

Social Work and People with Developmental Disabilities



PRESENTERS:

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REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKER**

AND

**JESSICA BERESFORD, BSW,
REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKER**

What are we going to talk about?



- Experiences as Social Workers in the Developmental Services field to create discussion and “food for thought”
- Challenges to providing services
- Strategies to providing services
- Successes

Angela Rail



- Registered Social Worker with the North Hastings Family Health Team
- Role includes:
 - Psychosocial assessments
 - Individual and family counseling
 - Facilitating educational groups and workshops
 - Case management
 - Working as part of an inter-disciplinary Primary Health Care Team

Jessica Beresford



- Registered Social Worker at Ongwanada
- Role includes:
 - Processing referrals
 - Family support
 - Individual supportive counseling
 - Developing and facilitating educative groups
 - Participating on a multi-disciplinary team

Challenges to Providing Services



- Challenges come in various forms
- General challenges and individual challenges
- Professional challenges
- Personal challenges

Challenges to Providing Services



- **Finances**

- Limited funding available
- Process to access and maintain funding
- Money management

Challenges to Providing Services



- **Availability of Supports and Services**
 - System challenges and changes – DSO
 - Eligibility requirements
 - Waiting lists
 - Limited resources and programs available
 - Demanding workloads

Challenges to Providing Services



- **Allocation of Power**
 - Decision making
 - Goal Identification- whose goals? SMART
 - Service mandates and guidelines
 - “Overpowering vs. empowering”- remember the individual
 - Recognizing our own power

Challenges to Providing Services



- Overall our job can feel like trying to fit a square box into a round hole
- It is difficult to work within the system to support clients with developmental disabilities identify and reach attainable goals
- Isolation and reduced resources

Strategies for Providing Services



- Being creative to work within the system
- Individualized focus
- Working within the system and individuals' abilities to plan for success and not failure
- If the plan doesn't work, change it!
- Remind ourselves what our professional purpose is and who we are working for
- Be willing to make mistakes and take a risk

Strategies for Providing Services



- **Education Groups**

- Can provide a foundation of knowledge to build upon
- Promote confidence in individuals to advocate for themselves
- Provide a safe place to practice basic skills
- Reach more than one person, time efficiency
- Encourage independence

Strategies for Providing Services



- **Individual Support**

- Think outside of the box in terms of individual counselling
- Encourage the client to share their feelings, and what they would like to get out of this experience
- Use experiential strategies
- Be prepared to work outside of your comfort zone
- Positive reinforcement
- Strengths based approach

Strategies for Providing Services



- Engaging direct support systems (interdisciplinary teams, family, home share, etc.)
 - Engage support systems to promote an individual's success
 - Provide suggestions for support system members to encourage success for individual
 - Acknowledge strengths in the support system and individual
 - Focus attention on the individual's wants and goals
 - Remember that we are always advocates

Strategies for Providing Services



- **Professional Team Work**
 - Utilize the interdisciplinary supports available
 - Reinforce the importance of an individual's engagement in planning
 - Promoting attainable goals
 - Explore many avenues for sources of issues and solutions
 - Awareness of the power imbalance from individual to professional
 - Recognize that often we do this work in isolation
 - Acknowledge the importance of networking

Strategies for Providing Services



- **Service Navigation**
 - Providing information of what is available
 - Providing support through application processes
 - Individual participation in service navigation process
 - Explanation of services

Key Points



- Power over individuals vs. personal empowerment
- Promoting attainable choices within resources available
- Remembering who we are working for
- The importance of effective individualized supports
- Creativity
- Team work
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes
- Have fun!



Thank you!!!

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