

Self-Directed Care in Home and Community-Based Services

What are self-directed care services?

Self-directed care services, often referred to as consumer-directed services, is a philosophy and practice that assumes that caregivers have the right and ability to assess their own needs, determine how and by whom those needs are met, and evaluate the quality of the services they receive. A growing trend in long-term services for older adults, caregivers have the ability to hire family, friends, or neighbors to provide some of the services they might need, such as meal preparation or personal care¹.

What are the advantages of self-directed services?

There are a number of advantages². Here are a few:

Sometimes caregivers and other consumers are not happy with the quality of the services they receive. If there have been problems with workers now showing up on time, or not available when needed, or restrictions from an agency on what workers can do, a self determination program might better meet your needs.

You may also be able to receive more services for the same amount of money, since you will be hiring your own worker and therefore can negotiate the rate of pay.

If you live in a rural area, home care agencies may have a particularly difficult time recruiting staff, since a provider might have to drive long distances to get to some homes. A consumer-directed program may be very effective since you may be able to hire someone who lives nearby to meet some of your needs.

¹ *Consumer Direction in Home and Community Based Services for Older People*. Suzanne R. Kunkel. Scripps Gerontology Center, Miami University, Ohio.

² *State Experiences Providing Consumer Direction to Older People*. Donna Lind Infeld, Phd. The Georgia Washington University.

What role do I play ?

If you choose to hire family and friends to provide some of the services you need, there are certain responsibilities that come with this increased choice and control. These responsibilities include managing payroll, and any applicable employment taxes and insurance, since you are considered the employer and persons that you hire are considered your employees. Some self-directed programs have an organization which can provide an array of fiscal services to handle some of the employer-related responsibilities on your behalf.

Will self-directed services replace the traditional service delivery system?

The vast majority of older persons prefer a traditional service delivery system. in receiving the help they need³. Though consumer-directed services are a growing trend and are therefore becoming available in more and more places, they are likely to be an option: you as a consumer will still be able to choose whether the traditional service delivery system, or consumer-directed services best meets your needs.

As a program administrator, how would I begin such a program?

The Georgia Division of Aging Services developed a self-directed care program for the non-Medicaid older population. Funded through the Administration on Aging's Caregiver Demonstration grant program, a guidebook has been designed to comprehensively lay out the elements of a successful model. Its purpose is to guide the reader and prospective program developer, and to offer a richness of experience in developing your own program. The guidebook is posted on this website.

As a caregiver, how do I find out more about self-directed services?

For more information on consumer-directed services, visit the web site www.consumerdirection.org.

³ *Myths and Realities of Consumer Directed Services*. Marie R. Squillace, PhD., and James Firman, Ed.D., paper supported by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

