

## **When Choosing an Independent or Supported Living Service Provider**

Use this worksheet when you visit a supported living service provider. It has some questions to ask and things to look for. You can fill out the worksheet after, or even during, your visit -- or you can ask someone to help you fill it out. It will help you compare all of the providers you've visited so that you can make an *informed decision* -- that means a choice based on what you have seen and heard. Because you may visit several providers, print out several copies of this worksheet so that you can use a different one for each provider that you visit.

### **First talk to the service provider. Ask questions.**

#### About your provider:

- Do you like your job?
- How long have you worked here?
- Where is your office?
- What cities do you service?
- What do you like best about your job?
- How long have you worked with people with developmental disabilities?
- What kinds of jobs have you had?

#### About the supported living services and supports:

- What kinds of services do you provide?
- To whom do you provide services?
- What kind of training do you offer?
- Does the consumer get to interview the staff that will be working with him/her?
- Is there anyone you wouldn't provide services to?
- What are some of the living arrangements your consumers live in?
- Do the consumers live in different ways, such as alone, with roommates, with spouses or life partners, with children?
- Do the consumers live in apartments or houses?
- How are the consumers involved in their neighborhoods?
- If I need a roommate, will you help me find one?
- How do you handle issues with consumers with different lifestyles, such as smoking/non-smoking; early morning/late night people; straight/gay; casual/neat; etc.?
- What do the consumers do during the day? School? Work? Volunteer?
- What kinds of things do the consumers do for fun?
- Do you feel it's okay for a consumer to receive supports from a variety of different providers?
- With what other agencies, services, and supports do you work?
- With what kinds of natural supports like family members, friends, churches and clubs do you work?
- How do you handle emergencies?
- What would happen if I got lost or missed my bus to my day program, would I call you to help me?
- What would happen if I didn't want some of the supports or services that you suggest?
- What would happen if I did not like my support person?

**Next, ask the provider to take you to visit one or more of the consumers that the provider serves.**

**Ask those consumers about themselves:**

- How long have you lived in supported living?
- Do you like it?
- What do you like best?
- What do you like least?

**Next, ask the consumer some questions about the supported living provider:**

- What do you like about the services and supports your supported living provider gives you?
- What don't you like about the services and supports your supported living provider gives you?
- What kinds of services and supports are you receiving?
- What has your provider helped you learn?
- Do you have a roommate? If so, did your provider help you find a roommate?
- Do you believe that the provider respects your rights?
- Was there ever a time when a provider told you that you couldn't do something?
- Does your provider treat you with respect?
- What kinds of things do you do for fun?
- Where do you socialize?
- Does your provider help you with your social life?
- What kinds of community supports do you use that won't cost money... things like church, local parks and recreation programs, health clubs, etc.?

**Now, look at the neighborhood where consumers are living. Ask yourself these questions and check yes or no.**

- Is the home or apartment in a neighborhood near other homes or apartments?  Yes  No
- Is it near where I could go to work, go to school, or volunteer?  Yes  No
- Is it near a shopping center or mall?  Yes  No
- If I wanted to go to church or synagogue, are there places of worship nearby?  Yes  No
- Is there a bus line nearby?  Yes  No
- Do I feel comfortable and safe and in this neighborhood?  Yes  No
- Is the home or apartment pet-friendly? Can I have a dog or cat there?  Yes  No
- Could my family and friends get there easily to visit me?  Yes  No

**Here's a space to write down other things you noticed and would like to remember about the supported living provider:**

**When you've visited all of the supported living providers on your list, compare your worksheets. We hope this tool helps you in making a great choice!**