Common Misuses of Person-Centered Planning and Ways to Prevent It

This summary is based on a classic article by Michael Smull (*Person-centered planning and perversion prevention)*. If you would like to read the original version, you can find it **here**.

Common misuses of person-centered planning include:

- **Superficial Understanding:** Professionals focus on surface-level choices rather than investing the time to uncover the individual's core values, which are essential for meaningful planning.

- **Coerced Consent:** Vulnerable individuals, especially those in institutions, may agree to any conditions to leave, resulting in plans that reflect the professionals' power rather than the individual's true desires.

- **Reliance on Labels:** Professionals may assign living arrangements or supports based solely on disability labels, ignoring the individuality and complexity of the person.

- **Program Model Practices:** Using program model practices while adopting the language of the support model, leading to plans that fail to honor the individual's values and choices.

- **Neglecting Time and Effort:** Failing to spend sufficient time understanding the individual and their values, resulting in plans that lack depth and authenticity.

These misuses undermine the core principles of person-centered planning and can distort the process, leading to plans that do not truly support the individual's vision for their future.

To avoid perverting the person-centered planning process, professionals must prioritize understanding the individual's core values and desired lifestyle. This requires a shift from program model practices to a true support model approach, ensuring actions align with the values of person-centered planning rather than just adopting its language. Key strategies include:

- **Deep Understanding:** Invest time in listening to the individual's words, behaviors, and those who care about them. Avoid relying on superficial expressions of choice or disability labels, and focus on uncovering stable core values that guide meaningful planning.

- **Respect Individuality:** Recognize the complexity of each person and avoid assigning living arrangements or supports based solely on labels. Understanding must account for the person's unique preferences across different settings.

- **Continuous Engagement:** Treat understanding as an ongoing process that deepens over time. Share life experiences with the individual to build relationships and mutual commitment, ensuring plans evolve with the person's changing desires and needs.

- **Empower Change:** Support individuals in exploring their desired lifestyles by allowing changes at their own pace, rather than adhering to rigid review cycles. Flexibility and responsiveness are central to honoring their evolving perception of quality of life. By focusing on these principles, professionals can ensure person-centered planning remains a respectful, value-driven process that truly supports the individual's vision for their future.

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