

# What is Self-Determination?

**Self-Determination** is a process that empowers persons who have a mental illness or developmental disability to have control over their lives and resources. Through Self-Determination, people are supported in exercising all of the same rights, choices and opportunities enjoyed by other citizens.

## ■ Desirable Outcomes

**Relationships** — Each person has a social support network of persons with whom a trusting relationship is established and upon whom they can depend for assisting in the assurance of health and safety.

**Individual Budget** — Each person has an individual budget for the purchase of services that is developed with freely chosen family members and friends (person-centered planning).

**Living In The Location Of Choice** — Each person is able to choose where they live, the supports they need, and who provides the supports.

**Having An Income** — Each person has a method of earning an income in a manner in which they have chosen. Jobs held in the community will pay the person at least minimum wage.

## Principles of Self-Determination

**Freedom** — People have the right to choose how they live their lives, where and with whom.

**Control** — People have the power to make decisions and truly control their lives. This includes gaining authority over financial resources and power to determine what supports are needed, how they will be implemented and by whom.

**Relationships/Support** — A relationship must be treasured, nurtured and protected. Those with whom the individual has real relationships provide the strength, assistance and security which ensures each person's well being.

**Contribution & Community** — Everyone has the ability to contribute to their community in a meaningful way. Giving of self helps people establish a sense of belonging and identity. Community membership includes the opportunity to be employed, to own a home, be truly involved in the routines of the community and make a difference in the lives of others.

**Responsibility** — Individuals, as they take greater control and authority over their lives and resources, assume greater responsibility for their decisions and actions.

**Dreaming** — All people have hopes and dreams which guide the actions they take and are the most meaningful to them. A commitment to helping people determine their dreams, respecting those dreams and helping make dreams come true is crucial.

**Dignity & Respect** — All people have an inherent right to be treated with dignity and respected as a whole person. Some of life's greatest lessons are learned by making choices that are later realized to be mistakes. All people have the right to the dignity of risk.

**Production of Income** — Everyone needs to generate income. It is central to the development of individual budgets. Not all of a person's unique needs can be answered with public dollars. By focusing on generating income, even those without the physical ability to do labor can achieve a meaningful income.

**Fiscal Conservatism** — Making things happen does not always require money. It is imperative that alternatives to paid supports be found. When a support is purchased, people will get what they need, pay only for what they get, make real investments, spend money more efficiently and make adjustments when needed. To find the best quality for the most reasonable price, people are free to purchase in and out of the system.

**Whatever It Takes** — Those who work in the system become barrier removers. The attitude is that nothing is impossible as long as it is legal and causes no harm.

### Limits on the use of Public Funds

- The choice must not present a devalued image.
- The choice is reasonable and prudent.
- The choice made must not do harm.
- The choice must not be illegal.
- The choice cannot require that people with disabilities be together.
- The choice must be available to everyone in the community.

# Self-Determination

in the Northwest Community  
Mental Health Affiliation

## OUR GOAL IS:

To create opportunities for individuals with disabilities to exercise all of the same rights, choices, and opportunities enjoyed by other citizens.

People will live self-determined lives. It means that people have control of the resources needed for their support, as well as responsibility for their decisions and actions.

For more information about **Self-Determination**, contact the Northwest Community Mental Health Affiliation at:

### Northern Lakes Community Mental Health

Grand Traverse, Leelanau Counties  
**(231) 922-4850**  
**(231) 935-3871 TDD/TDY**

Crawford, Missaukee, Roscommon,  
Wexford Counties  
**(800) 492-5742**  
**(231) 876-3281 TDD/TDY**

### West Michigan Community Mental Health

Lake, Mason, Oceana Counties  
**(231) 845-6294**  
**(800) 992-2061**  
**(800) 790-8326 TDD/TDY**

[www.nwcmha.org](http://www.nwcmha.org)

Oral interpretive services are available at no charge.  
Call Customer Services at 1-800-337-8598 for information.

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These materials were reviewed by consumers.



## Self-Determination:

A Basic Human Right

