

Transition/Diversion in West Virginia:

A Navigator's Guide to Community Inclusion

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A Navigator's Guide to Community Inclusion

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The Transitioning to Inclusive Communities (TIC) Project is a three (3) year systems change grant, managed by The Center for Excellence in Disabilities (CED) at West Virginia University, a part of the Robert C. Byrd Health Sciences Center. The project was funded by a grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) awarded to the West Virginia Bureau for Medical Services (BMS), Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR).

TIC was designed to:

- Assist individuals with long-term care needs who live in or are at risk of nursing home placement to move (or “transition”) to the community of their choice with the necessary supports;
- Support the development of innovative community programs or projects that support people with disabilities and/or those with long-term care needs to live in their preferred community settings; and,
- Effect change in West Virginia’s system of home and community-based services to increase opportunities for people to choose, get and keep community residences instead of staying in or going to institutional “placements.”

This guide is a publication of the Project. It is a “how-to” book for “*navigators*,” people who want to assist those who wish to move from a nursing facility to the community or to remain in their preferred community residence (see Section 2, “Navigator Roles and Responsibilities”). This guide will give you basic information to help people move to the communities of their choice and access the services and supports they need. It includes supportive documents, tools, forms and other resource materials that TIC staff and other navigators have found useful during the course of the project. It is presented as a “work in progress” and *not* as an absolute, step-by-step manual that details everything that can occur in the highly individualized processes of transition and diversion.

This guide is also designed as an accompaniment to skills training for navigators and a resource/reference manual to be used following such training. Hopefully, it will be helpful for any future navigators who “step up,” since the project is at its end and nursing home navigation is a role that has been/can be performed by a variety of people and entities, not a particular job position at any particular agency or site.

The TIC staff would like to thank CMS, BMS and our project partners for the opportunity to help so many West Virginians achieve their preferences and to support the development of new resources that contribute to that possibility continuing. We are also most grateful to those dedicated, passionate individuals who have served as navigators, advocates and system reformers during this project. And specifically, we applaud the staff of the Northern West Virginia Center for Independent Living (NWVCIL), who have committed to continue carrying the TIC torch into the future.

Introduction

The Art and Science of Transition

The *Olmstead Decision*, rendered by the Supreme Court in 1999, requires all states to administer services, programs and activities for people who have disabilities in each individual's preferred community setting whenever possible. The purpose of this guide is to assist you to help people who may wish to leave institutional care to live in the community home of their choice.

"Confinement in an institution severely diminishes the everyday life activities of individuals, including family relations, social contacts, work options, economic independence, education advancement and cultural enrichment." –United States Supreme Court, *Olmstead v. L.C.*

"Transitioning" for people with disabilities means moving from institutional care to a place and community of their choice. People can transition from hospitals (acute or psychiatric), nursing homes, rehabilitation centers and residential child care facilities.

"Diversion" means to provide the services and supports necessary for an individual to avoid going into an institutional type of setting.

West Virginia has identified people called "navigators" who take a facilitative role (with a team of supportive people) in assisting individuals with transitioning or diverting.

This guide is meant to illustrate some of the key steps in the transition/diversion process to assist you in building supports for people who want to move into their communities. This manual reflects a process that is based on the principles of **self-direction/control, informed choice, person-centeredness and responsibility.**

As you know, a person considering moving to a different place (or who is threatened with institutional placement) is likely to be experiencing numerous logistic challenges as well as intense emotions—fear, anger, a loss of control, frustration, uncertainty, isolation, despair and/or extreme boredom. Therefore, it is critical that one is sensitive and responsive to the individual and their particular situation. *Individuals should always be in the "driver's seat" of their own process.* This requires that those assisting them consistently respond with respect and dignity throughout the process. "Active listening" ensures that the consumer's perspective is always represented. Individuals will more successfully self-direct their own transition or diversion if you consistently respond to their point-of-view; navigators should consistently demonstrate their understanding of each

individual's perspective and *take action according to that person's choices and desires*. It is important to continuously assist the consumer to express their thoughts, feelings and preferences by applying positive, responsive interpersonal skills. Some consumers may choose to experience Person-Centered Planning (PATH's and MAP's, e.g.) as part of their transition or diversion process. While these activities are person-centered in themselves, the philosophy (and the use of person-centered communication skills) underlying them apply to any interaction with a consumer, anywhere in the process. *A good navigator always tries to see the world through the eyes of the individuals who are transitioning or diverting and to support them to experience their lives according to their dreams and desires.*