



Glossary of Terms for the Self-

Determination Survey

Self-Determination -- Self-determination refers to taking control over one's life and destiny and making choices and decisions about one's life without undue interference. People who are self-determined make things happen in their lives; they are actors in their lives, not acted upon. Promoting self-determination involves enabling individuals the opportunity to make choices and exert control over various aspects of his or her life, and enabling them to build capacity in areas like problem-solving, decision-making and goal setting. Within this context, the choices and decisions individuals make must be uncoerced, informed, and unbiased.

- An uncoerced choice or decision means that the individual is presented with an array of options and is not forced into one by real or implied threat.
- Informed choice or decision means that the individual has access to positive and negative information about the available options from which he or she is to choose.
- Unbiased choices and decisions are made when the individual is not "led" to select an option through selective presentation of options or information.

Making a choice refers, quite simply, to indicating a preference between two or more options. People learn more about their preferences as they experience a greater variety of options and alternatives. In too many cases, however, the options available to people with disabilities from which they can choose are too limited or constrained. Meaningful choices are those in which the person can select from a sufficient number of options which truly reflect the persons preferences. Offering two work-related options, neither of which are based on the individual's preferences, interests or abilities does not provide sufficient options to provide opportunities to make a meaningful choice. Since choice making is the final step in the decision-making process, providing sufficient options is equally important for making decisions.

The term control is often associated with absolute dominance or authority. However, in the context of promoting self-determination, the term control is more closely aligned with directing or managing one's life. Individuals become more self-determined as they: gain enhanced capacity to make decisions, solve problems, and set goals; experience greater opportunities to make choices and take control over decisions that impact their lives, and; are provided the supports needed to overcome barriers and limitations. While level of physical, cognitive or behavioral functioning impacts relative self-determination, all persons can be enabled to become more self-determined. The key to promoting self-determination for individuals with the most significant disabilities is the degree to which individuals are, through supports and accommodations, enabled to express preferences, make choices based on those preferences, and enabled to participate in all aspects of decision-making.

Systematic supports -- Systematic supports refer to formal processes that assist individuals in seeking, gaining, or keeping employment. Systematic supports could include job search assistance, assistance during interviews, job coaching, etc.

Consumer control -- Consumer control refers to enabling the consumers of services to influence or direct the nature, quality, or quantity of the services that are being provided to themselves or to those who are receiving similar services. Means of promoting consumer control could include, but are not limited to:

1. placing consumers and other appropriate representatives (family members) in charge of monetary decisions related to their employment through brokerage arrangements or voucher systems;
2. supporting consumers to select their own jobs, job coaches, job coaching methods, etc.;
3. conducting satisfaction surveys of consumers of services as a means of ongoing quality assurance; and
4. including consumers in strategic planning for the organization.

Consumer autonomy -- Autonomous functioning refers to the movement from being primarily dependent upon someone else to being primarily dependent upon oneself for one's care and daily activities. Consumer autonomy refers to an individual being considered and treated as a unique individual with his or her own goals, preferences, circumstances, motivations, abilities, personality, and needs.

Self-direction -- Supporting individual self-direction and autonomy are important components of promoting consumer control. Promoting self-direction involves enabling the person to do for themselves what others might be doing for them. Self-direction refers to an individual's ability to independently initiate tasks or to function with limited external prompting from another individual (job coach, coworker, parent, etc.). Promoting self-direction may involve enabling supported employees to, for example, track their own hours on the job instead of having a job coach track them for them or setting and maintaining their own schedule.

Social inclusion -- Social inclusion refers to the presence and active participation of the service consumer in the formal and informal social opportunities in the workplace. Formal social opportunities include organized employee parties, outings, retreats, community services, and other activities. Informal opportunities include lunch and break periods, as well as casual, spontaneous contacts with others.

Empowerment -- Empowerment refers to the transfer of control and decision-making responsibility from the provider of services to the consumer of services. Consumers can be empowered by

1. self-advocating for more choices and control and taking necessary steps to achieve those ends;
2. being provided with information needed to make informed choices;
3. receiving training in self-advocacy or other skills; and
4. being provided with technology or supports that enable choice-making and autonomous functioning.