Community Integration for People with Disabilities: Key Principles

General Principles

- Individuals with disabilities should have the opportunity to live like people without disabilities. They should have the opportunity to be employed, have a place to call home, and be engaged in the community with family and friends.

- Individuals with disabilities should have control over their own day, including which job or educational or leisure activities they pursue.

- Individuals with disabilities should have control over where and how they live, including the opportunity to live in their own apartment or home. Living situations that require conformity to a collective schedule or that restrict personal activities limit the right to choose.

Employment

- Individuals with disabilities should have the opportunity to be employed in non-segregated, regular workplaces. Virtually all individuals with disabilities can be employed and earn the same wages as people without disabilities. When needed for such employment, they should have access to supported or customized employment. They should be afforded options other than sheltered work, day treatment, clubhouses, and other segregated programs.

Housing

- Virtually all individuals with disabilities can live in their own home with supports. Like people without disabilities, they should get to decide where they live, with whom they live, when and what they eat, who visits and when, etc.

- To this end, individuals with disabilities should have access to housing other than group homes, other congregate arrangements, and multi-unit buildings or complexes that are primarily for people with disabilities. They should have access to “scattered site” housing, with ownership or control of a lease. Housing should not be conditioned on compliance with treatment or with a service plan.

Choice

- Individuals with disabilities should have the opportunity to make informed choices. They must have full and accurate information about their options, including what services and financial support are available in integrated settings. They should have the opportunity to visit integrated settings and talk to individuals with similar disabilities working and living in integrated settings. Their concerns about integrated settings should be explored and addressed.

Public Funding

- Government funding for services should support implementation of these principles. Currently, public funding has a bias toward institutionalization, forcing individuals to overcome myriad barriers if they wish to age in place and remain in their communities.
These community integration principles are embraced by:

ADAPT
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Diabetes Association
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
The Arc of the United States
Autistic Self-Advocacy Network
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Easter Seals
Little People of America
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of Rights Protection and Advocacy
National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Rights Network
National Federation of the Blind
National Mental Health Consumers’ Self-Help Clearinghouse
National Organization on Disability
Paralyzed Veterans of America
TASH
United Spinal Association