



Applied
Self-Direction

Strengthening Information & Assistance in Self-Direction Programs

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What is Information & Assistance in Support of Self-Direction?



Information & Assistance (I&A)

According to CMS in the 1915(c) waiver technical guide:

- Service/function that assists the participant or participant's family or representative in arranging for, directing and managing services.
- Assist in identifying immediate and long-term needs
- Developing options to meet those needs
- Accessing identified supports and services
- Practical skills training to independently direct and manage waiver services
 - Providing information on recruiting, hiring, and managing workers
 - Providing information on communication & problem solving
- Ensure participants understand responsibilities



Approaches to I&A Structure

- In self-direction, different models of I&A structure include:
 - I&A is provided by the case manager, in conjunction with their other responsibilities
 - I&A is offered by a standalone service
 - Agency structure (e.g., a specialized support brokerage agency or as a service offered by a Center for Independent Living)
 - An independent model (i.e., individuals who meet provider qualifications for the service may enroll as providers)
 - I&A offered as part of a Financial Management Services (FMS) entity or Managed Care Organization (MCO) scope of work



Approaches to I&A Payment

- In self-direction, approaches to I&A payment include:
 - Per Member Per Month flat fee (cap on hours)
 - Unit based, ex. per 15 minutes or 1 hour



Approaches to I&A Professionals

- Across the country, the skills required to provide I&A support varies widely
 - Some states require minimal initial training with little or no ongoing training
 - Other states require professional credentials and offer rigorous opportunities for further training



Why Does This Matter?

- States vary widely in their approaches and there are limited resources on I&A design best practices
- Without robust I&A systems, states will struggle to implement self-direction at scale
 - Most people need support to be successful with self-direction
 - People typically decline participation in self-direction if they feel they've not received enough support to understand the model
 - Includes the provision of program monitoring and safeguards
- Many states have plans underway to expand self-direction and we believe well-designed I&A will be critical to their success



I&A Initiative



I&A Initiative

- Our goals:
 - To better understand what works well and what doesn't work well in states varying approaches to I&A
 - To provide meaningful guidance to states and other stakeholders regarding best practices in I&A design and implementation
 - To collaborate with a geographically diverse cross-section of knowledgeable experts and practitioners
- Generous sponsorship from Centene supports this work



I&A Initiative

- Key Activities
 - Executive Roundtable Discussions
 - Two 2-hour virtual sessions held in September 2021
 - Participants included thought leaders, I&A professionals actively working in self-direction programs, FMS professionals, and state and MCO personnel
 - White Paper
 - Summarized the key takeaways from the Executive Roundtables, released in December 2021
 - I&A Core Standards
 - Specific guidance and considerations for states designing (or redesigning) I&A for self-direction
 - We need your feedback prior to releasing this work!



Executive Roundtable Findings



Executive Roundtable Participants

Bradley Beck
Independent Support Broker

Pam Bell
Pennsylvania Department of Human Services

Alixé Bonardi
Human Services Research Institute

Holly Carmichael
GT Independence

Suzanne Crisp
Public Partnerships

Marian Frattarola-Saulino
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Shared Support Maryland, Inc.

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Central Alabama Wellness

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Independent Support Broker

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University of Missouri Kansas City Institute for Human Development- Partnerships for Effective Social Change

Morgan Robinson
Central Alabama Wellness

Mary Sowers
National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS)

Deborah Stone-Walls
USAging

Shawn Terrell
Administration for Community Living (ACL)



Major Themes: I&A Structure

- The majority of experts expressed concerns about case managers absorbing the responsibility of providing I&A support
- When I&A is offered as a waiver service:
 - People who self-direct should be strongly encouraged to utilize a support broker
 - Open enrollment of any qualified support broker affords more flexibility for participants, but states should plan carefully to avoid quality problems
- Many experts felt that providing I&A as an administrative activity offered many upsides, despite costing more



Major Themes: I&A Structure

- While FMS entities can be uniquely well-suited to provide I&A, strong systems are needed to avoid conflict of interest
- MCOs are sometimes contracted to provide I&A, but their contracts often require I&A to be delivered via case management



Major Themes: I&A Payment

- Experts with experience as I&A practitioners tended to emphasize the advantages of unit-based payment methods (a set rate per time unit)
 - Allows for individualization
 - Accommodates the variation of needs across participants over time
 - The alternate per member per month (PMPM) flat fee may be cost prohibitive for participants, more of an administrative convenience
- Experts with national program design experience tended to emphasize the advantages of a PMPM flat fee
 - Costs are more predictable, simple to execute
 - The cost of a support broker is covered for the month, no disincentive to call your support broker when needed



