



Self-determination at HCDDS

Published in Reflections in 2006 for the 10-year anniversary

For the past several months, many staff have assisted in the creation of a book about the history of self-determination at the Board. The book isn't quite ready for publication, but here is a sneak preview of some information it contains:

The self-determination movement began at the Board 10 years ago, and initially was led by staff who were so dedicated to the effort that they volunteered to work on it outside of their full-time jobs. In 1996, 15 individuals and their families were selected out of 85 volunteers to pilot Self-determination efforts. Interviews with these early pioneers showed that they desired greater choice and control over the services they received.

Individual Budgets started in Hamilton County in 1999, and the pilot project expanded to more than 140 individuals. As Cheryl Phipps took the helm of the agency in 2000, a greater focus on self-determination ensued. A flurry of planning and change started in 2001 with the Swaim Lodge Group, and has continued from then until now. This flurry encompassed Individual Budgets for all and regionalization of Service Facilitation and other swift change, with 2002 being dubbed the year of "Shock & Awe."

While staff in the Community Resources Department have admirably led the charge throughout "Shock & Awe", evidence of Self-determination sweeping through the agency has popped up in many ways. One of the most significant has been the growth of Leaders in Action, a continually growing group of self advocates who speak up and make sure we are going in the right direction.

Our agency's efforts have caught the attention of other county boards and entities around the state, and we have become a popular resource for information and learning as others go about their efforts. Evidence of the very basic principles of self-determination have taken root in the Leadership Team, even among directors who would not be considered part of "direct service."

All Leadership Team members assist in providing direct service to one individual or a group of individuals by participating on an individual's planning team, providing transportation for individuals or groups to evening or weekend meetings and other events, presenting information at Leaders in Action meetings, or being part of an individual's social network.

Congratulations to all on the 10-year anniversary of self-determination in the Hamilton County Board of MR/DD! This anniversary serves as a reminder to all of us that we are here, not primarily for ourselves, but for those individuals with MR/DD and their families we have the honor of serving.