**The What, When, Why and How’s of Active Support.**

Active Support is a person-centered approach to providing direct support. The goal of Active Support is to ensure that people with even the most significant disabilities have ongoing, daily support to be engaged in a variety of life activities and opportunities of their choice.

**What is Active Support?**

Active Support is helping people to be actively, consistently, and meaningfully engaged in their own lives regardless of their support needs.

* Be Engaged: Doing things; Participating; Spending time with others; Making decisions; Making choices. People without disabilities spend nearly 90 % of their time in purposeful engagement. How does that compare?
* Actively : Each day; Through-out the day whenever there is an opportunity;
* Consistently: With approaches that provide enough structure and predictability that people experience comfort, continuity, and have a better ability to be engaged;
* Meaningfully: In ways that increase competence and opportunity; in ways that help people be and stay connected to others (socially); in ways that provide enhanced esteem; in ways that are focused on needs, preferences, and goals of the person.

**Why Bother with Active Support?**

* Studies have shown that even in community settings:
	+ People supported are often disengaged.
	+ Staff time is spent *doing* *for or to* rather than supporting to do.
	+ People with the highest need have the lowest amount of engagement

**What are Active Support Philosophies?**

* Engagement for the sake of engagement; but not activity for the sake of activity.
* Activities are meaningful to the person.
* *All* are included regardless of support needs.
* There is a commitment to make it happen as an individual and a team.

**What Techniques and Approaches are used in Active support?**

* Teaching and Positive Support Strategies:
	+ task analysis,
	+ graded assistance;
	+ observable,
	+ measurable goals and outcomes;
	+ positive reinforcement.
* Focus is on engagement, preferences, and opportunities. Success is not defined as “completion of task.”
* Team planning, preparation & coordination based on individual’s expectations.
* Supporting Choice.
	+ Recognize that experience is part of choice too.
	+ Making it enjoyable
* Provide engagement opportunities all the time not just when planned or scheduled.
* Plan for growth and new opportunity.

**How does Active Support differ from current practice?**

* More emphasis on team and DSP roles in:
	+ planning and preparation
	+ communication
	+ organization
	+ decision making
* *Every* moment is time to engage not just when there is a written program.
* CHOICE and CONTROL are important
	+ But seen both in the short and long term.
* Effort is made to ensure individuals engage in a variety of ways
	+ socially
	+ by contributing
	+ showing and gaining competence
	+ self-care
	+ not busy work
* All people are participating
* Changes in teams-it’s not always neat and tidy at the end of a shift.

**Preparing Staff Teams to Offer Active Support.**

To maintain a focus on active support organizations must consider all aspects of staff performance. They must develop internal mechanisms to keep staff on track. Minnesota model supports the identification and development of an internal training and technical assistance (TTA) expert within the organization. This person learns to support, train, and mentor teams in Active Support. The TTA model consists of the following activities.

* **Pre-Training Meeting with Front Line Supervisor (FLS) and Manager**:

There are a number of key readiness factors that make active support more likely to work. Buy-in and support of the FLS are key factors in success. This meeting assesses team functioning and look at possible assets and barriers to implementing at the site. The FLS learn more about Active Support and their roles. It is a time to plan and prepare for staff training and the roll-out of the AS model. At this point, meetings with family members, case managers, or people being supported may be scheduled as needed to help clarify AS and its purpose and benefits.

* **Pre-Training Meeting with People Supported:**

Trainers do best if they understand the unique needs and abilities of people supported and the environment they live in before training. The TTA consultant visits the site to get to know people supported and survey the environment.

* **Classroom Training:**

A classroom training of all employees as a group is conducted. Presence of full staff allows for critical team building, decision-making, and buy-in of employees. The training provides an overview of the principles and structures of Active Support. It will help the team develop a system of communication, accountability, and customization of AS approaches.

* **Mentored Training of Each Employee:**

A one-on-one mentored training on site is scheduled with each DSP following the classroom training. This 2-hour training per DSP is organized to help each DSP apply the steps of planning, organizing, applying, and evaluating active support practices.

* **Post –Training Follow-Up with Supervisor & Employee Teams:**

Embedding Active Support takes on-going effort past training. A series of follow-up meetings and calls with the supervisor and staff team helps support this process.

**Additional Support Activities:**

Internal consultants and management will continuously review activities and resources needed to support and maintain the AS model. Evaluating Active Support initiatives along with other quality assurance and enhancement activities will help infuse this way of providing support into the organizational design.

**Intervention Intensity for Each Residence:**

* Time involvement approximately 65 hours
	+ 3 hours pre-training meeting
	+ 2 hours meeting with persons supported.
	+ 12 hours classroom training.
	+ 20 hours mentoring
	+ 18 hours for 6 months follow up
	+ 8 hours prep time
	+ 2 hours per site project time

**Active Support A Provider Perspective.**

Consortia members will share how the training, mentoring and team building activities inspired changes in practice. They will describe how changes to the way direct support professional provides support have impacted the work team and chanced the environment. They will offer stories on how Active Support is impacting the quality of life for the person supported.

Contact Information:

Mark Olson

Project Coordinator

Institute on Community Integration (UCEDD)

University of Minnesota

204 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE

Minneapolis, MN 55455

612-626-2020

612-625-6619 fax

olso4541@umn.edu