

**Administration on Community Living (ACL) No Wrong Door System
Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) Training Program**

Course Title: Person-Centered Thinking and Practices

Lesson Number & Title: 8 First Impressions and Conversation Skills

Copyright Notice and Disclaimer Certain materials incorporated herein are Copyright ©2016, Regents of the University Minnesota. All Rights Reserved.

IN NO EVENT SHALL UNIVERSITY OR TLCPCP BE LIABLE TO ANY PARTY FOR DIRECT, INDIRECT, SPECIAL, INCIDENTAL, OR CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGES, INCLUDING LOST PROFITS, ARISING OUT OF THE USE OF THIS CONTENT, EVEN IF UNIVERSITY OR TLCPCP HAS BEEN ADVISED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES.

Administration on Community Living (ACL) No Wrong Door System Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) Training Program

Course Title: Person-Centered Thinking and Practices

Lesson Number & Title: 8 First Impressions and Conversation Skills

Page No: 1

Narration:

Welcome to the lesson on First Impressions and Conversation Skills. This lesson is part of the course on Person-Centered Thinking and Practices in the in the Person-Centered Counseling Training Program. Please review the information on this screen and go to the next page when you are ready.

Text:

Welcome!

Here is a description of the lesson you are starting:

This lesson will help you understand the importance of starting off well with a person. It reviews the difference between person-centered discovery and assessment. It reviews methods of discovery conversations that are likely to support the person's engagement. It describes the power of purposeful but branching conversations. It will reinforce a technique of guess/ask/write in documenting information. It describes the usefulness of open-ended questions. Keep in mind, you will have opportunities to practice these skills and others during the in-person portion of the blended learning model.

Learning Objective

After completing this lesson:

You will be able to demonstrate your ability to use a purposeful branching conversation that is likely to help people to identify their "to/for balance."

To view course information, including On-the-Job Training Assessments, Portfolio Assignments, and a list of Activities, click on the “Menu” tab and then click Lesson Information.

This course is one of the six foundational courses in the No Wrong Door System Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) Training Program meant to provide basic skill and knowledge related to the identified competencies for a PCC professional. Click on the box below to learn about how person-centered thinking approaches are infused throughout these courses.

DRAFT

Administration on Community Living (ACL) No Wrong Door System Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) Training Program

Course Title: Person-Centered Thinking and Practices

Lesson Number & Title: 8 First Impressions and Conversation Skills

Page No: 2

Narration:

In previous lessons, we touched on some approaches that build trust and engage effective discovery. This lesson goes into more depth on approaches used in the person-centered thinking curriculum. As a reminder, conversations start with a purpose. However, they do not immediately jump to assessment. The person-centered thinking tools you are practicing are meant to support the artful use of skills in interactions. They are not more forms to fill out with a person. Please review the information on the page. When you are ready, go to the next page.

Text:

Working Toward Better Starts and Better Results

Lack of choice, direction, and control are not the only issues people experience when they engage human services systems. People find the systems are too complex and disjointed. There is little sharing of information between entities and no follow-up. This is sometimes called a lack of a “warm hand-off.” The result is that people are asked to repeat important information multiple times to different agencies. If the agency is not the correct one, the person must start from scratch. If the service ends or more than one is needed, the person is expected to track information and pass on recommendations. These issues can leave people angry, perplexed, overwhelmed, and discouraged. Important information is often lost. Sometimes people choose not to get help at all rather than deal with these issues.

The No Wrong Door approach is meant to counteract some of these

problems. A goal of person-centered counseling is ensuring people are connected in a streamlined and supportive way to helpful resources. Regardless of whether a person is eligible for any specific program or service, helping them with next steps and providing appropriate follow-up is a goal. Starting with discovery rather than program eligibility assessment helps support this.

DRAFT

Administration on Community Living (ACL) No Wrong Door System Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) Training Program

Course Title: Person-Centered Thinking and Practices

Lesson Number & Title: 8 First Impressions and Conversation Skills

Page No: 3

Narration:

It's important to keep in mind that people may not have much experience with the system or a Person-Centered Counseling professional's role in supporting them. Others may have plenty of experiences with systems but not always very good ones. Considering people's comfort right away is important regardless of whether the interaction is over the phone or in person. Explaining your role to people early on so that they understand the context of your conversation can help them. Remember, your first contact with someone might be your only opportunity to help them. Please review the information on the page. When you are ready, go to the next page.

