

People First of Montana/MCDD



Information Bulletin # 5

By R. Timm Vogelsberg, Council Member / Family Member

People First Chapters: Empowerment, Advisors and Employees

The Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities made a unanimous decision to fund People First Chapters directly. Council members agreed that true empowerment means controlling the funding and the decisions.

Roger Shelley of the Rural Institute is working with Deborah Swingley and Timm Vogelsberg to visit chapters and establish individual budgets. During these meetings interesting conversations have begun about the 'advisor' and the People First Chapters.

The advisors used to be paid by an advocacy organization to 'advise' People First Chapters. Now the People First Chapters are paying the 'advisors'. This is the beginning of a strong opportunity for People First Chapters to become empowered. The chapters are the employer of the 'advisor'. The 'advisor' is now the employee and as such it might

be time for People First Chapters to begin to analyze the role of their employee and their interaction with their employee.

The title and role of the 'advisor' should be considered by each chapter. The word 'advisor' implies that the employee is in a position to provide advice and tell the employer (People First Members) what they should be doing. It is important as chapters become empowered, that they realize that they can and should make their own decisions. Advice may be a role of the 'advisor', but the final decision about what the chapter will do in the future should be up to the People First Chapter members NOT the advisor.

This may seem like a small point, but true chapter empowerment will mean that each chapter controls their funding and decisions. Advice may be helpful and followed if the chapter members are in agreement. What is most important is that the chapters take the opportunity to discuss the advice and determine if that is what their chapter wants.

I believe that People First Members can manage their own funds and can make their own decisions. Our role as 'advisors', consultants, or whatever term is decided, is to support People First empowerment, NOT to tell them what to do. We should offer advice as requested and support any reasonable decision (even if it isn't the same as our advice)!

We'd like to hear from **YOU** about the topics you'd like to have covered in future Information Memos or if you'd like to write an Information Memo. Please either call or email Council offices with your topic suggestions for Information Memos.

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