

Section 3

Overview to Becoming a Support Broker

All support brokers are hired and trained by one of the seven support broker agencies listed in the previous section. Once hired and trained by a support broker agency, brokers then interview with and get selected by people with disabilities. While each support broker agency develops its own job descriptions, all have agreed to the universal elements listed in this section's "Job Description". Additionally, broker job descriptions get individualized by the people with disabilities who select them.

A support broker's primary responsibility is to the person with a disability and the people who care about them. The job requires working closely with many people who may possess differing priorities and agendas. "Obligations of a Support Broker" summarizes and discusses this juggling act whereas "County Assumptions and Minimum Requirements for a Support Broker" outlines just that.

Support Broker Job Description

Purpose: To advocate for adults with developmental and other disabilities to lead a self-directed life. We believe people with disabilities deserve the opportunity to direct their own supports while maintaining or improving their quality of life in their homes and in their community.

Position Duties and Responsibilities: The following categories are an outline of the job duties expected of the Support Broker.

Planning: The Support Broker is expected to initiate the planning process with the person and her/his team. A Person Centered Plan must be completed annually, at a minimum. The team will determine the type of Person Centered Plan that will be used. The Support Broker is expected to be well informed on a variety of person-centered planning tools. The Support Broker will coordinate the planning meeting, help ensure all key people have input, and document the planning session. A written copy of the Person Centered Plan will be given to the person and all interested parties, including the person's Dane County manager. This plan must be reviewed a minimum of every 6 months.

Training: The Support Broker is expected to complete all mandatory Support Broker training offered by the Support Broker Coalition and Dane County. Support Brokers may be required to attend information sessions throughout the year as a means of gaining resources and learning more about Self-Directed Services.

Fiscal Responsibility: The Support Broker is charged with informing the person and/or guardian with the choices available in Self-Directed Services. To accomplish this, the Support Broker must be aware of the State and Federal funding programs, both for personal funds and support funds, and how this relates to county funding. In addition, a broker should understand how an individual may blend their personal funds, family resources and public funding to help an individual achieve their goals. Paperwork related to this job duty must be completed within the necessary timelines. Support Brokers negotiate with support providers within a person's rate. Advocacy with Dane County may be necessary if a person's support needs change.

- **Knowledge of Personal Funds.** It is expected that all Support Brokers will have a clear understanding of SSI and SSDI benefits along with the knowledge of who is eligible for SSI-E. There must also be an understanding of how MA is related to personal funds and knowing who is eligible and appropriate for the MAPP program. The Support Broker must also understand the representative payee responsibility and make ensure all representative payees have the knowledge to follow through with job duties accurately.
- **Knowledge of public funding.** It is expected that all Support Brokers will have a thorough understanding of how County, State and federal funds work together through the waiver program. Accurately completing the assessment for the waiver program is a necessity. It is just as important to accurately complete the IFP, narrative and agreement/voucher forms in order for Dane County funding to be paid to support providers. The Support Broker is expected to review their Dane County funding statement from Fiscal Assistance with each client/guardian every three months.

Communication: The Support Broker is expected to have a minimum of monthly contact with one person on each support team. A face to face visit with each individual is required a minimum of once every three months in a variety of settings. Person-directed exceptions can be

written in the person's support plan. The County Manager will be informed of any crisis situations and/or any situational change that has occurred in a person's life.

Mandatory Reporting: Each Support Broker is required to be proficient in the Abuse and Neglect Policies provided by Dane County Human Services and the State of Wisconsin, and must follow this format for any suspected abuse and neglect situation.

Paperwork/Documentation: The Support Broker is responsible to complete a variety of paperwork for people to receive both Dane County Human Services and State of Wisconsin funding. This includes annual plans, fiscal paperwork, case notes, requests for adaptation modifications and DD system change form. All communication must be documented in a case note that details who the communication was with, what type of communication it was, what was discussed in detail, and how long the interaction was. The above protocol should also be used to document any administrative time spent.

Knowledge of Community Resources: The support Broker is expected to have an extensive knowledge of community and neighborhood resources. These include both paid and natural supports.