Text:

Working Toward Better Starts and Better Results

Administration on Community Living (ACL) No Wrong Door System Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) Training Program

Course Title: Person-Centered Thinking and Practices

Lesson Number & Title: 8 First Impressions and Conversation Skills

Page No: 4

Narration:

A key to good starts and informative discovery is the spirit in which the Person-Centered Counseling professional approaches both the person and the task. Many Person-Centered Counseling professionals have a background in motivational interviewing. This is a definite advantage in discovery. The spirit of motivational interviewing has the same spirit as person-centered discovery. However, the two are not exactly the same. Please review the information on the page. When you are ready, go to the next page to learn more.

Text:

Comparing Motivational Interviewing with Person-Centered Discovery

Administration on Community Living (ACL) No Wrong Door System Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) Training Program

Course Title: Person-Centered Thinking and Practices

Lesson Number & Title: 8 First Impressions and Conversation Skills

Page No: 5

Narration:

There are skills like the spirit of motivational interviewing that Person-Centered Counseling professionals can use in discovery. This program teaches two techniques to support basic skills in discovery. The first is how to have a purposeful but branching conversation. The second is “guess/ask/write.” These methods support an open-ended but meaningful approach to gathering information. They make it more likely that the professional will get information about a person’s best “to/for balance.” These approaches also help the professional to more fully understand a person before documenting and acting on information. Please review the information on the page. When you are ready, go to the next page.

Text:

Branching vs. Linear Conversations

An essential skill in person-centered discovery is how to have a conversation that is both purposeful and open-ended. The temptation is to have a linear conversation. However, a branching conversation is often more fruitful.

Administration on Community Living (ACL) No Wrong Door System Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) Training Program

Course Title: Person-Centered Thinking and Practices

Lesson Number & Title: 8 First Impressions and Conversation Skills

Page No: 6

Narration:

It's surprising how much can be missed with a linear approach to gathering information. Especially the most important things from a person's view. Assessments may have to be completed. However, getting to know what's important *to* a person should always be the starting place. Person-Centered Counseling professionals recognize the value of getting well-rounded information. However, they can be concerned about the time it takes to have a branching conversation. Please review the information on the page. When you are ready, go to the next page.

Text:

Branching vs. Linear Conversations

Activity: Tracking Important to and Important for

Administration on Community Living (ACL) No Wrong Door System Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) Training Program

Course Title: Person-Centered Thinking and Practices

Lesson Number & Title: 8 First Impressions and Conversation Skills

Page No: 7

Narration:

Well-done branching conversations will almost always provide a better understanding of the whole person. They should not take significantly longer than a linear conversation, if you keep your purpose in mind. However, you will learn much more about what is important to a person than if you simply asked questions on a screening document or eligibility assessment. In addition, the person will often be more comfortable. The things they share may help you understand more about what will really work for them. This may help people identify or share other needs they didn't realize you could help them with. It will help tailor options more closely to their preferences. Please review the information on the page. When you are ready, go to the next page.

Text:

Checking Assumptions with Guess/Ask/Write

As we are having conversations, it is easy to assume we understand someone when we don't. Assumptions help us function and problem-solve quickly. They are important to our ability to be efficient. However, untested assumptions are a problem. Very often our assumptions can be based on stereotypes, our own beliefs, experiences, or culture. You must regularly check in with the person for accuracy to remain person-centered. If assumptions are often wrong and end up in service plans or other communication, it will break trust. People feel unheard, frustrated, and diminished.

Guess/ask/write is a method of checking understanding at frequent junctures in the conversation. It's a reminder to check with the person specifically before documenting anything you think you have learned. It means writing or documenting only what you said you would.

DRAFT

Administration on Community Living (ACL) No Wrong Door System Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) Training Program

Course Title: Person-Centered Thinking and Practices

Lesson Number & Title: 8 First Impressions and Conversation Skills

Page No: 8

Narration:

You will get a chance to practice guess/ask/write later in the training program. You will definitely want to use the technique if you support someone to develop a one-page description or person-centered plan. However, you may use other techniques, such as active listening, when simply having a conversation. All of these methods can support the ability to work well with diverse people. It ensures you are clarifying. It also supports the opportunity to process. Please review the information on the page. When you are ready, go to the next page.

Text:

Guess/Ask/Write

Guess/ask/write is particularly useful when helping someone develop their person-centered plan. But it's not a bad practice in general. People should not be surprised about what you write about them. They should not be in disagreement with it. A person-centered plan or one-page description belongs to the person, and they control all aspects of what goes on it. However, even your professional notes and documentation can affect them. Review the process below.

