

Social Capital in the Neighborhood

Presenters: Aileen Wight Felske (Lead Presenter); Elaine Yost Burak; Diane Strain

Intended audience: Direct Services Workers, Agency Managers, and Funders

Session Description

This presentation is based on a 6 month project funded by the Persons with Developmental Disability, Calgary Alberta Regional Board. The agency, OPTIONS, offers residential services, supportive roommates, and day support to 200 adults with developmental disabilities.

The project was a participatory action based study of community connections. Individuals and their supportive roommates examined their immediate local environments (approximately 10 block radius from their homes). The study notes what people say is important about their neighborhood (good and bad), who they know, and what activities occur. The objective was to increase immediate social capital in the neighborhood and correlate it with people's feeling of belonging and connection.

Results of the study include maps, photos, oral narratives, and simple measures such as a 24 hour clock to record people's locations. A tool kit on neighborhoods was developed to guide supportive roommates and the individuals supported in increasing their social capital. Copies of the tool kit will be available for session participants.