

LEARNING INSTITUTE ON PERSON-CENTERED PRACTICE FOR POLICY MAKERS

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It was great to meet and learn from well versed, experienced, published faculty who have been where we are as policy makers, but also have the knowledge to share about system changes.

LEARNING INSTITUTE PARTICIPANT

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In June 2023, policy makers and management staff from the New York State agencies that oversee Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) programs came together in person and virtually for the first-of-its-kind Learning Institute on Person-Centered Practice for Policy Makers. These State agency leaders took part in a unique learning experience focused on reimagining the delivery of HCBS, exploring their roles in this transformation, and discovering how this theme connects with their sense of purpose. Through this exploration of systems and self, participants built on

their capacity as change agents. Sessions were led by faculty members Chris Liuzzo and Hanns Meissner—both New York State-based leaders in person-centered planning—with support from Public Consulting Group and the New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation.

Multimodal Learning Experience

Learning Institute participants were given the opportunity to learn from the faculty, guest speakers, and from one another in a community of practice experience. Guest speakers included service providers, and parents and caregivers who spoke about challenges and innovative solutions used in real life situations. A variety of exercises engaged participants in unique ways of learning. Examples include journaling, exploratory interviews, a hands-on “sculpting” exercise, and small group reflection exercises.

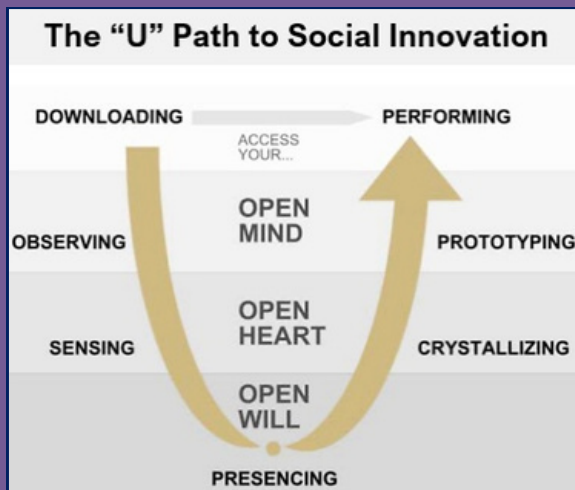
“I value the approach to learning that was presented.”



Shown above: A participant's sculptures depicting a stuck provider change effort and shift to innovation

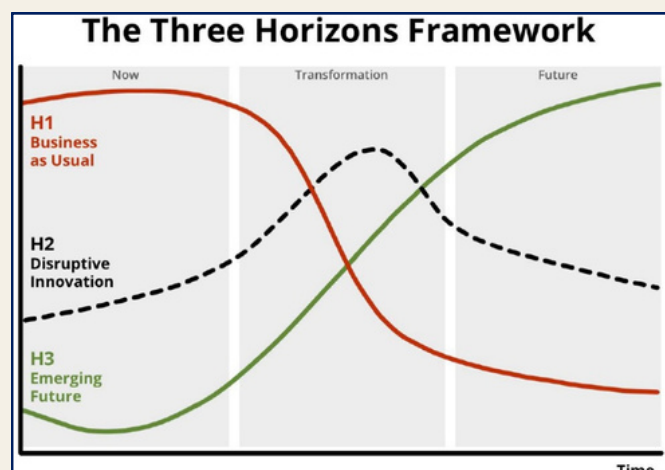
Participants learned about and discussed:

- The purpose and meaning of authentic person-centered work
- The various possibilities of the federal HCBS Final Rule in supporting individuals to live community lives
- Theory U, a holistic change management framework used as a tool for creating systemic change
- The evolution of service models over time and what transformation is desired
- How system dynamics can promote and hinder socially innovative support arrangements
- How assumptions about people and person-centeredness affects our roles



The stages and associated qualities a person or organization experiences on the path to social innovation

Framework showing how different perspectives and approaches play out across time before and after a systems transformation



Guest Speakers

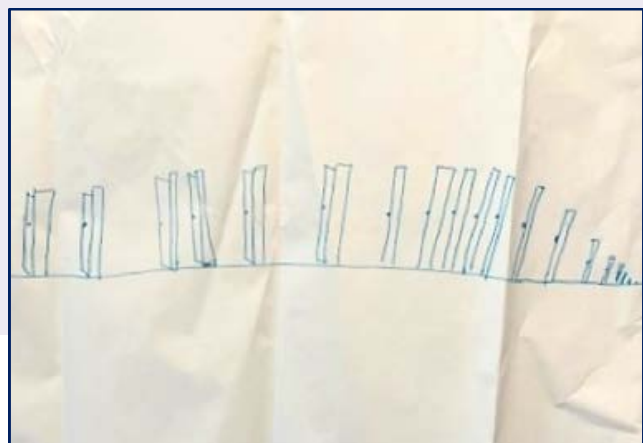
During the in-person sessions, participants heard from four guest speakers. The speakers' stories served to help participants deepen their understanding of systemic factors that prevent and promote authentic person-centered practice. Speakers spoke about what kept individuals "stuck" in services that did not work for them, and what socially innovative support arrangements helped them become "unstuck."

