

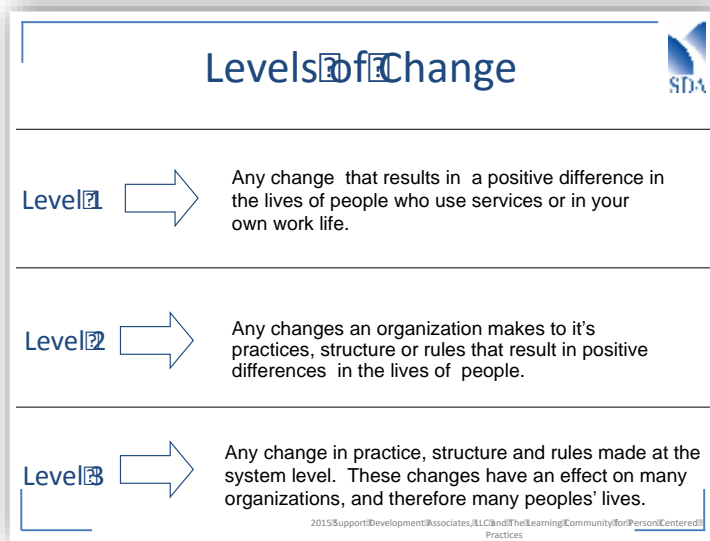
# A Brief Overview of Considerations for Regional Centers When Implementing a Person-Centered Organizational Initiative<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

For a variety of reasons, many of California's regional centers are currently considering or have implemented a person-centered organizational initiative. Moving towards a person-centered system<sup>2</sup> requires considerable thought and planning to be effective. This brief article presents some factors to consider in the early stages of planning, implementation, or efforts to sustain the initiative.

## Levels of Change.

One of the first factors to consider in planning an initiative concerns levels of change. **Level 1** changes (see figure below) are ones that service coordinators or providers can make that will make a positive difference in the lives of people you support. These are changes that can be made today or tomorrow without a change in policy and typically without permission (e.g., structure of team meetings, ways to include individuals in the individual planning process).



**Level 2** changes require approval from management. It is a change in practice, policy, or structure (e.g., changes in IPP format, job descriptions, organizational units). **Level 3** changes can be thought of as “systemic” changes. A change in state law or regulation is an example of a level three change. These are changes that the Department of Developmental Services (or other regulatory or legislative bodies) might need to make in order to support your initiative.

## Ideally, Changes Occur Organically from Learning

These changes are driven by the learning that occurs from supporting individuals using regional center services. Service coordinators and providers who work with people are trained and

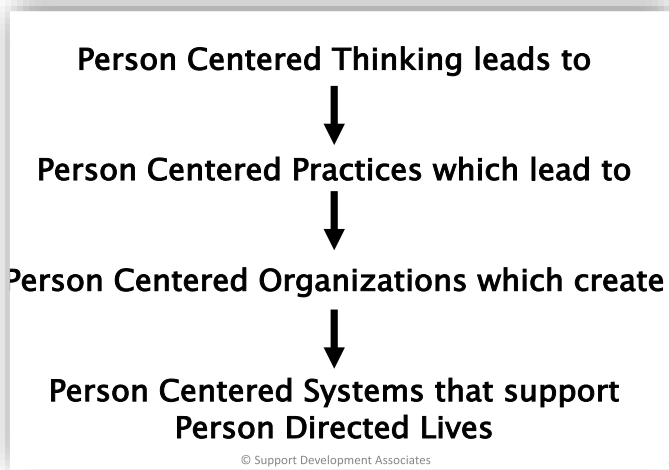
<sup>1</sup> Adapted from **Becoming a Person Centered System** by Michael W. Smull, Mary Lou Bourne, & Helen Sanderson (2009). This article provides more detail to the ideas expressed in this brief overview along with lessons learned along the way. Available at <http://www.allenshea.com/>.

<sup>2</sup> There are many paths that lead to a person-centered system. While the methods may differ, the core elements of person-centered thinking and planning described here are the same.

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supported in applying person centered thinking and planning skills. They change what they can change in their everyday service and support practices. Those changes that improve the lives of the people who use services are **level 1** changes.

The learning of those who apply the skills is collected, organized, and presented to a leadership group that includes both the organization's senior managers and the system senior managers. The leadership group listens to what service coordinators and providers have learned and looks for those things that should be celebrated and shared and for those things that need to change. The changes made by leadership are referred to as **level 2** changes.

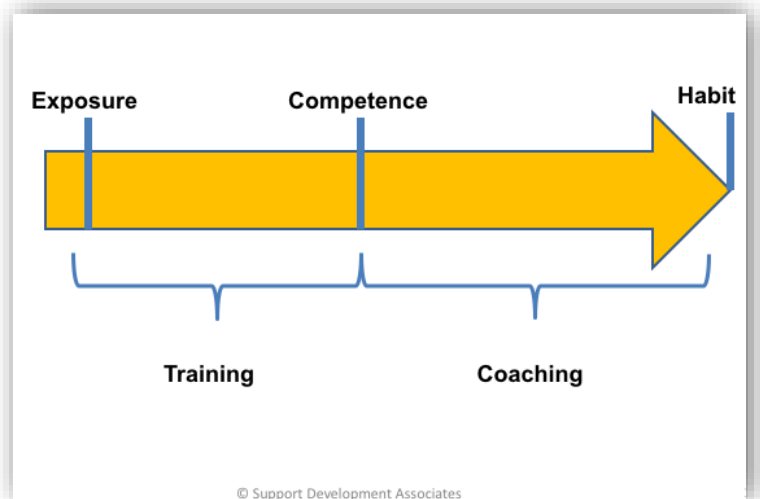


**Level 3** changes occur when regional center leaders, through their active participation in statewide leadership groups (e.g., ARCA), act upon and resolve the issues, system-wide policies, rules, and/or structures that create obstacles and/or inefficiencies. Where the system managers can make changes that support person centered practices for multiple organizations, these changes are referred to as level 3 changes.

