

Person-Centered Thinking and Practices

3 What is Person-Centered Thinking in the Person-Centered Counseling Role?



Introduction

These slides contain content adapted from the Administration for Community Living's Person Centered Counseling Training Program. The content includes text and narration from online courses. To view original content or for more information, please visit nwd.acl.gov or contact NoWrongDoor@acl.hhs.gov.

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Welcome! (1/2)

Person-centered thinking (PCT) skills help people approach each other in a consistently person-centered way. They are a core skill set for Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professionals. This lesson provides additional information about what being “person-centered” means in this role. It helps learners distinguish between “fixing” approaches and “support” approaches. It introduces the three promises of PCT. It reminds learners about the power and importance of active listening in the role.

Welcome! (2/2)

Learning Objective

After completing this lesson: You will be able to discriminate between “fixing” and “supporting” approaches as part of person-centered thinking practices.

Being Person-Centered (1/2)

Many people think that person-centered approaches mean engaging people in formal person-centered planning (PCP) processes. While formal plans may be preferred by some, they are not always necessary. Person-Centered Counseling professionals will have a role in helping to develop formal plans as requested. (You can learn more about planning in the course on Person-Centered Planning and Implementation.)

Being Person-Centered (2/2)

However, person-centered thinking is a holistic approach to interacting with people. These skills are the focus of this course and the one-day in-person training. They are meant to ensure that people seeking services consistently experience helpful, meaningful, and self-directed outcomes connected to their supports. These skills work with or without a formal PCP in place. However, when there is a formal plan, they help create a meaningful connection between those plans and professional approaches.

The resource section of this course has information on PCP in general. If you are interested in learning more about a variety of approaches to planning.

Person-Centered Thinking (1/2)

Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professionals are part of a system of support. They will feel the pressures of balancing responsible use of resources with attention to each individual. It will be important to balance all parts of their roles. However, they will want to maintain the core beliefs and values of PCC. As a reminder, PCC professionals support people of all ages and abilities in:

- Having positive control over the life they desire
- Being recognized and valued for their contributions (past, current, and potential)
- Being provided new and ongoing opportunities to be positively engaged during all phases of their lives
- Being supported through a variety of relationships, both natural and paid, within their communities

Person-Centered Thinking (2/2)

Person-centered thinking skills and approaches help guide and organize respectful listening. This ensures that actions and decisions are most likely to be meaningful from the view of the person seeking services and those they involve in their lives. By using PCT skills, the professional can support actions that are likely to improve the person's situation in ways that are important to them and still include responsible use of public resources.

Using Person-Centered Thinking in the No Wrong Door System (1/3)

A “fixing” approach is when a professional offers solutions to a person’s concerns without first knowing what is important to the person. Fixing assumes that the professional or others know what is best for a person in a given situation. Support assumes the person should be offered help to sort through this themselves. Being able to support means being able to listen.

If you can answer the following questions around the person’s defined purpose for engaging No Wrong Door (NWD) services, you are likely using support approaches rather than fix the situation for the person.

Using Person-Centered Thinking in the No Wrong Door System (2/3)

Ask yourself:

1. Are choice, direction, and control embedded in everything I've done?
2. Do I know what is important to the person? This includes their goals, expectations, and preferences.
3. Do I know what is important for the person? This includes their critical concerns and needs, especially in area of health and safety.
4. Can I describe the person's preferred balance between important to and important for? Have I been diligent in informing people of risk in ways that work for them? Have I supported the dignity of risk as an essential part of life that all people have a right to experience?

Using Person-Centered Thinking in the No Wrong Door System (3/3)

5. How have I helped the person explore where and how to get the services and supports that will achieve and/or maintain the “to/for balance”? Do I have effective approaches for this person to evaluate options and make informed decisions?
6. Have I helped the person define clear methods of evaluating if what was decided on is working or needs to change? That means way of measuring and evaluating progress or identifying problems that makes sense to the person.

Listening as Part of Supporting

Person-Centered Counseling professionals must have strong ability to listen for understanding. (You will learn more a specific approach in another lesson.) Person-centered discovery identifies what is important to a person. It helps avoid “fixing” interactions.

The Three Promises of Being Person-Centered

People engaging systems often feel as if they are not very important to professionals. They don't always feel heard or respected. People who are facing the unknown often feel as if they are in crisis even if PCC professionals don't look at it that way. When professionals are unclear about timelines, next steps, and rely on the person to do all the follow-up, the person can become frustrated or overwhelmed. People often feel a loss of control when engaging unresponsive systems. They may try to regain control in unhelpful ways, such as becoming avoidant or difficult. Being person-centered means supporting healthy control on the part of the person. Making and keeping these promises supports control.

The Three Areas of Person-Centered Thinking Skills (1/2)

The information in this lesson helps focus all the skills and tools on supporting people to solve their own problems, rather than fixing their problems for them. This curriculum teaches three sets of tools and approaches that help professionals explore and organize what they have learned. These skills can build on skills others you already have such as motivational interviewing. They can also be a foundation for Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) professionals who do not have those other skill sets. They can help professionals avoid “fixing” approaches and move toward supporting.

The Three Areas of Person-Centered Thinking Skills (2/2)

These skills will be explored more fully in later lessons. This course focuses on three types of tools that support skills in the following areas:

- Discovery skills: These help the PCC professional identify what's important to and for the person and the correct balance between them.
- Everyday learning skills: These help the PCC professional evaluate, organize learning, problem-solve, and negotiate or mediate.
- Other tools for managing roles and expectations include a matching profile and a one-page description, which help the person find the best support.

Conclusion and Lesson Review (1/2)

- Person-centered thinking is a consistent approach to supporting people in a person-centered way, even if they don't have or desire a formal person-centered plan.
- “Fixing” is what happens when we engage solutions for people. “Supporting” is what happens when we use discovery to understand what is important to a person and help them make the best decisions they can for themselves.
- The three promises of person-centered thinking (PCT) are to listen and keep listening, act on what we heard, and be honest if things will take time or we don't know what to do yet.
- The tools and approaches in this curriculum will support you in keeping the promises of PCT.

Conclusion and Lesson Review (2/2)

Learning Objective

After completing this lesson, you will be able to discriminate between “fixing” and “supporting” approaches as part of person-centered thinking practices.

Reflection on Learning Objective

Directions: Review the objective(s) on this page. Write down your answers to the following questions.

1. What did you learn in this lesson that you felt was important?
2. What will you do differently because of the content in this lesson?