

Thirty Elements of Service Quality

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Last issue, I discussed how to instill a true sense of home into housing options for people with disabilities. This time I will offer tips for consumers, families, advocates, and staff to look for to determine if the service provider is offering high quality support services that truly meet individual needs and preferences.

Specifying what constitutes quality in services is a difficult task. On any list of elements of service quality, there are bound to be items of varying degrees of importance depending on a person's interests and needs.

Below is a general list of a range of elements that I have assembled over the years. Many of these elements were first suggested by W. Wolfensberger in 1983. Taken together, I believe, they should enhance the probability that a service actually benefits the people it was intended to serve.

Common Ingredients of Quality of Service

1. The regard and value the agency extends to consumers.
2. The loyalty and fidelity held by service providers to those served.
3. The degree of understanding present by those served.
4. The extent to which consumers are understood in terms of their needs.
5. The extent to which the agency individualizes services.
6. The level of consumer participation and guidance in regards to what is happening with and for them
7. The relevance of service practices to people's needs and preferences.
8. The extent to which the service respects and strengthens the person's autonomy and self determination.
9. The extent to which the person is assisted in maintaining or strengthening their community.
10. The extent to which the person is supported in having and managing personal relationships.
11. The provision to consumers of just the right amount and intensity of support

12. The extent to which the agency addresses the person's development, growth, and competencies.
13. The presence of appropriate protection and safeguards for the person's vital needs.
14. The extent to which the agency preserves and nurtures the person's natural and informal supports.
15. Respect for the rights of the person and supports for the person to exercise these rights.
16. The extent to which the service and agency processes are understood and meaningful to the consumer.
17. The service should be affordable.
18. The service should adapt as individual needs change.
19. The person is not stigmatized through association with the service.
20. The service should be coordinated with other aspects of the person's life.
21. The level of appropriate acknowledgment and support for the existential, emotional and spiritual struggles of the person served.
22. Adequate levels of structure, consistency and dependability of service.
23. When supervision is needed, it should be properly targeted, enhancing, and empowering for the person.
24. The extent to which consumers' lives are encouraged to be as normal as possible.
25. That the interests and needs of the person served are not supplanted by the interests of the caregiver or the agency.
26. Consumers should not be subjected to involuntary interruptions in their home and work life.
27. The person should have effective access to independent and competent advocacy, allies and legal advice.
28. The extent to which the agency provides compensating supports to help consumers offset practical disadvantages they may face in community living.
29. The service should be conveniently located and accessible.

30. The service should have integrity, honesty, and authenticity.

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