

GOOD WORK

Finding the Meaning in Direct Support Work



We believe that ...

- ... direct support workers make an essential contribution to the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families when they are committed, competent, and caring. This workshop looks at what makes for good work.
- ... opportunities to reflect on what is meaningful in direct service work are one important source of the learning that underpins good work and the effective leadership of service organizations. This workshop provides a time for reflection.
- ... a sense of meaning cannot be poured into people. People construct meaning for themselves in focused conversation about important questions. This workshop provides a structure for reflection.
- ... people who do direct support work can benefit from reflection on its meaning; so can people who manage or coordinate services; so can people with disabilities and their families who are interested in hiring and directing their own staff. This workshop welcomes anyone who wants the chance to think more deeply about supporting people with developmental disabilities to live well connected lives of their own choosing.

The purpose of this workshop is to learn how to encourage reflection so that interested people can form a richer and more meaningful picture of the work of providing direct support to people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Sources

- The Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities has collaborated for the past 2 years with the state's Bureau of Developmental Disabilities and more than 40 service providing agencies to develop a series of workshops in response to the need for a capable workforce. **Good Work** is one of this series.
- The workshop draws on research conducted by The GoodWork Project, which studies how professionals carry out work that is of high quality and socially responsible (www.goodworkproject.com).

The Workshop

Participants will work on a series of structured reflections in small teams, sharing their thinking through a group record, and concluding with a plan that identifies opportunities for improving the quality of direct support work. Once they complete the workshop they will have the tools and materials to facilitate these reflections in their own organizations.

Because the reflections build on one another in sequence, those who attend should plan to be at the workshop full time (9:00-4:00 each day).

The Workshop Leaders

John O'Brien & Connie Lyle O'Brien learn about building more just and inclusive communities from people with disabilities, their families, and their allies. They use what they learn to advise people with disabilities and their families, advocacy groups, service providers, and governments and to spread the news among people interested in change by writing and through workshops. They work in partnership with a group of friends from 12 countries.

I've been doing job coaching for several years and keep saying to myself, 'someday I better start a career'. This workshop made me realize I had a career and I could help build the status of my profession."

—Vocational direct support worker

I've always really liked what I do but having a chance to think about my work has renewed my commitment to it.

—Residential direct support worker

This workshop made us reflect on great questions and re-energized our staff

—Agency director