- **Housing:** It is expected that all Support Brokers will have a basic understanding of low income programs such as Section 8 housing, opportunities to purchase homes such as Movin' Out, Inc. Brokers don't generally take a lead in finding housing unless a client is moving between agencies and/or no residential agency is involved.
- **Community Connections:** Support Brokers must be aware of a variety of community activities which can strengthen peoples social relationships, enhance people's community membership and increase their self empowerment.
- **Transportation:** The Support Broker is expected to have a proficient understanding of the transportation options in Dane County and how this service is funded. The Support Broker must be able to advocate for the appropriate transportation for each client.
- **Assessment and Referrals:** The Support Broker must be accurate in the assessment needs of each client. When a need is identified, the Support Broker must be able to make a referral to the appropriate person in order to get the need met. Examples of referrals are: Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Psychiatrist, Communication devices, Neurotherapist, etc.

Team Building and Conflict Resolution:

- A Support Broker is expected to assist individuals in building and maintaining strong teams that help a person live the life they desire. Teams typically include a combination of family, friends and paid supports.
- **Conflict Resolution.** Each Support Broker must be proficient in facilitating team meetings when necessary. There also may be a need for the Support Broker to mediate conflicts in order for the team to find a resolution with a situation.

From: *Quality Standards for Support Brokers* – Introduction, p. 5 (December 30, 2005)

OBLIGATIONS OF BEING A SUPPORT BROKER

Dane County Department of Human Services

Dane County has outlined the multifaceted role of the Support Broker in a paper entitled "Obligations of Being a Support Broker". The following information was adapted from "Understanding the obligations of supported living," a section of Assistance With Integrity, by John O'Brien and Connie Lyle O'Brien, Responsive Systems Associates, Lithonia, GA., 1993. It is written from the perspective of the Support Broker.

People with developmental disabilities need committed, capable allies if they are going to overcome the barriers imposed by widespread prejudice and discrimination. It is important for a Support Broker to be committed to becoming such an ally. Being someone's ally doesn't necessarily mean becoming a close friend or endorsing everything the person does or wants. From the point of view of the Support Broker, whose primary role is to help people obtain what they want, it means being willing to be involved in a constructive way in helping a person discover and move toward a desirable personal future.

Obligations to the Person

There are a variety of obligations Support Brokers accept in relation to the people we assist. We acknowledge that in order to assist individuals effectively, we must earn trust and the distinction of being an ally by:

- respecting the individuals who hire us
- listening carefully so that we can keep getting to know each person better
- learning with each individual about the kind, amount, and style of assistance needed to live successfully in her/his home and community
- learning with each individual about her/his interests and preferences and helping identify the kind of support that will offer a safe and reasonable basis for participation in community life
- working with the individual, and her/his family and friends, to identify ways to obtain the assistance needed
- recognizing the social, financial, and personal barriers to the kind of life each individual wants, and helping identify ways to overcome them
- understanding each person's vulnerabilities related to her/his disability and personal history, and carefully negotiating safeguards with each person to balance risk and safety in a responsible way
- using our knowledge and experience to help individuals be flexible and creative with all the resources available, and responding as her/his interests, preferences, and needs change
- keeping responsibilities clear so that, in every area in which we work together with individuals that hire us, all team members are aware of each other's contributions and responsibilities
- minimizing our intrusion into each individual's life by periodically checking to make sure we are not doing unnecessary things or doing necessary things in intrusive ways
- sticking with each person during difficult times
- learning from our mistakes
- following through on our commitments to the people who hire us and not making promises that we cannot keep.

We recognize that social, legal, and service developments may open many new possibilities for people with developmental disabilities, and we accept responsibility to:

- provide current information to individuals who hire us
- invite and encourage each person to try new experiences
- invite and encourage each person to widen her/his circle of friends and contacts
- hold high expectations for the quality of each individual's life, and assist her/him in participating as a full citizen and community member
- stretch our own awareness of possibilities by actively seeking contacts with people involved in building up our communities, and with people who are developing more effective and practical ways to assist people with disabilities.

We realize that team members may disagree with us or be dissatisfied with our assistance to the individuals who hire us, and we accept responsibility to:

- negotiate openly with each individual in search of mutually satisfying outcomes
- try new ways to assist, then check to see if the new approach has good results
- work hard to understand communication about the adequacy and acceptability of our assistance, especially when an individual more often communicates with behavior than words
- help each individual explore other sources of assistance, if she/he wants to do that.

