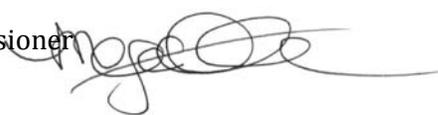




TO: Executive Directors, Provider Agencies
Directors, Developmental Disabilities Regional Offices
Directors, Developmental Disabilities State Operation Offices

FROM: Gerald Huber, Deputy Commissioner
Division of Person Centered Supports 

Megan O'Connor-Hebert, Deputy Commissioner
Division of Quality Improvement 

DATE: July 10, 2014

SUBJECT: Strengths and Risk Inventory

Over the past few years, OPWDD has been making a substantial effort to increase the availability of information on our website to assist the field in enhancing the quality of supports and services and with continuous quality improvement initiatives. In November 2013, OPWDD designed a person-centered planning page for its website which offers resource information on the process, methodology, and hallmarks of person-centered planning (http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_services_supports/person_centered_planning). More recently, OPWDD has posted important information on the new federal Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Settings Standards for public comment that became effective on March 17, 2014 (<http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/node/5406>).

At this time, we are pleased to share with you the attached **Strengths and Risk Inventory** as an optional tool to be utilized by any individual receiving services from state and voluntary providers. The inventory tool is designed to help generate meaningful person-centered discussion in conjunction with the individual's circle of support on areas of health and well-being to be considered during person-centered planning and service delivery based on the person's informed choice(s). This resource can assist individuals, along with their advocates and staff who support them, to identify and discuss what risks are non-negotiable, the safeguards that are necessary, and the informed choices that may involve tolerable risk.*

This tool is just one of several that are planned for roll out over the next several months. We strongly urge providers to use this tool in its programs. We believe that effective use of this tool will be helpful in meeting the person-centered process and planning requirements outlined in the new HCBS Settings regulations, including the following requirement related to what needs to be included in the Person-Centered Plan: "The written plan must (vi) 'Reflect risk factors and measures in place to minimize them, including individualized back-up plans and strategies when needed'."

The following provides further details on the Strengths and Risk Inventory Tool and tips for using it.

Background on the Strengths and Risk Inventory Tool:

The inventory tool was developed by the Person-Centered Quality Committee, a stakeholder group comprised of individuals receiving services, self-advocates, provider representatives, parents and state staff that met between spring 2013 through fall 2013. The Committee focused on providing recommendations and strategies for enhancing informed choice for individuals while continuing to address health and safety

concerns. The inventory tool aligns with person-centered planning practices that encourage individuals to live their lives the way that they choose and to make meaningful choices based on informed decision-making.

Sometimes, opportunities for success and personal growth in life are accompanied by the potential for harm. By focusing on positive, innovative approaches to safeguard planning, the responsibilities and consequences associated with specific risks to individuals can be discussed, negotiated, and mitigated in an individualized way while still enabling people to pursue the outcomes that are most important to them.

Tips for Using the Strengths and Risks Inventory Tool:

Utilizing a Strengths and Risk Inventory Tool is a best practice that can help in the development of comprehensive, flexible, and individualized safeguards with individuals.

The inventory tool can be completed during any person-centered planning and service delivery process. It can be re-visited over time as an individual's needs and supports evolve and change. It is recommended that it be reviewed on an annual basis or whenever significant changes in a person's life circumstances or informed choice may arise.

If an area identified on this inventory tool is considered to be unmet for the person or if the person requires further support to foster their well-being, the identified need should be further addressed in the service planning process and should be reflected in the person's Plan of Care.

Vulnerability and concerns in one domain of life does not necessarily mean that a person requires similar safeguards in other domains. Risks should be measured based on their potential for harm to the individual, and flexibility in negotiating the need for safeguards is essential.

Feedback on the Tool:

We welcome any feedback about this inventory tool from individuals, advocates/circles of support, parents and family members, MSCs, direct support professionals, agency personnel and others. We would also like to know more about your experience using it so that we can improve the quality of the tool.

Please send any comments or feedback to the Division of Quality Improvement's e-mail at: quality@opwdd.ny.gov.

***Please note** that individuals who self direct their **services using self hired staff** must also adhere to the documentation requirements for risk identification and development of safeguards. This tool may be helpful in the plan development process. In addition, **this inventory is not intended to replace any process for determining risk for individuals who display behaviors that rise to a level warranting an offender-specific or specialized clinical risk assessment.**

cc: Provider Associations
Willowbrook Task Force
Central Office Leadership
DQI Staff