

Real Communities Commitments and Responsibilities

An important privilege of citizenship is the choice to join with others to build a stronger community. The purpose of Real Communities is to learn how to make this choice real for more people with developmental disabilities so that they can exercise the responsibility to act as contributing citizens through membership in a local group that is at work on making their community better for everyone.

A Real Communities initiative accepts four commitments and four responsibilities for learning.

Commitment	...this means learning...
<p>People with developmental disabilities are active members who influence the group's direction and participate in doing its work. Action is with people with developmental disabilities, not for them.</p>	<p>...to keep asking "Whose gifts are missing?" and discovering how to reach out, invite and actively involve people who need personalized support in order to contribute to their community.</p>
<p>Action focuses on making the community better for everyone. The initiative is not about specialized responses to disability but about engaging people who care about working together on local issues of common interest.</p>	<p>...to listen carefully to fellow citizens outside the circle of those primarily concerned with disability to discover what local issues people care about enough to take action together.</p>

Commitment	...this means learning...
<p>Over time, the initiative builds up local capacity for collective action by creating and strengthening continuing relationships with a variety of associations and groups. The initiative is not about single victories but about building communities where people have a growing capacity to act together.</p>	<p>...to build and strengthen local alliances and networks.</p>
<p>Participants take responsibility for sharing what they are learning. The initiative creates new ways for people with developmental disabilities to do the work of active citizenship and makes what they have found available to other communities.</p>	<p>...to reflect together on the work and identify and communicate its lessons.</p>

In addition to the capacities and gifts of people in their local communities, Real Communities initiatives draw on three sources of knowledge that give them a common language and core of practices.

- **Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)** guides the process of community building.
- **Person-Centered Support** guides the discovery of people’s gifts and defines the conditions necessary for them to offer those gifts to the Real Communities initiative.
- **Purposeful Learning** offers a set of disciplines for gaining a deeper understanding of the work.

To build knowledge and skill in these three areas, Real Communities provides supervision of community builders, consultation to local initiatives and expects and supports regular participation in workshops, learning journeys, and retreats.