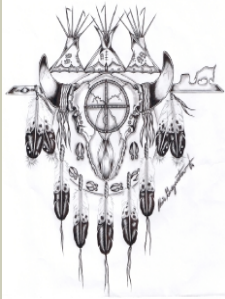


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Self-Advocacy

By Willie Davis, SLC Consultant & Disabled Person

Most professionals who provide services to persons with disabilities will encourage clients to take on responsibility for the direction of their own lives. Self-advocacy could be a goal on an IEP, 504 plan, IPE, or other formal document. More often, though, independence emerges more informally. It is personally encouraged by the vocational rehabilitation counselor who supports an individual taking more and more responsibility for his or her own Individual Plan of Employment. In some cases, individuals beginning to explore self-advocacy may speak out for themselves in a manner that is confrontational. Clients may be asked to questions about personal goals, their ability to take on certain tasks, or what type of educational level they expect to achieve. To provide answers, they are required to evaluate the present and what they anticipate for the future. This isn't always an easy process. Some clients come to us after having made some really poor decisions in their lives up to this point. They may have problems with alcoholism, drug use, domestic violence, poor social skills, or inadequate work skills, in addition to their disabilities. They may have blamed their disabilities for all of their problems when part of these problems came from their own choices. In planning the future, clients will again come face to face with choices and some of these are not what they want them to be. To get a four-year degree, if there is no college close enough, tribal members may need to move off of the reservation. Once a person makes a certain amount of money, SSDI and other benefits are reduced.

In order for professionals to provide services to their clients in an effective manner, they need to include self-exploration to the process, no matter how painful the facts of life may be initially. This may include how to better make the client more knowledgeable about disability issues, their own disability, and advocacy for persons with disabilities.

Self-Advocacy I continued I

Sometimes the anger and frustration a person feels when confronting the realities of life, either the mistakes he has made himself or the unfair restrictions on persons with disabilities, can be turned into a positive by becoming a self-advocate. These angry, confrontational individuals often turn out, through their passion, to be the most effective advocates lobbying state, tribal, federal, and private organizations to better services for people with disabilities.

Self-exploration 101: Do YOU have what it takes?

- Live by example, others will follow when they see you making the right/positive choices. You can say all you want to others, “Learn by my mistake”, but the hard reality is that you aren’t going to have that much creditability, for example, telling youth to stay in school if you dropped out yourself. What to do? Go back to school if you think it is so important. Walk the walk!
- Choose your causes based upon personal interest. You’ll put more effort into accomplishing something if it matters to you personally.
- Get others involved so that you are not the only one putting in all the effort. You will have strength in numbers.
- Be able and willing to put time and effort into the cause.
- Organize yourself and be prepared to answer questions or know where to go for help.

Listing of Self-Advocacy groups or organizations:

Each provides information on how to promote self-advocacy, to identify strategies, and to be part of the student’s transition process. There is also information on your rights, other support links and connections to disability self help information.

www.idonline.org/ld_indepth/transition_self_advocacy.html

www.thecht.svr.edu/selfadvoc.htm

www.thearc.org/misc/sadescr.html

www.TransitionalLivingLearningCenter.com

www.selfadvocacy.org

“Choose your causes based on personal interest. You’ll put more effort into accomplishing something if it matters to you personally.”

Coalition Building: Tribal Services for Adults

Perspectives from Tribal Reservations

By: Breeanne Hinojos, SLC Research Assistant & Willie Davis, SLC Consultant

Coalition building involves an organization uniting around a common issue and clear goal(s). Coalitions take on various causes and strive for solutions to community problems. These problems can include anything from alcohol and drug abuse to lack of education programs to high unemployment. Coalition groups work to solve these problems.

What to look for when forming a Coalition Group:

- Identify the unifying issues
- Discover the resources that can come from this organization
- Find what obstacles you might encounter
- Respect coalition members' self-interests
- Structure the group's decision-making
- Remember to give and take
- Develop a common strategy to resolve issues
- Be consistent with whom you are representing. Attend all meetings!
- Be clear with responsibilities and which task each person performs

The following is a short description of our tribal communities and what we feel needs to be done in order to establish the call for involved community members, agencies, and successful coalition building.

