

**Make a Difference**

**Support Valued Experiences**



# Five Valued Experiences: Dimensions of Inclusion



All citizens have better life chances, and everyone's world grows more interesting, when communities offer rich opportunities for people to have these **five valued experiences**:

**Belonging** in a diverse variety of relationships and memberships.

**Being respected** as whole persons whose history, capacities and futures are worthy of attention and whose gifts engage them in valued social roles.

**Sharing ordinary places** and activities with other citizens, neighbors, classmates, and co-workers. Living, working, learning, and playing confidently in ordinary community settings.

**Contributing** by discovering, developing, and giving their gifts and investing their capacities and energy in pursuits that make a positive difference to other people. There are gifts of being and gifts of doing: contributions can include interested presence as well as capable performance. Contributions may be freely exchanged or earn pay.

**Choosing** what they want in everyday situations in ways that reflect their highest purpose. Having the freedom, support, information, and assistance to make the same choices as others of a similar age and learning to make wiser choices over time. Being encouraged to use and strengthen voice regardless of mode of communication, clarify what really matters, make thoughtful decisions, and learn from experience.

The quest to act in ways that offer more of these five interrelated experiences builds a more competent community. Healthy communities work to notice and overcome *us* and *them* thinking by exercising social creativity in doing these **five community tasks**.

**Promoting interdependence** by valuing and investing in the social ties and associations that promote trust, encourage mutual support, and energize collaboration.

**Living inclusive stories** by opening valued social roles to people who have been excluded by prejudice, stereotyped expectations, and poorly designed opportunities and by celebrating the benefits of diversity.

**Practicing hospitality** by making ordinary places acceptable and welcoming and finding effective ways to adapt to and accommodate differences that might otherwise keep people out.

**Seeing and supporting capacities** by adopting the practice of using what the community has to get more of what it really needs, looking first at community assets and what people can contribute rather than getting stuck on what is missing or scarce.

**Resolving conflicts** in fair and creative ways. When people whose voices have been missing begin to speak up about their interests and concerns, new problems come up about who has power and how it will be used. Healthy communities avoid escaping into withdrawal exclusion or violence and find ways to work together and find ways that more people can stay involved and get more of what really matters to them.

History shows that people with disabilities are vulnerable to isolation, wasted capacities, and excessive external control. Common practices in the world of services too often force people to live in a box that limits their opportunities for valued experiences in order to get the assistance that they need.

**Segregation** at the margins of community life, which decreases the chances of building a more diverse community.

**Stereotypes** that stick people into a narrow range of social roles that reinforce stories of incompetence, unworthiness, unacceptability, and passivity.

**Congregation**: involuntarily grouping people together in special, separate groups based on their professionally applied label.

**Poor support** because of unrealistically low expectations, technical incompetence, or lack of imagination and creativity.

**External control** that deprives people of choices because of a low level of individualization or a reflex response to vulnerability.

Service workers who want to assist people with disabilities to get or keep out of the box have to build alliances that are strong enough and plans that are imaginative enough to energize creative action that opens pathways for people's energy, capacities, and gifts to flow into community life. They continue to improve the quality of their answers to the questions that define **five accomplishments**.

**How can we assist people to make and sustain connections, memberships and friendships?** Service workers make a difference when they listen deeply and act thoughtfully to provide exactly what a person needs to build a bridge to **community participation**.

**How do we enhance people's reputation?** Respect comes to those who play recognizable and valued parts in everyday life. Service workers make a difference when they support people to identify and take up social roles that express their interests and provide needed assistance with negotiating the accommodations they need to be successful and so encourage **valued social roles**.

**How do we increase people's active involvement in the life of our communities?** Service workers make a difference when they assist people to make the most of the ordinary community settings that attract their interest and energy. This increases **community presence**.

**How do we assist people to develop and invest their gifts and capacities?** Service workers make a difference when they focus on what each person can bring to others and bring imagination and technical competence to designing and delivering the help each person needs to develop **competency**.

**How do we increase choice and control in their lives?** Service workers make a difference when they honor people's rights and responsibilities and offer what works to promote their **autonomy**.

