

Self-Direction: An Overview

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Over 1 million people self-direct in the United States and every state has at least one self-direction program

Research demonstrates that self-direction is associated with:

- Better quality of life
- Greater autonomy and self-efficacy
- Reductions in unmet needs
- Improved housing and employment outcomes
- High service-user and caregiver satisfaction
- Cost-neutrality or reduced service costs, depending on program details



Fundamental Principles of Self-Direction

We all have the **fundamental human right** to live a life of freedom and full community inclusion.

Systems that promote human rights must maximize **autonomy, choice, and control**.

Resources

<https://www.mentalhealthselfdirection.org/>

<https://appliedselfdirection.com/>

<https://www.selfdirectedsupport.eu/>

Best Practice Elements for Self-Direction

Developed by a group of self-direction experts in multiple countries

1. A **dedicated budget**, individualized and controlled by the person with any support they choose and agree to, used flexibly and creatively to support the person's best life
2. Access to legally recognized **supported decision-making** that minimizes substitute decision-making and the loss of legal agency
3. **Outreach and education** beginning in early childhood
4. Clear and simple **information**, widely available in the mainstream, tailored for cultural responsiveness, and fully accessible
5. Practical **administrative processes** that minimize participant burden
6. **Person-centered planning**—a process of identifying what is important to a person with strategies to support it—that demonstrates a commitment to peoples' capacity and value
7. No-cost **assistance** with technical aspects, including adequate support for meeting program requirements and assistance with locating, hiring, and managing staff
8. Respectful **employment practices** that recognize the rights of staff to a fair wage and to be free of exploitation
9. **Peer support**—mutual aid in understanding and navigating the system— that bolsters participation, promotes equitable access, and drives innovation
10. Transparent, sufficient, and fair **resource allocation** based on a person's priorities and needs
11. **Portability** of self-directed funding and eligibility across jurisdictions within a country
12. Comprehensive and genuinely independent **systems of advocacy** to protect human rights, privacy of personal information, freedom to make big and small life decisions, and the prevention and safeguarding from harm
13. Practices that **ensure all people have the option** to control as much or as little as they choose, based on the presumption of personal capacity
14. **Quality practices** and outcomes measurement that support continuous learning and improvement and hold systems accountable to the principles of self-directed support
15. An orientation toward **equity in access**, respect for people's cultural identities, and positive outcomes with particular attention to groups that are historically marginalized and underserved
16. **People with lived experience** are fundamentally trusted and have principal roles in oversight, governance, and administration