Edie

Edie shared the challenges and victories her family faced when developing an individual innovative support arrangement for her two sons with intellectual/developmental disabilities. She did not want her sons to be in a group home and worked to create a place for them to call their own home – despite bureaucratic challenges. Edie's home became two, with her sons having their own separate space and staff to support them. After hearing Edie speak, one participant said they believe a mother's standards should be the standards they strive to meet for individuals receiving services. Participants also commented on how Edie's sons did not just live in a neighborhood, but rather they were a part of the community and were well-known. This observation supported Edie's sentiment that, "When you're in your own community and you're visible, people can see what you can do." Lastly, participants recognized the perseverance that was needed to create the innovative arrangement.

Doris

The Learning Institute participants also felt a connection to Doris' story. Doris spoke about trying to navigate a "stuck" support arrangement for her mother who was aging and experiencing dementia, and using creative ways to improve the situation. She shared the challenges she has faced with respecting her mother's wishes while trying to keep her safe, including language barriers, insurance limitations, and difficulty finding an aide. Participants heard about the compromises that Doris and her mother came to negotiating two living spaces, and the difficulties with this arrangement which did not fully meet each of their needs.



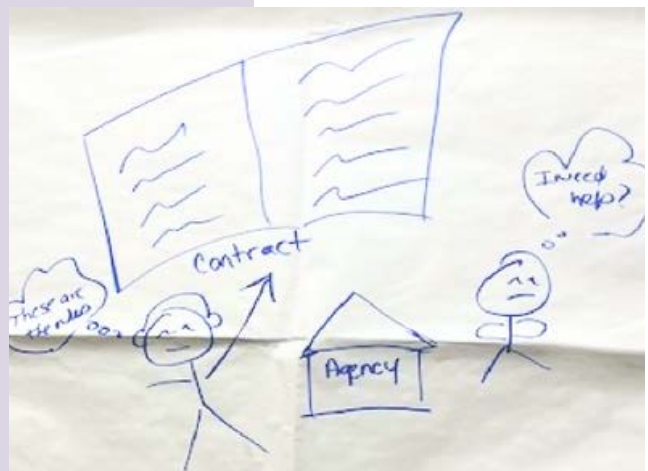
Shown above: Reflective drawings on the many challenges families face and their perseverance

Participation Response

Learning Institute participants spoke about challenges, desire to see change, and next steps. Despite coming from different service sectors, participants shared some common thoughts. Many agreed that systemic change is needed. Another recurring thought was that administrative requirements can be a barrier for implementing person-centered change. Lastly, many participants showed hope. No one believed systemic change would be easy, but they were hopeful it could be done.

Administrative Requirements

Participants spoke about the challenges that can come with the need to demonstrate compliance with federal and state statute and regulation. Many participants acknowledged the difficulty of balancing administrative requirements to demonstrate compliance with the need to respond with flexibility to people's real-life needs. When asked about changes they would like to see, one participant shared that they were thinking about the many doors that are unnecessarily closed, and how the inflexibility of policy can inadvertently impact people who could benefit from more person-centered flexibility.



*Shown above:
Reflective drawings on
challenges posed by
administrative requirements*

Acknowledgment of Needed Change

Participants acknowledged that systemic change is needed and voiced it from the first session onwards. Their awareness stemmed from both work experience and personal connections. Participants described how they view “authentic person-centered work” and reflected on what service models are still used today. They acknowledged how components of institutional care that do not support person-centeredness still exist. Policy makers knew before joining the Learning Institute that change is needed. Throughout the sessions, participants challenged themselves to explore the various ways change can be born and grow. For example, participants delved into how internal assumptions affect the way services are designed and delivered, and what dimensions of care and support models to consider (including individual/professional relationships, people's experience of the service/support, service outcomes being focused on, and the oversight agency's relationship with HCBS providers).

Hope

Participants communicated hopefulness about models of care transcending to a point beyond what has currently been achieved. They felt possibilities were demonstrated during the pandemic when challenges demanded innovation. Participants spoke of seeing changes already occurring and that, as oversight agencies, part of their role is to encourage that innovation.

Moving Forward

The Learning Institute on Person-Centered Practice for Policy Makers went beyond simply explaining what “authentic person-centered work” is. It challenged participants to reconsider their assumptions, identify areas for improvement within themselves and the system in which they work, and think about what next steps could look like. Examples of next steps participants discussed included reviewing the 'Evolved Systems of Care Model' graphic in an upcoming agency presentation, adjusting training curricula to include more content on person-centeredness, incorporating person-centered planning initiatives in future projects, and encouraging planning conversations to move beyond only considering a person's clinical needs. In the final session, participants stated that taking time away to join the Learning Institute had been helpful, and expressed that the experience had generated discussion among themselves and their colleagues on how to bring the learning and innovative problem-solving from the Learning Institute back to their agencies.