Guess: Listen to what the person is saying. Guess in your head what it means. Repeat it back in your own words to the person. For example: "I'm guessing that getting up early to start your day is important to you."

Ask: Ask if your guess is correct. Use words like: "Does that sound right? Is that what you meant? Do I have the right? Do I understand this correctly? Is

there something else I should know?" Continue your conversation until you receive affirmation that you are on the right track.

Write: Write down what you learn exactly as you said it.

DRAFT

Administration on Community Living (ACL) No Wrong Door System Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) Training Program

Course Title: Person-Centered Thinking and Practices

Lesson Number & Title: 8 First Impressions and Conversation Skills

Page No: 9

Narration:

While each person is unique, knowledge about issues groups have faced can support your effectiveness in discovery. It can help you realize people see things very differently due to life experiences. For example, due to life stresses, homelessness and mental illness rates are higher in gay youth than heterosexual youth. It's not uncommon that a veteran of the military has less trust in government programs than a person without those experiences. Some cultures do not have words for "vulnerability" or "psychosis." They may not understand "rights" as a concept in the same way you do. These are just a few of the examples. Please review the information on the page. When you are ready, go to the next page.

Text:

The Power of Open-Ended Questions

Good practices of not making assumptions can be helpful in identifying hidden differences due to culture or other differences in backgrounds. They also encourage people to share context and leave more room for a natural give and take of information. Many groups have reasons for being suspicious of systems or government programs in our country. Your kindness, patience, and willingness to be respectfully curious about what will work best for each person can make a difference.

Activity: Open-Ended Questions

Administration on Community Living (ACL) No Wrong Door System Person-Centered Counseling (PCC) Training Program

Course Title: Person-Centered Thinking and Practices

Lesson Number & Title: 8 First Impressions and Conversation Skills

Page No: 10

Narration:

Congratulations! You have now finished the lesson. Let's take a few moments to review the key ideas and learning objectives. A welcoming, accessible place to get trustworthy information is part of the No Wrong Door approach. A good first impression is important. People seek information for a variety of reasons. If they are not greeted well and supported immediately, they may never come back. Or they may only be back at the point of crisis. Best use of resources helps to prevent unnecessary use of crisis level support. If they are already in crisis, being listened to means they are more likely to be able to use the resources well.

Please review the information on this page. You can also review the content as needed by using the "Left Arrow" icon at the bottom of the screen. This will take you back through the lesson. You may take the test now, later, or as requested by your employer. Good luck and thanks for completing the lesson!

Text:

Conclusion and Lesson Review

- <bullet> Giving people a warm welcome and helping them understand your role in a friendly way will help get things off to a good start. People should feel important when they contact a No Wrong Door system.
- <bullet> Discovery is different than assessment. Discovery is a process of

finding out what is important to a person and how best to support them. It can inform eligibility processes but is not defined by them.

- <bullet> Purposeful branching conversations often do not take much longer than asking people close-ended questions about themselves. Conversations feel less like an interrogation. They help gather information about what the person's needs are, but in the context of what is important to them and what makes sense to them.

- <bullet> Nothing should be assumed about a person without checking it out. Do not ever write anything about a person that they have not had a chance to validate. This is absolutely critical on any person-centered plan or description. Guess/ask/write is a method of reminding yourself to do this.

- <bullet> Cultural and diversity issues will affect a person's communication and what works best for them. Continue your learning in this area about what works and how to tell when you are off track. Continue to develop your resources in this area. Checking assumptions frequently can help reduce misunderstandings.

Reflection on Learning Objectives

Directions: Review the objective(s) on this page. When you are done click on the "My Notes" icon at the top of the screen to use the electronic journal or use your own notebook. Write down your answers to the following questions.

1. What did you learn in this lesson that you felt was important?
2. What will you do differently because of the content in this lesson?

Learning Objectives

After completing this lesson, you will be able to demonstrate your ability to use a purposeful branching conversation that is likely to help people to identify their "to/for balance."

If you are ready to take the test, click on the "Take Test" tab. You can also take the test later: It will be available from your "Personal Page." To access it, click on the "My eLearning Lessons View" button. Choose the lesson title from the list of assignments, and then click on the "Start the Lesson" button

at the bottom of the screen. Click the “Take Test” tab to start the test.

We recommend that you complete the On-the-Job Training Assessments and Portfolio Assignments for this lesson. They will help you demonstrate competencies for the ideas presented. To view On-the-Job Training Assessments, Portfolio Assignments, and a list of Activities, click on the “Menu” tab and then click “Lesson Information.”

Again, congratulations and good luck!

DRAFT