

## Individual Supports

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**People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities<sup>1</sup> (I/DD) must have access to individual supports, such as assistive technology and personal assistance, to support their participation in daily life.**

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### Issue

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities are often able to better perform basic tasks of everyday life such as communicating, interacting with others, completing daily living routines, and moving in and around their homes and communities when individual supports are provided when needed. All too often, individual supports are denied because of restrictive criteria such as age, disability label, severity of the disability, problem behavior, motor or sensory limitations, or test scores. For many people, the opportunity to create individual supports is limited by the availability of funding due in some cases to waiting lists and the institutional bias in Medicaid.

### Position

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities must have access to the supports necessary to lead a meaningful life in the community. These supports should be provided based upon functional needs and choice. Supports should lead to opportunities for community involvement and development of individual interests.

Individual supports may include:

- **Personal assistance.** Adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (and parents of minor children with I/DD) should be able to hire and fire personal assistants to help them perform everyday activities, make decisions, and exercise control over their lives.
- **Communication.** People learn to communicate in many ways, such as personalized gestures and sounds, picture symbols, manual signs, and spoken language. Support must be available to help improve an individual's communication and social interactions as well as reduce challenging behaviors.
- **Assistive technology.** People must have access to devices, services, and training that enhance independence, mobility, communication, environmental control, and self-determination. The ways assistive technology can be used must be assessed throughout a person's life cycle and as needs change. Designers, manufacturers, service providers, educators, and people with I/DD and their families should be educated about the benefits of technology.

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Supports must be individually planned and applied according to the principles of person-centered planning, self-determination and individual outcomes, flexible funding, and team collaboration. The individual supports must be independently and regularly monitored for quality, safety, and effectiveness.

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Joint Statement with the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD).

<sup>1</sup> “People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities” refers to those defined by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) classification and the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition (DSM IV)*, published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). In everyday language they are frequently referred to as people with cognitive, intellectual and/or developmental disabilities although the professional and legal definitions of those terms both include others and exclude some defined by *DSM IV*.

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