Spirit Lake Nation

By: BreeAnne Hinojoso

As a young adult on the Spirit Lake Nation Reservation, I see a need for more prevention programs. Underage drinking is a very common problem among teenagers here on the reservation. I believe we need to have more programs for our youth such as the Boys and Girls Club of Spirit Lake Nation, which offers children activities and a place to play basketball and socialize. Introducing children to different sports is a great idea because children gain confidence and positive self-esteem by participating in such activities. They learn to set goals for themselves and this can stop them from trying drugs or alcohol at such a young age.

I also know there is a need for more treatment programs like the Spirit Lake Nation Recovery and Wellness Program located in Crow Hill. This program offers drug and alcohol evaluations and counseling; however, a person might end up waiting a couple of weeks before being seen due to the long waiting list. This would not be a problem if there were other treatment programs available on the SLN. Other prevention services for adults needed on the reservation include are domestic violence programs.

Another challenge I have noticed on the reservation is the lack of child-care for parents. This prevents parents from going to school and/or finding employment because they can't find someone to watch the children. The Spirit Lake Head Start Program is a great program because parents can take care of business while their children are learning in the Head Start classrooms. However, there are only a limited amount of openings and people on the waiting list could possibly wait up to a year before

Coalition Building – Turtle Mountain

getting their child into the program. I think programs that offer childcare would be very beneficial for young adults on the reservation because it will create more jobs, as well as give young adults a chance to finish their education or find a job. Another program for parents that could be addressed is an early literacy program for children of young parents.

These are the services and programs that I believe we can improve through coalition building.

Turtle Mountain Reservation

By: Willie Davis

Our community has an established Special Education Department/Program throughout our school systems that allow individuals with disabilities to obtain the necessary services they require while in a secondary setting. However, once they graduate, there are limited resources available to these individuals who become young adults. Most have the option of working with programs like Vocational Rehabilitation or the local Developmentally Disabled Adult Workshop. What is missing is a comprehensive and larger structured Disability Service Agency (DSA). Our community has a number of adult individuals with disabilities needing assistance and a sizeable number of programs and agencies that could coordinate services with the assistance of a DSA.

There are several local coalition groups that have worked toward inclusion and objectives that represent community awareness. For example, the Turtle Mountain Community Wellness Committee meets monthly to discuss community wellness. They provide community awareness support through yearly conferences, guest speakers, seminars, and other community wellness issues that discuss ways to live a positive lifestyle without using alcohol and drugs.

The Turtle Mountain Diabetes Coalition works with the Indian Health Service Hospital to provide education, monitoring, and other means of health awareness to local tribal members. They also work with local schools and provide outreach to enrolled members throughout the year.

I would like to see a consolidated effort made by our local community with a confirmation and leadership from our local tribal governments to bring together all local coalitions and committees, developing a network. As it is, tribal members and residents have to discover available services by contacting an office or agency, then asking for information or referrals. Others have to go through the local tribal office for connections. This alone does not guarantee you will find out what you are looking for. The best solution, as I see it, is to umbrella all coalitions under one agency, establishing an overall line of communication with the tribal government.



“Introducing children to different sports is a great idea because children gain confidence and positive self-esteem by participating in such activities.”

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

**www.
spiritlakeconsulting.
com**

Upcoming Events and Workshops

Disability Access – The School Years

Date: March 26-27, 2007

Time: 11am-5pm

Location: Turtle Mountain Community College, Computer Classroom
(2nd Floor)

Caring for Our People Training – Vocational Rehabilitation

Date: March 21-22, 2007

Time: 11am-5pm

Location: Lake Region State College, Rm. 128

If you are interested in attending, contact us at

info@spiritlakeconsulting.com, or Erich Longie at (701) 351-2175

4th Annual Regional Assistive Technology Expo

Come learn about Assistive Technology (AT) and how it can help you or someone you know! The 4th Annual AT Expo on April 5, 2007 at the Ramada Plaza Suites in Fargo, North Dakota will highlight AT devices and services for people of any age and ability to help them live, learn, work and play. People interested in attending may need AT for themselves, a friend, a family member, a student, an employee or a client. Whether you have a child with a learning disability, a parent with memory loss, or need help staying in your own home and getting back to work, this AT Expo is for you!

For further information please contact: Magda Fitterer or Jeannie Krull at 1-800-895-4728. Email: mfitterer@integra.net or jmkrull@integra.net. Forms can be obtained online at: <http://www.ndipat.org/newsevents/default.asp?ID=377>. The fax number is 1-701-365-6242.

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Jessica@spiritlakeconsulting.com to be added to our mailing list.***

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