Enacting Client-Centered Change in Potentially Oppressive Systems

# Oregon State University ADA 30 Symposium Handout

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# Seven Basic Types of Change

1. Appreciative Inquiry- This process is grounded in the idea that what we focus on is what we produce. The process includes what is known as the 4 D’s: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny.
   * **Discovery**- a cross section of the community is interviewed to find what are individual’s values of excellence and the positive core of the community.
   * **Dream**- keeping the themes from stories shared in the discovery phase to find what has been the best in the life of the community to recognize through shared vision that better is possible.
   * **Design**- members identify what new beliefs and practices will be put into place and which key relationships will influence how and how well these new innovations will work. Decision leads to implementation, so avoid undue forced consensus at this phase.
   * **Destiny**- members embody the ability to act on what they have created without an authority to give them permission. A new community culture is born out of improvisations, learning and ongoing refinement.
2. Engaging external systems for the benefit of community, clients, or workers.
   * Workers may involve the agency in public policy discussions relating to changes in law or regulations affecting their program. The agency may assert its influence as an advocate on matters involving the program’s design and implementation to spur supportive change in the external system. (Ex: agency participation in a livable wage campaign).
3. Undertake a community development agenda.
   * The agency directs its resources to build community capacity, moving from a focus on service to community development with the goal of each member having increased opportunities to contribute by living a fuller, more satisfying life.

1. Remove procedures that inhibit service.
   * Some rules or procedures end up outliving their usefulness or original intentions. Other rules are created from an overabundance of caution or created apart from the context of the day-to-day reality, serving neither clients nor the goals of the program. Workers can seek to establish more empowered and helpful polices in their place.
2. Develop programs or projects.
   * Consider underserved populations in your agency or community and new projects or programs that could support them.

1. Modify programs or projects.
   * Altering existing programs to benefit clients or promote accessibility and utilization of services. This could include a change in service methods, molding programs to relevant client interests, program location, or increasing community outreach/awareness.
2. Utilize clients’ views when setting agency direction.
   * Clients are seen as resources and become partners by investing them with the skills and authority to influence agency decisions. An example would be having a significant number of clients on an agency board of directors.

# Garnering Support

Receiving the approval necessary to proceed is a vital step in creating change; you must receive buy in not only from the potential 'gatekeepers' (i.e.-employers) but also others who would like the change made as well. Here are tips to consider when securing support with individuals throughout the process.

**Gaining consent –** Two elements are key here.

1. People will question “who are you to do…?”. Are you a member of the group who would be affected by this change? If not, think of how you might address this. Demonstrate a sense of purpose and be unapologetic, and also compassionate, in your pursuit. You do not have to have all the answers but it’s important to believe you can find them on your way. Demonstrate your genuine attention to the issue and interests of those involved.
2. Find those receptive to your idea and work with them. Supports can guide you in establishing a working relationship with others whose backing will be important. An endorsement by opinion leaders can help ease those skeptics of the change but know that you can not convince everyone. Focus on the people who are aware of and support your efforts.

**Gaining support from your supervisor**

1. Outline the issue as you see it. Do your homework and come ready with statistics, specific examples, and case examples. The goal is to convince them that this problem needs correcting.
2. Describe your proposed response and your role in the process. Identify and address possible obstacles, and perhaps invite your supervisor to be part of the problem resolution process.
3. Highlight the philosophy behind your intent and the benefits that will come of it. Does the proposed change align with your agency’s mission or your supervisor’s professional values? Be specific in your description of how this change benefits both the agency and the people you serve.
4. Think of ways to enroll your supervisor in the effort. Ask for their ideas on how to move forward with this change and look for a role they could play. Continue to stay flexible and incorporate their ideas instead of taking an either/or stance.

**Gaining support from your organization**

1. Clearly identify what needs to be changed or what you wish was different.
2. Think about it for a while. Find others who feel the same way as you and really dissect the situation thinking of what causes it, what keeps it going, who gains from keeping things the way they are and who would be inconvenienced by a change.
3. Test your assumptions and consult with trusted colleagues and service users. Find relevant facts and figures, organize your thoughts, and know how you want to convey your ideas to others.
4. Identify other interested individuals. Have one-on-one conversations with people to identify their identification with the issue and their interest in supporting the change. Community change often is contingent on developing effective relationships so be sure to invest this time.
5. Identity those who are willing to do something and try to get them to conceptualize how they will support. Always consider “who else should we be talking to?”.
6. Have a small group meeting. Avoid using this time to complain about the situation and instead make a plan of the work that needs to be done and can be started now.
7. Increase your recruitment and continue to do your homework. It is important to keep momentum in the time between your first and second meetings.
8. Hold your next meeting and think about members of your community- who are the actors involved, who makes decisions on this issue, who feels the problem, who is likely to oppose or support your efforts? Think of enterprises that will allow members to take action and focus their energy.
9. Continue to work in teams, even if only small ones. This increases creative exchange of ideas and provides motivation while preventing members from feeling disconnected. Organize the work and have consistent communication.
10. Celebrate your accomplishments! It can be overwhelming to think only about all the lies ahead so continue to look back on all you have done thus far.

Continue these steps as you further formalize your plan of action, learn more of what type of change is needed, keep connected with your team through meetings and social events, and continue to recruit others to assist in the effort. Continue to maintain the change you have created and monitor your progress. You will have setbacks but having a community of support and a solid framework will help keep you moving forward.

# Helpful tools for assessment and planning

## Nasty Nine/Needed Nine

This tool can be used as a form of assessment, to be filled out by groups and individuals. For this goal, rank each item on the Needed Nine list as it has been experienced within the organization on a scale from 1-9. Or it can be used to identify Needed Nine aspects that currently exist in your organization to further build on those strengths.

The Nasty Nine are conditions that can undermine the success and effectiveness of an agency. If any of these resonate, consider focusing efforts on the counter point to that item found in the Needed Nine.

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| **Nasty Nine** | **Needed Nine** |
| Fragmentation   * Disconnected activities * People working apart | Creative Collaboration   * Willingness for new ideas * People working together |
| Reactive Mode   * Acting after problems recognized * Emphasis on fixing | Proactive thinking and acting   * Anticipating problem; acting ahead * Emphasis on prevention |
| Prescriptive Programs   * Procedures and policies dictate action | Developmental initiatives   * Flexibility, ability, and local control |
| Superficial Networking   * Weak connections among people | Transformational Networking   * Connections change conditions and people |
| Lack of Evaluation   * Evaluation not valued nor used | Practical Evaluation   * Evaluation used for improvements |
| Lack of Strategic Planning   * Decisions serve just the moment * Actions are isolated | Systems Level Planning   * Decisions recognize interrelated parts * Decision for purposeful impact |
| Lack of Clear Leadership   * Influence serves self interest | Nurtured leadership groups   * Mutual influence valued |
| People viewed as objects   * Some know what’s best for others | People Involved as Resources   * Everyone seen as having gifts to use |
| Unclear Mission, Vision, and Culture   * Lack of purposeful focus | Clear Mission, Vision, and Culture   * Purposeful focus, inspirational intent |

*\*Adapted from Bill Lofquist, personal communication, January 2007*

# IMAGINE - an easy to remember process for initiating and implementing organizational change

**I**  Start with an *Idea*

**M** *Muster* support and formulate an action system

**A** Identify *Assets*

**G** Specify *Goals* and objectives

**I** *Implement* a plan

**N** *Neutralize* opposition

**E** *Evaluate* progress

\**Developed by Krist-Ashman and Hull (2009*)