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PREPARING DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS IN CMS'S EXPECTATION TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUALS WITH 'INFORMED CHOICE'.

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), according to the "2014 Federal Home and Community-Based Services Regulation: What you need to know", taken from the Arc's National Policy Matters, the emphasis is on 'personal autonomy' and greater access to 'integrated settings'. The regulation also will ensure that people who receive the supports will be able to make 'informed choices'. Given that direct support professionals will have a major role in ensuring that people with disabilities will be better prepared to understand the 'choice making process' and associated risk and responsibility that goes along with making ones' decision, the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) is currently in the process of developing a training program that will be geared towards 'train the trainer' for teaching Informed Decision Making.

Informed Decision Making (IDM) is a process that everyone uses either intuitively or with guidance from others - often referred to as 'supportive decision making'. The IDM process is typically inclusive of several steps: 1-Define the problem, 2-Gather information, 3-List options, 4-Compare options, 5-Make a decision, 6-Develop a plan of action, and 7-Evaluate the decision. Individuals with intellectual disabilities can be helped in how to make informed decisions, but have been traditionally limited in the opportunities to make their own choices. Typically, the people we support are 'experience poor' and need to have opportunities to experience different options in order to establish a preference. The NADSP believes that people with disabilities should be offered training about the IDM process and by using scenarios and real life experiences, they will be able to learn how to make informed choices as well as understand the risk and responsibility that goes along with decision making. Until now, state systems have been geared towards 'overprotection', which is counter-productive to allowing for 'dignity of risk'. In order to meet CMS's expectations, states will have to balance associated risk that is part and parcel of decision making, with its traditional regulations on incident management regarding Abuse and Neglect. I think you'll agree that in many service settings, direct support professionals will be the key lynchpin in meeting these new guidelines.

NADSP has a long and rich history in providing training for direct support professionals, through its competencies and certifications, with its Code of Ethics and accreditations and we are reaching out to various national organizations like the Interdependent Network, CQL, NASDDDS, ANCOR, the Arc of US and others, in anticipation for input and guidance in developing a comprehensive and meaningful training program for direct support professionals on Informed Decision Making. We have scheduled an **"Introduction to IDM" webinar, on Friday, September 5th**, the week prior to National Direct Support Professional Recognition Week. We hope that you'll join us on the webinar and partner with NADSP as we develop a robust training that prepares the direct support workforce in meeting this exciting challenge.

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