Major Themes: I&A Professionals

- Experts identified numerous skills that I&A providers should ideally possess
 - One person can't possess all the ideal competencies
 - Participants with lived experience in the program are a great fit
- Many experts felt training and oversight for I&A professionals is often inadequate. Some argued that more work is needed to 'professionalize' this key role in self-direction



I&A Core Standards



Aim of the I&A Core Standards

- Recommendations designed to offer answers to the following questions:
 - What should an I&A professional know to help them successfully support participants?
 - What should an I&A professional do to help them successfully support participants?
 - What abilities and resources should an I&A professional have to help successfully support participants?
 - How can states and other program administrative entities gauge the success of their I&A professionals?
- Publication is forthcoming pending feedback of key stakeholders



Recommended Qualifications

- Note: Educational requirements are intentionally not included in the suggested qualifications
- Suggested Qualifications, examples include:
 - Must be able to pass criminal background check and any other checks required by program
 - Must not have any other conflict of interest, such as being an immediate family member of the participant



Recommended Qualifications

- Philosophical Hallmarks, examples include:
 - Belief that anyone who wants to manage and direct their own services can do so with the right supports
 - Cultural awareness to be able to work successfully with participants of diverse backgrounds
- Necessary Skills, examples include:
 - Ability to delegate tasks appropriately and according to scope or program role
 - Being accountable and dependable for the participant



Recommended Core Competencies

- These competencies can be taught through training and developed through mentoring, examples include:
 - In-depth understanding of the philosophy and operations of self-direction, including roles and responsibilities
 - Thorough knowledge and understanding of additional resources available to the participant to support the person-centered plan
 - Detailed knowledge of necessary paperwork
 - Comprehensive understanding of the key players in the program and the roles each person plays



Recommended Strategies for Supporting I&A Professionals

- A state, managed care organization, and/or other program administrative entity can help ensure I&A quality by implementing resources that support the work of I&A professionals
- Examples of proposed strategies include:
 - Providing standardized training for I&A professionals about self-direction
 - Providing an assurance that the participant was provided information about self-direction by having a checklist that the participant checks off and signs
 - Providing limits to the number of individuals served by any single I&A professional to ensure the I&A professional has sufficient time to support each participant served



Recommendations for Monitoring & Oversight into the I&A Role

- I&A is a program safeguard that is critical to help detect and prevent potential problems, including fraud, waste, and abuse.
- Before the I&A professional begins delivering services, a training on monitoring and oversight should be provided. The I&A professional will subsequently provide comparable training to participants.

Example training topics include:

- The definitions of and reporting requirements for fraud, waste, and financial abuse
- The difference between intentional and unintentional fraud and how to respond to each
- How the employee records their time and the employer verifies the time is accurate
- How to review and monitor the spending reports and follow up on concerns with the appropriate party



Recommended Strategies for Oversight of the I&A Function

- A state, managed care organization, and/or other program administrative entity will need to implement strategies to ensure I&A professionals are effective in their role
- Example approaches include:
 - Distribute I&A satisfaction surveys to participants
 - Compare metrics to detect potential outliers that may (though not necessarily) indicate issues with I&A quality (e.g., I&A professionals with higher rates of participants terminating self-direction)
 - Have a website that allows participants to rate the I&A professionals across various areas, in order to create a “scorecard” for I&A professionals



Recommended Strategies for I&A Professionals to Monitor the Participant Experience

- I&A professionals should engage in continual quality monitoring to ensure the services they provide are adequate and effective.
- Example approaches include:
 - Distribute satisfaction surveys
 - Analyze success in the program
 - Timecard/EVV errors
 - Fraud investigation
 - Problems with hiring workers
 - Health and safety of the participant is being achieved



Best Practices for Ensuring Continuity in the Event of a Disaster

- The pandemic has forced self-directed participants and their supports, including I&A Providers, to think about what should happen in an emergency
- Example best practices include:
 - Allow virtual appointments and check-ins
 - Ensure the participant has an emergency plan in place that considers local risks
 - Check in more often on the participant during an emergency



Suggested Parameters to the Number of Participants an I&A Professional Can Successfully Assist

- There is no magical number of participants any one I&A Professional can successfully support. While the ideal number of participants is usually somewhere between 35-45, the actual number depends on many factors.
- Example factors include:
 - The experience and knowledge of the I&A Provider
 - The experience and knowledge of the participant and where they are in the self-direction journey



Discussion



Discussion

- What is your personal experience with I&A in self-direction?
- What I&A design considerations are most important to you? Why?
- What are your best suggestions to include in our I&A Core Standards?



Thank you!

- Please contact molly@appliedselfdirection.com to share your feedback for the I&A Core Standards
- Our thanks again to Centene for sponsoring this initiative!
- Thank you for attending & participating!

