

# Community Life Engagement

## What is “community life engagement?”

This refers to people with IDD being involved in their community. Sometimes the way people get help to participate in their communities is called “community integration services.” Ways people participate in their communities can include: volunteer work, taking college classes, going to the gym, library or community recreation center.

Community participation can be good for exploring and volunteering within your community. It can help you know what your options are for work. It can help you learn what you can do and what type of work you would like to do.

## Why are we talking about community life engagement?

Being involved in the community can give meaning to people’s lives. It can help you make friends, develop relationships, and have fun.

People with an intellectual disability can be an important part of their communities. They can have a life of their own, and be confident, and be proud. They should make their own personal choices, with support if they need it, about how they want to live their lives.

## Four important things you should know about community life engagement

### 1. Supports need to fit each individual person

Everyone is unique. People who support you should get to know who you are and what you like to do.

### 2. People should be truly involved with their communities

Staff shouldn’t get in the way of this. It is not just about being someplace, but about the contributions and the friends that the person makes while there.

You can become involved in your community in your own special way. You can join a church, temple, or self-advocacy group. Or you can volunteer and help others. You can also connect with your local library, school, or social clubs. You can meet new people that you have things in common with and that like the same things you do!

### 3. Providers should teach people skills so they can be more independent but also encourage people to rely more on neighbors, friends and family instead of paid staff.

Staff shouldn’t over-support people with too much paid help. They should help people connect more naturally with friends and co-workers to get involved with their communities.

### 4. Keep the focus on individual goals.

The services you get should be related to what you want to do, and how you want to be involved in your community. It’s the job of people supporting you to make sure they keep this in mind.

Community Life Engagement is a project of:

**ThinkWork!**  
Advancing employment and opportunity for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

[www.CommunityLifeEngagement.org](http://www.CommunityLifeEngagement.org)

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