### Training is a Start

Training for service coordinators and providers in person centered thinking is a start in an organizational change initiative. It will support level 1 changes immediately. However, without follow-up and support in its application to planning and everyday practices, the effort will likely stall. In addition, without continual training, turnover will serve to diminish returns.

In order to achieve some level of competence and movement towards the habitual use of person centered skills (in listening to and planning with individuals and families), follow-up coaching and support is critical. Whether inside or outside the regional center or provider agency, establishing a coaching supports model will increase the chances of sustainability.



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**Types of Training Available to Support Change Initiatives**

**Person Centered Organizational Change Strategies**

A two-day management retreat focusing on change strategies, resistance, culture shifts, and successful approaches to implementing person centered organizational change.

**Person Centered Thinking Overview**

A 2-4 hour overview of skills that provides exposure to person centered thinking to individuals, families, service coordinators and providers.

**Training in Person Centered Thinking**

A two-day training in the discovery and organizational skills needed to understand what is important to and for a person.

**Person Centered Thinking Skills Applied to Person Centered Descriptions, One Page Profiles and Individual Program Plans**

A two-day training in moving information from discovery to individual plans (customized to the plans of participants).

**Establishing a Coaching/Leadership Model**

Ongoing support for supervisors and agency leaders who, in turn, support the use of person centered skills in everyday practice.

**Positive and Productive Meetings**

A one day training, Positive and Productive Meetings is an innovative, practical meeting process, developed by Helen Sanderson Associates, that ensures that people can listen carefully, think clearly and therefore make effective decisions together.

**People Planning Together**

Training for individuals who use regional center services on how to write their own person centered plan.

**Families Planning Together**

Training for families in developing one page descriptions for their family members.

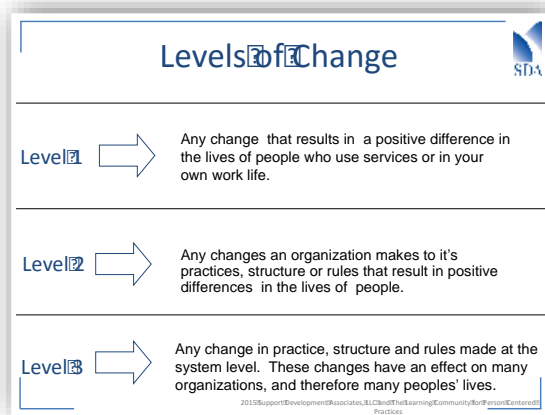
**Community Connections**

Using the practices of person centered thinking to support individuals in building connections to their community.

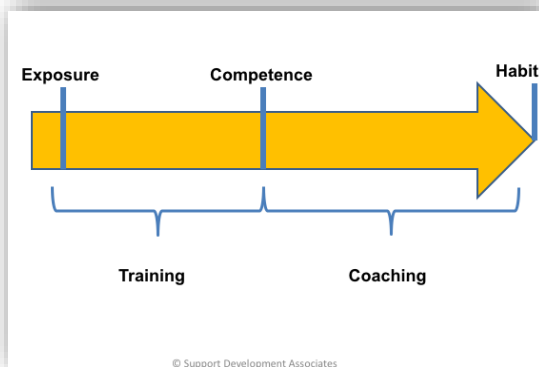
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### Planning for Next Steps

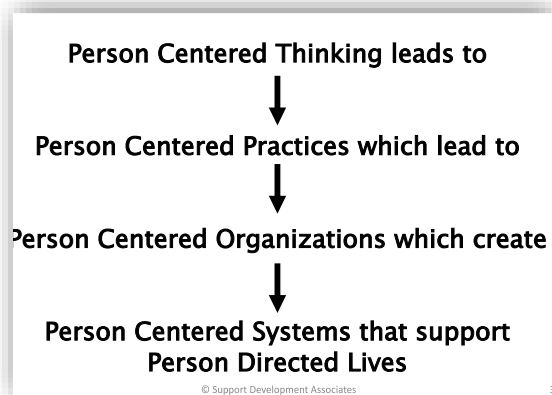
When you're considering pursuing an organizational initiative that promotes person centered thinking and planning, here are the three primary factors that you should consider:



**Consideration #1:** What levels of change are you comfortable with supporting in your organizational initiative?



**Consideration #2:** Where would you like to see service coordinators and providers in regards their understanding and implementation or person centered practices over the next three years?



**Consideration #3:** What kind of training are you considering, in order to implement or sustain an initiative at your regional center?

In California, there are a variety of opportunities for securing training, coaching and organizational change strategies in person centered thinking and planning. For more information about possible next steps available through training or to secure other resources, you can contact Bill Allen at [allenbill@mac.com](mailto:allenbill@mac.com). Or, go to click [here](#) for more resources and a directory of trainers and contact information.