

Person-centered Thinking and Culture Change

Person-centered Thinking

Person-centered Thinking (PCT) is a way of empowering persons who need services and supports because of disabilities or chronic illnesses to retain positive control over their lives. Underlying this approach is the belief that services and supports should be centered on what is most important to the individual, while addressing what is important for their health conditions or disabilities.

PCT was developed for use in the field of developmental disabilities in the 1980s and is now used in work with other populations, including older adults. An illustration of person-centered thinking is as simple as a change in language: "Mary is a blind resident" becomes "Mary is a person who has a visual impairment" or "John has a developmental disability" versus "John is mentally retarded." The idea behind person-centered language is to acknowledge the person as an individual with unique needs, desires, and characteristics, rather than as a label.

However, as important as our use of language is, PCT is more than just a change in wording. PCT empowers individuals by supporting their inclusion in everyday activities and decisions, and challenges the myriad of myths and stereotypes that often exclude them from participating fully in their communities. Too often, individuals dependent on others for daily needs are viewed as not able to make the kinds of decisions that give them a sense of control over their lives. Because it is often the simple act of making personal daily choices that brings enjoyment to life, through increased autonomy and participation in decision making, individuals can experience an improved quality of life that includes the dignity of personal choice and respect.

Culture Change

Culture change means transforming the mindset and practice in long- and short-term living environments as well as in community-based settings. It is about changing the culture of an organization or community so that the focus is on the individual's life, dignity, and self-determination rather than the needs of the organization. This kind of transformation may require changes in policies and procedures, actual physical structural changes, along with changes in relationships- all ultimately leading to better outcomes for consumers and staff.

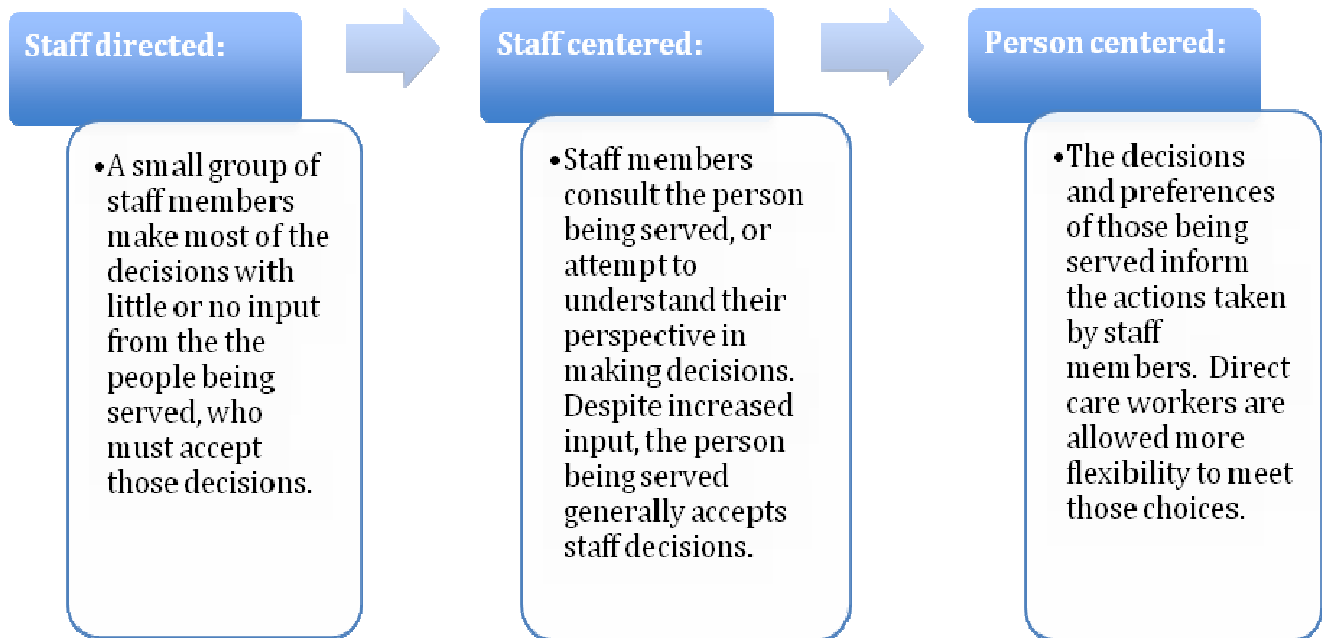
Residents of long-term care facilities and advocates on their behalf argue that the current system of institutional care should provide more support for individuals to remain involved in communities and should allow for individuals to choose the type and setting of the services they receive. In long-term care environments, this might begin with reflecting a more homelike atmosphere.