Obligations to the Person's Family and Friends

We acknowledge the importance of family and friends to the individuals we assist. We want to invite and encourage active support for a positive future for the people who hire us, and we do not in any way seek to replace family and friends in the person's life. We recognize that family and friends may disagree with us or be dissatisfied with the support we provide. Thus, we accept responsibility to:

- respond to concerns about the person's safety and well being
- negotiate openly in search of mutually satisfying outcomes.

We realize that the individuals we assist and their family and friends may have different, perhaps even conflicting ideas about what is possible and desirable for the individual. In the event of these differences, we agree:

- to uphold the importance of mutually respectful relationships among family members
- to assist everyone involved to negotiate a satisfactory resolution to the conflict, if our help is acceptable to the person we assist and to involved family and friends
- that if the conflict is serious and we cannot resolve it, we will maintain respectful contact with all parties but honor the choice of the person we assist.

To help each individual build the future she/he wants, we believe we must invite and assist others within our community to do what the human service system cannot do alone, which is to help people create satisfying lives and fulfilling community relationships.

From: *Quality Standards for Support Brokers – Role of Support Brokers*, p. 2-3 (December 30, 2005)



County Assumptions and Minimum Requirements for Support Brokers

Dane County funds support broker agencies to provide support broker services. In turn, support broker agencies hire and train the support brokers they employ. This training occurs within the support broker agency as well as through courses offered by the Waisman Center's Training and Consultation Catalog. The county requires all support brokers to complete the State of Wisconsin's "Background Information Disclosure" form and to undergo a Caregiver Background Check per Wis. S. 50.065. Regardless of which agency a broker works for, core-training elements include:

- Understanding how to complete essential financial paperwork to ensure a person's individual funding flows uninterrupted.
- An overview of Dane County's Developmental Disabilities system such as that offered at "Taste of Dane County"
- Review of Dane County's Abuse and neglect policy as presented by Dane County's Community Services Consultant, Maya Fairchild.
- "Power and Control: Learning How to Use It Respectfully" offered through the Waisman Center's Training and Consultation Catalog.
- Strategies for working effectively and communicating clearly with community providers and families such as those taught in "Communication and Intentional Messages" through the Waisman Center's training catalog and broker coalition sponsored training.
- Understanding person-centered planning techniques
- Understanding financial and health care benefits such as Social Security and Medicaid
- Continuing education sponsored by the broker coalition such as the annual broker symposium and periodic county informational updates.

In addition to the above core-training elements brokers must meet minimum qualifications of the Community Integration Program (CIP) which includes:

- Skills and knowledge which would typically be acquired toward a degree in the human service field, and
- At least 2 years experience in a human service field, and
- Knowledge of services and resources in the developmental disabilities field, and
- Attend (or be exempted from) mandatory CIP Core Course training provided by the CIP staff

PEOPLE SELECTING SUPPORT BROKERS CANNOT:

- Select a broker employed by one of their current support agencies
- Hire their brokers to provide other types of support to them
- Choose their guardian or legal representative to act as their support broker

MINIMALLY BROKERS MUST:

- Be selected, hired and work under the direction of the person receiving support
- Sign a written broker agreement with the person receiving supports, outlining what the broker will do
- Develop, write, implement and revise a person-centered plan annually
- Assist a person in identifying and obtaining needed supports that can be purchased within their service rate
- Have at least monthly contact with the person receiving services or one of their team members
- Have face to face contact with the person receiving services at least every 3 months
- Assist a person in developing their own personal record keeping system or ensure that someone else in their life is doing this.
- Complete and maintain required on-going forms and records, including:
 - Case note or journal entries specifying contacts made on a person's behalf
 - Individual Financial Plan (IFP)
 - Service Agreement/Vouchers to ensure that all service providers get paid and know the parameters of the support they are paid to provide.
 - Necessary funding paperwork (annual CIP plans)
 - Monthly recording of hours spent per person (610's)

MINIMALLY, SUPPORT BROKERS MUST ASSURE THAT:

- A person receives necessary health and dental care
- A person is living in safe, decent conditions
- A person's money is being appropriately managed
- All workers are adequately trained and aware of the person's support needs
- The person is receiving adequate support to maintain health and safety
- If one or more of these conditions are not met, the broker must be actively involved in trying to assure that they are met