



Person Centered Counseling in No Wrong Door Systems

The Administration for Community Living's (ACL) No Wrong Door (NWD) initiative highlights the need to address systems of access to long term services and supports (LTSS). ACL has partnered with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) on NWD funding opportunities to aid states in creating implementation plans and improving systems of access as an extension of the earlier Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) initiatives. There are four primary components to a NWD system:



https://nwd.acl.gov/Building_A_NWD_System.html

- governance and administration;
- outreach and awareness;
- streamlined access to public programs; and
- person centered counseling.

Person centered counseling (PCC) may be called options counseling. The NWD resource site has a great summary document, "Key Elements of a NWD System of Access to LTSS for All Populations and Payers." This summary makes clear the importance of person-centeredness, not just in the provision of PCC but as a goal in system design and governance and in streamlining access to publicly funded programs. "A person-centered system recognizes that every individual is unique and the system must be able to respond flexibly to each individual's situation, strengths, needs and preferences."

ACL notes that the majority of people in need of LTSS will not qualify for publicly funded services. A critical role of PCC is to assist individuals and their families in making informed choices about the use of their own resources, financial and otherwise, and to connect them to available community resources.

Person Centered - Beyond Compliance

Streamlined access to publicly funded services is also a key element of NWD systems, but that does not mean that systems of access should function as a funnel moving people quickly and directly to publicly funded services. This is the key role of PCC and person centered thinking more broadly. Eligibility based systems that assume everyone is headed to publicly funded services quickly screen individuals in or out, thus determining their path in the system. This approach can drive people prematurely to publicly funded programs. This approach can also exclude individuals from needed information and support to most effectively use their own resources which can accelerate their need for publicly funded programs.

A person-centered, needs-based assessment process can focus on the needs and preferences of the individual, determine available financial and other resources, and provide information and support for informed decision making. Streamlined access for those needing publicly funded services is absolutely critical. But not everyone is on that path. PCC should meet individuals where they are and work with them to develop a plan that works for them and empowers them to effectively make informed choices about the options available to them for their long term care needs.



Sage Squirrel Consulting would love the opportunity to you help develop a culture of person centered thinking and move away from eligibility focused systems of access.