

## Pennsylvania’s College of Direct Support (CDS-PA) Featured Lessons

### Teaching and Learning Resource: Reflecting on Our Own Support Networks

<b>CDS Course supported by this resource</b>	<i>Working with Families and Support Networks</i>
<b>CDS Lesson(s) supported by this resource</b>	<i>Understanding Support Networks</i> (Lesson #1 in <i>Working with Families and Support Networks</i> course)
<b>Type of resource</b>	Written resource intended to be used by CDS-PA learners and enrolled organizations in any of a variety of ways, including group or one-on-one discussions and individual self reflection.
<b>Purpose of resource</b>	To enhance people’s conscious awareness of the important role that support networks play in their lives. This awareness can provide a foundation for Direct Support Professionals, Supports Coordinators supervisors, etc. to competently and successfully support the support networks of others through their work.
<b>Intended participants</b>	Direct Support Professionals, Supports Coordinators, supervisory staff, training departments, others who support people through Pennsylvania’s Office of Developmental Programs
<b>CDS course work to be completed prior to use of this resource</b>	It is recommended that learners complete the <i>Understanding Support Networks</i> lesson in the <i>Working with Families and Support Networks</i> CDS course prior to participating in discussions or reflections based on this resource. Familiarity with the concepts presented throughout the lesson will enhance people’s learning experience.

It is important that Direct Support Professionals, Supports Coordinators and others are sensitive to the crucial role that support networks play in the lives of the people they support. One way organizations can help build this capacity is to foster their staff members’ awareness of their own support networks. As people become increasingly conscious of the importance these networks in their own lives, they become more effective champions for and members of the support networks of the people your organization supports.

The questions below can be used to guide people in self-reflection on their own supports networks. The questions are adapted from questions in Lesson #1, *Understanding Support Networks* in the CDS course *Working with Families and Support Networks*. Anyone who has completed this lesson has had the opportunity to consider and reflect on them. This resource presents the questions in a way that makes it easy to use them in a number of ways:

- Supervisors can use the questions to spark group discussion in staff meetings.
- Supervisors can incorporate the questions into in one-on-one supervisory sessions with staff members.
- Training departments can incorporate the questions into face-to-face trainings.
- Direct Support Professionals, Supports Coordinator, supervisors and others can use the questions as an opportunity for further self-reflection.

### Questions to encourage reflection on support networks

Support networks are the people in your life who are there when you need a little help and encouragement. Support networks are groups of people made up of family, friends, neighbors, paid supports, and other community members. Everyone has and needs support networks in their lives.

Take a moment to think about the people in your life.

- Who do you turn to when you need help and support in times of difficulty?
- When you really need to talk to someone, who do you reach out to?
- How do you reach out to them (visits, phone calls, e-mails, social networking, blogging, etc.)

These people are your support network. Now think more closely about these people.

- How did you meet each of these people? How long have you known each one?
- Why is each person important to you?
- Which of these people are members of your family? Which ones are friends? Which ones are simply acquaintances from the community, work, social networking, etc.?
- How has each person helped and supported you?
- What qualities do each one have that cause you to feel comfortable turning to him/her in times of difficulty?
- What things or activities do you do with each person?
- How often do you have contact with each of these people?
- Describe how your life would be changed if any one of these people were no longer part of your life.
- Have you ever helped or supported these people in any way? Describe the ways in which you have done this.

Now think about your responses to the above questions.

- What surprises you about who is or isn't part of your support network?
- What do you notice about the variety of people in your support network?
- What commonalities are there in the relationships you have with the different members of your support network? (how long you have known them, how you met them, how you spend time with them, how you stay in touch with them, etc.)
- What traits or qualities do the members of your support network members have in common with each other?
- What do you notice about the differences among the members of your support network and the differences in your relationships with each of them?

How might your reflections on your own support network help you in your job of supporting others?

If you were developing an ISP for yourself:

- What information would you record about your support network?
- How/where in the ISP would you record it?

Consider the person centered components of the ISP (Like and Admire, Know and Do, Important To, Desired Activities, What Makes Sense, Understanding Communication, Personal Outcomes and Outcome Actions) as you answer these questions.