful, everyday lives in their chosen neighbourhoods and communities.

We gather together to work for justice and to bring about social change, so that people with disabilities are afforded the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities as any other citizen. We work to find common ground with other individuals, organizations, and stakeholders in our desire to further develop and promote ways for shifting our cultural understanding of how ordinary, everyday lives can be made possible for all.

We learn alongside others about the practice of Independent Facilitation and its contribution to a full life. We are committed to supporting those people we serve, their families and/or loved ones by FACILITATING CHANGE and CUSTOMIZING SUPPORTS.

OIFN is led by a group of volunteers, known as the OIFN Stewards. See the [OIFN Leadership](#) page to learn more.

2) What is Independent Facilitation?

Independent Facilitation is an ongoing process that supports people to create change. Through conversations over time, people and their family members and/or loved ones are supported to imagine possibilities, make their own choices, think about, plan for, and take steps toward creating the ordinary, everyday lives that they want in their chosen neighbourhoods and communities.

Independent facilitators support people to strengthen their voices, share their wants, needs, and gifts, and work toward their visions of a promising future. Independent facilitators work with people and families over time, assisting people to tell their stories, identify and work on action steps, and reflect on learning and new possibilities as they come into their adult lives. As things evolve, independent facilitators support people and families to talk about changes, so that next steps reflect people's current wishes, preferences, and visions for their lives.

Independent Facilitation is grounded in a set of capacities, core beliefs, and values. Visit "The Practice" section of [oifn.ca](#) to learn more about:

- [facilitating change](#)
- [the context for this work](#)
- [why "independent" facilitation is important](#)
- [safeguards to the practice](#)
- [values and principles](#)

We also encourage you to look through our website and visit the [Resources](#) page for OIFN Publications and contributions from others.



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3) How can I become involved with OIFN?

Please see our [Connect with Us](#) page for information about the number of ways you can stay connected with and involved in our network.

We invite you to sign up to the [OIFN Mailing List](#), so that you receive our newsletters. We generally send newsletters once every few months, which include updates from OIFN, upcoming events of interest, and information and resources.

OIFN is active on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Through these online platforms, we share information and resources and create spaces for interaction among network members.

By following us on social media and joining the mailing list, you will be sure to receive information about upcoming OIFN Book Club gatherings, Forums, and other learning events.

4) What does OIFN do?

OIFN works to promote justice and social change by connecting people and convening gatherings for a process of collective learning. We engage in conversations, gather and share resources, and deepen shared knowledge and understanding about the contribution and impact of Independent Facilitation as one aspect of supporting a person in living a meaningful, everyday, ordinary life. OIFN partners with others provincially, nationally, and internationally to explore opportunities for broad social action and change.

See our [What We Do](#) webpage to learn more.

5) Can I become a member of OIFN?

OIFN is a Community of Practice rather than a membership organization and, as such, welcomes participation and engagement of anyone who shares in the vision, mission, and core beliefs of the OIFN [Community of Practice](#) and its key messaging.

We invite people, family members, loved ones, independent facilitators, and allies to come together as part of a broader movement for change. We come together with others to engage in concerted action so that all people can live an everyday, ordinary life in their chosen neighbourhoods and communities.

We acknowledge the rich experiences, diverse perspectives, and valued roles that people bring, and we strive to be open, welcoming, respectful, and inclusive of all voices, so that, together, we may engage in meaningful dialogue, learn and grow, make contributions, and imagine possibilities for the future.

See “How can I become involved with OIFN?” below to learn more about the different ways you can be involved in and connect with the Community of Practice.



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6) I believe I have gifts or skills to offer to OIFN. Can I volunteer with OIFN?

There are many opportunities to support OIFN. At any given time, we may be looking for assistance with reading and offering feedback on documents, developing resources, contributing to OIFN's Social Media platforms, planning Community of Practice gatherings, participating in meetings with other network members and/or allies, etc.

OIFN is led by volunteers known as the OIFN Stewards. The OIFN Stewards meet regularly (at least once a month), and there is generally a lot of work in between meetings to keep things moving forward.

If you are interested in joining the OIFN Stewards, participating in a working group, or exploring other ways to contribute to OIFN, please [contact us](#), so that someone from OIFN can make arrangements to have a conversation with you.

7) Can OIFN provide me with an independent facilitator?

No, OIFN does not employ, contract with, train, mentor, or negotiate on behalf of independent facilitators.

8) How do I become an independent facilitator?

In Ontario, independent facilitators are not part of a regulated profession. This means that there is not one specific path, course, or background required to become an independent facilitator.

The work of Independent Facilitation requires a firm understanding of and commitment to a set of strong values and principles, as well as a complex set of skills and capacities that are gained and proven over time. OIFN encourages people who are new to the practice to take the time to understand how to put values and principles into practice and how to support people and families and/or loved ones by observing and learning from more experienced and skilled facilitators at work. This involves careful job shadowing and mentoring, reflective practice (reflecting on experience), co-facilitation, and participation in local/regional/provincial Communities of Practice. There are a variety of different training and capacity building approaches across the province that work within the same values and operate out of the basic tenets of Independent Facilitation. Each of these approaches offer complementary perspectives and add to a facilitator's overall body of knowledge.

Mentoring is a significant and highly valuable safeguard for Independent Facilitation practice that creates opportunities for new facilitators to learn the craft little by little through hands on participation and mindful observation. Working alongside and entering into dedicated dialogues with experienced mentors supports less experienced facilitators to integrate the values and principles of practice. It also assists facilitators to gain insight into the capacities needed, in order to work meaningfully with people and their families and/or loved ones. Experienced mentors guide mentees to set and achieve personal goals and enter more fully into reflective practice. It is important to note that mentoring is a practice that is regular and ongoing. Even experienced facilitators regularly seek out other mentors from whom they can learn. This is part of their commitment to lifelong learning and reflective practice.

See more about "training" in the next question to learn about opportunities to expand your facilitation skills.



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9) Does OIFN offer any training?

As a Community of Practice, OIFN endeavours to bring people, their family members, loved ones, agency allies, and independent facilitators together for shared learning. We believe that we all learn with and from each other. We encourage you to visit the OIFN Calendar of Events for upcoming OIFN events and training offerings from other organizations and Community of Practice members. We also invite you to sign-up for our mailing list and follow our Facebook page, as we will share information about upcoming events here as well: <https://www.facebook.com/OIFNCommunity>.

You can find a number of resources available on the OIFN website:

<https://www.oifn.ca/resources2/>

Please also take a look at offerings available directly from organizations including:

- LifePath Coaching and Facilitation – www.lifepathfacilitation.ca, Contact Judith McGill at jlmcgill11@gmail.com
- Facilitation Leadership Group - www.facilitationleadership.com
- Realizations Training and Resources - www.realizationstraining.com
- Helen Sanderson Associates (HSA) - www.hsacanada.ca
- Inclusion Press - www.inclusion.com

If you have more questions, please fill out our [Contact Us](#) form or e-mail gen_enquiries@oifn.ca.