QuickGuide

Peer network meeting topic: Microboards

Introduction

Peer networks can help people understand how to support a person's self-determination and look at options to enable a person living with disability to self-manage their supports. It is good to be intentional about building up support networks around an individual. This is especially important when you consider that parents worry about who is going to look out for their family member when they no longer can. One of those options might be a Microboard.

This Quick Guide provides a starting point for using your peer network meeting to talk about Microboards and how members could go about creating one.

Definition

A microboard is a small group of people, typically committed family and friends of a person who lives with disability or mental illness.

That group of people form an incorporated association for the benefit of that person.

https://www.velacanada.org/vela-microboards

Microboards intentionally create relationships around an individual that are sustainable and committed and that support everyone within that connection.

Let's make it happen

Key elements of a Microboard

There are some key elements to an effective Microboard:

- *Trusted group of people:* these are people who have the same values as you, and who care about your loved one and will act in the interest of the individual
- *Based on individual:* the centre of gravity has to be the person living with disbaility
- *Small not for profit board:* the group will usually be 6-8 people to keep it manageable and is a not-for profit entity
- *Close mutual relationship:* there needs to be a close relationship between the members of the Microboard and the individual. Support is freely given by Microboard members.
- *Solely serves to support that individual:* the sole reason for being part of the Microboard is to enhance the life chances of the person living with disability
- *Collaborative:* everyone on the Board must work towards the same goals for the same reasons
- *Members must be adults:* members of a Microboard must be 18 years and over

- *Incorporated association:* unlike a Circle of Support, Microboards have the added formality of being an incorporated body where the people involved act as board members.

Principles of Microboards

Vela Canada uses the following Principles and Functions as their building blocks for Microboards:

- Microboard members must establish and maintain a personal relationship with the person for whom the board is created.
- All people are assumed to have the capacity for self-determination. This capacity will be acknowledged, respected, and demonstrated in all of the dealings of the Microboard.
- All planning and decisions made by a Microboard will demonstrate regard for the person's safety, comfort, and dignity, with consistent respect for his/her needs, wishes, interests, and strengths. This is called person-centered planning.
- Microboard members will act as sponsors to the community, ensuring the person participates in community activities with Microboard members (e.g. family functions, social events). This is done in ways that are natural for each of the people involved.
- Ensure the person has the opportunity to both receive from and give to his/her community, as well as with other individuals in his/her network.
- All Microboard members will conduct their board business in the spirit of mutual respect, cooperation, and collaboration.

https://www.velacanada.org/principles-for-microboards

Who would you ask to be on a Microboard?

The success of the Microboard will of course depend on the people who are on it. You should ask people you can trust; who have the same values as you; and who care about your loved one, or are committed to getting to know your loved one.

Board members can be:

- parents;
- siblings;
- aunts and uncles;
- cousins;
- friends of the family;
- people who have worked with the individual and bonded with them, or shown a keen interest in his/her life;
- people the individual meets on a daily basis and are interested in them; or

- current staff from the agency or school that supports your loved one if his/her employer agrees. (Their employer may see it as a conflict of interest.)

If people are worried about asking people to be on a Microboard, you could have a look at Ric Thompson's article The Art of Asking:

http://www.inclusionwa.org.au/download/theartofasking.pdf

Steps to creating a Microboard

- ***Take charge, develop a vision:*** A Microboard gives families control over funding and formalises the vision for an individual's life by putting it in the association objectives to which all members must work to
- ***Build a team:*** A Microboard spreads the love and responsibility. A Microboard means that the person with a disability still has people around them that know them really well and can support them to continue building a good life, after parents and family have passed away.
- ***Incorporation process:*** Incorporation protects committee members from most personal liability but leaves them with the responsibility to act honestly and prudently.
- ***Support person to be involved in decision making:*** Ensure that the individual has a say and is involved in who is on their Microboard
- ***Part of community:*** If you and your family are intentional about being actively involved in your own community, it is the surest way to meet people and develop some connections.
- ***Be creative:*** A Microborad provides a way to provide services that are creative, flexible and reflect the needs of the individual. It is a move away from traditional services.
- ***Understand local legislation:*** The rules of incorporation would need to be explored in each state depending on where the Microboard is registered as regulations may differ around the country. Maybe get someone on the Microboard who understands this stuff.

The NDIS and Microboards

Microboards Australia gives some great tips for putting the establishment of a Microboard into your or a family member's NDIS plan. This would be a conversation you would have with the NDIS planner.

Microboards Australia suggests a Microboard would come under the category of core supports: NDIS participants should request funding to set up their microboard through the following support categories:

Core Supports

- Self-management capacity building
- Improved living arrangements
- Increased social and community participation
- Improved Life Choices

How to justify your request?

The freely given support of the microboard is not a substitute for paid supports however the microboard will enable the person with a disability to:

- Be less dependent on their family and therefore less vulnerable
- Tap into the creativity and networks of microboard members to enable more opportunities for them to achieve her goals
- Have higher quality supports due to the specific training offered by the microboard
- Manage NDIS funding in a transparent and accountable way
- Keep the vision and knowledge of their good life alive
- Apply for grants for specific projects not funded by the NDIS
- Use their NDIS funding in more creative and effective ways
- Reduce the cost of supports over time

http://microboard.org.au/ndis/

Where you can find more information

Microboards Australia has lots of information about setting up a Microboard in Australia, and great examples of how they work.

http://microboard.org.au/

The website also explains the difference between a Microboard and a circle of support.

http://microboard.org.au/2017/10/19/whats-difference-circle-support-microboard/

Vela Canada is a non-profit society that provides information and mentoring to individuals with disabilities and their trusted others to take greater control of his/her life by exploring ideas and options that can lead to customized, inclusive and creative supports and services. It has loads of great information about Microboards:

https://www.velacanada.org/vela-microboards

It is good to be intentional about building up support networks around an individual. A wide and growing support network is a key factor in keeping people supported and safe into the future. Resourcing Inclusive Communities looks at ways to do this and includes Microboards.

http://www.ric.org.au/learn-about/building-support-networks/microboards/

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To find out more watch the Peer Connect webinar about Microboards on this website. Click here to find it:

https://www.purpleorange.org.au/news-links/purple-orange-news/introduction-microboards/

The Community Living Project in South Australia has information and can assist with a Circle of Support which could later evolve into a Microboard.

http://communitylivingproject.org.au/circles-initiative/