Culture change is applicable to all levels of an organization, not just to direct care workers. Although they have the most direct contact, the power to implement broad changes in systems usually lies with management. A holistic approach with input and commitment from all staff is crucial for the change process to be effective. Systemic change of this kind can be challenging. Every organization is unique and must determine what will work best for them.

Person-centered Thinking as a basis for Culture change

Some of the current work in PCT is based around *culture change* efforts in long-term care facilities and other organizations that provide services and supports to individuals with chronic illnesses or disabilities. PCT forms the basis for culture change efforts that seek to transform the services and supports for individuals who depend on others for daily needs. Culture change is based on person-centered values and practices where the voices of consumers are respected. If PCT is to thrive, continuous culture change and organizational development must be undertaken to address how services are accessed and delivered across the continuum of care.

Culture change occurs along a continuum of person-centered thinking in the provision of supports and services:



Current Efforts in North Carolina

Efforts must be made to develop services and supports in North Carolina that strive to be person-centered from the beginning, and to facilitate changes within current systems. Planners may need to build the case for change, as the current delivery system may provide few incentives to organizations to begin this process. Here are some notable efforts to promote PCT and culture change in North Carolina.

Current Efforts Continued:

1) The North Carolina Office of Long-Term Services and Supports (OLTS) and the UNC School of Social Work Jordan Institute for Families are working to encourage the use of PCT in planning and in the provision of services to older adults and people with physical and sensory disabilities. OLTS and Jordan Institute staff members are involved in developing PCT tools, trainings, and manuals, as well as leading training and certification efforts for individuals and organizations. OLTS staff members are available for consultation on PCT-related efforts. For more information contact Ann Eller at 919-855-4423.

Website: <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/olts/>

2) The North Carolina Coalition for Long Term Care Enhancement (NCCLTCE) includes individuals from diverse backgrounds working to support facilities that incorporate environmental enhancements and health care innovations. The coalition's goals are to:

- bring together a diverse group dedicated to improving the quality of life in care settings
- educate people on philosophies of cultural and environmental enhancements in institutions
- support those organizations that choose to adopt cultural and environmental enhancements
- advocate change which promotes human growth in caregiving environments

For more information, or to become a member, contact Becky Wertz at 919-855-4580.

Website: <http://www.ltcenhance.com/>

3) Triangle J Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Ombudsmen along with the Community Advisory Committee in Moore County facilitated an educational symposium on culture change in September 2008. A primary outcome of the meeting was an increase in communication and engagement between nursing home administrators as a means for sharing information and support on their respective culture change activities.

Triangle J AAA Ombudsmen are planning to host another event for all of Region J on May 5 at Wake Commons. For more information contact Carmelita Karhoff at 919-558-2714.

Website: <http://www.tjaa.org/>

For Further Information on...

Person-centered Thinking

Person Centered Learning Community

<http://www.learningcommunity.us/success.htm>

National Resource Center for Participant-Directed Services

<http://www.bc.edu/schools/gssw/nrcpds/home.html>

Culture Change

National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform

http://www.nursinghomeaction.com/public/245_1265_12658.cfm

Promoting Excellent Alternatives in Kansas Nursing Homes- Education Initiative (PEAK-ED)

<http://www.k-state.edu/peak>

Pioneer Network

<http://www.pioneernetwork.net>

