

What Happens When You Pay for Your Own Services?

By John O'Brien

In most places, the government still pays people who give services. Services like a place to live, help with finding a job, support in keeping a place of your own.

In some places, things are starting to change! The government is starting to give money to people with developmental disabilities to pay for their own services. This gives people more decisions to make about what service they need and when they need it.

There are some questions to ask about this change. Will it really change anything? Will people really get better services if they can pick and choose?

Some people say yes. If you pay for your own services and you don't like them, you find someone else to pay.

It may not work that way. Paying someone to help you live your life is not like buying a car or a house. It is different.

This paper talks about how it can be different.

Why does the idea of paying for your own services sound so good?

It sounds good because most people think it is better to choose your services than to have someone else choose them for you. It also sounds good because it should mean more say so over things. For example, you would be able to say who will work with you, when they will work with you, what they will do, how much they will get paid, and if they will keep their jobs. It also sounds good because in our country, the paying customer is always right!

However, things might not be as good as they sound. The main reason is that even if you get to choose the services you want, there may not be much to choose from in your local community. If there is not much to choose from, you may not be any better off than when you did not get to choose.

More about what your choices and what there is to choose from

If you live where there are lots of choices, having the power to choose your services and the money to pay for them should work well. However, if you live in a place where there are not many choices, there may be a big problem.

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Here's a way to think about what happens when you have the power of choice, but there are not many choices. Pretend that you are hungry and you want to go out to eat. You can find a lot of different kinds places to eat. Some cost a lot of money and some do not. You have a lot of choices and the power to choose. However, what if there was only one place to eat in town. What if you don't like the food there or it costs too much money. What would you do? What good would it be to have the power to choose?

Or, here is another way to think about it. What if you need a job and you need some help in finding one and learning how to do it. What if there was only one person in town who is good at helping people find jobs, but he or she wants more money than you can pay for that kind of help. What would you do?

You would either have to wait until you could save up enough money or until someone else comes along who can help you. So, you have the power to choose and some money to go with it, but it doesn't help you get a job when you need it – now. It might even make you decide that the old way was not so bad after all. You might find yourself saying "who wants choice and the money that goes with it!"

It's hard work!

What many people are finding out is that getting the services you want and paying for them is a lot harder than buying something to eat. It's about getting together a support team. Your support team! It's about being a team leader or even a cheerleader. It's hard work!

What can make it easier?

There are some ways that it will become easier for people who choose and pay for their own services. First, as more people with developmental disabilities and their families start choosing and paying for their own services, professionals will start to see that this is something that is here to stay. They will start to take individuals with the power to choose their own services and the money to pay for them as partners, not clients.

The second way that it will become easier is when individuals who choose their own services and pay for them, start working together in their local communities. They can put their ideas and their money together. This gives people more buying power when choosing services. People buying things together can get better deals. They can also get professionals to change things that they do in order to keep their customers happy.

Going from consumer to customer

Right now, people with developmental disabilities are often called consumers. If you look in the dictionary, a consumer is someone who uses things. Consumers don't buy

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things, they just get what others give them. The power to choose and pay for your own services, makes you a customer not a consumer. Customers have the power to change things. Consumers have to take things the way they are and hope for the best. Going from consumer to customer is not easy.

It takes a lot of time

Being a customer is hard work. It takes a lot of time to figure out what you services really want and need and how you can get them. This means going to people who provide services and asking them to be on your team. As a paying customer it means asking for what you want, when you want it and at the price you will pay. It also means changing services around when they are not working the way you want them.

Why should you do it?

Moving from consumer to customer is not what everyone wants to do. If there are not many choices where you live, being the first paying customer in your town will be very hard. It will mean that you have to put together a team of people who really want to support you in making this change.

If you decide to make the change, what you get out of it will be worth the hard work you put into it. As a customer who chooses services and pays for them, you can get things set up the way you want them. It doesn't mean everything will be perfect, but it can mean you have a lot better chance at living the kind of life you choose. It is hard work, but it will get easier as more people learn how to do it and teach others. Are you ready?