



“Person-Centered Approaches to Supporting Dignity of Risk for People with Disabilities”

Summary of a webinar from March 23, 2023

Introduction

This webinar is about supporting dignity of risk. “Dignity of risk” is the idea that taking risks is how we learn and grow. Taking risks helps people feel confident and independent. People with disabilities often have less control over risk taking. Agencies and direct support staff can support dignity of risk for people they support.

Personal Stories

Mary Lou talked about why risk is important. Taking risks helps people learn. Learning helps people feel self-confident. When a person feels confident, they feel better about themselves. Sometimes the service system is too cautious. People with disabilities are not allowed to take risks. Mary Lou talked about how to balance risks and safety.

Shannon talked about dignity of risk in Tennessee. In 2016, Tennessee made a goal to support dignity of risk. Shannon talked about how Tennessee put dignity of risk into practice across the state. They learned it takes time, training, and commitment to make changes in a state. Shannon says it is important to include people with disabilities in conversations on dignity of risk.

Susan gave a provider’s view on supporting risk. At her organization, they used to do a “one size fits all” type of support. Some people had too much support, others had too little. Then, her organization started using technology to help people live more independently. She learned to avoid leading with “what ifs” when supporting people with disabilities.

Carl is a self-advocate. He gets services from Susan’s organization. Carl used to live with two roommates. Carl really wanted more independence. He wanted to live in his own trailer. Carl has been living in his own trailer for 5 years.

Elise talked about how organizations can support direct support staff. Elise says it is important that dignity of risk is not held back by overly cautious direct support staff. She says supporting direct support staff to understand dignity of risk helps the people they serve. Elise gave examples of different ways that agencies can support people with dignity of risk.



NCAPPS

National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems

The speakers on this webinar were:



Mary Lou Bourne is a long-term service and supports system consultant. Mary Lou has dedicated her career to transforming service systems by designing and implementing high-quality, person-centered systems, services, for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). She has served as a Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Examiner, a member of several CMS Technical Expert Panels and has delivered training and technical assistance in 38 states.



Shannon Nehus has over 30 years of experience working with people with IDD. She joined TennCare in 2017 as the Long-Term Services and Supports Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Program Director. Before that, she spent 26 years as a leader in the provider community providing supports to children and adults with IDD. She has a Master of Science degree in Educational Psychology from Tennessee Tech University.



Susan Arwood is the Executive Director of Core Services of Northeast Tennessee, a provider agency that provides residential and community supports for adults with IDD. Before coming to Core Services, Susan spent more than 30 years working with the Tennessee Division of Rehabilitation Services. Susan and her team lead Core Services through as a TN DIDD Person-Centered Organization, Enabling Technology Transformation Agency and Employment First Agency.



Carl Lipford is an advocate at Core Services and was living in a home with 24/7 supports and housemates when Tennessee introduced an Enabling Technology project in 2018. Carl was not happy with his life; his dream was to live alone in a trailer park. Through the Enabling Technology project, Carl's dream became a reality. Five years later, Carl is living his best life and has shown the nation how important it is to assume competence.



Elise Messner has worked in the IDD field for the last 30 years. She has worked as a Direct Support Professional, manager, and for the last 12 years, the Executive Director of the Learning Community of Pennsylvania. She's also a trained Person-Centered Thinking Coach. Elise has a passion for creating supportive cultures where people who use services and DSPs are supported and empowered through the practice of person-centered approaches.

NCAPPS is an initiative from the Administration for Community Living and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to help States, Tribes, and Territories to implement person-centered practices. NCAPPS webinars are open to the public, and are geared toward human services administrators, providers, and people who use long-term services and supports. All NCAPPS webinars will be recorded and archived at <https://ncapps.acl.gov>.