

The History of Individualized Funding

In their Position Paper to the Ministry for Human Resources, the Woodlands Parents' Group proposed redistributing financial resources formerly directed to institutions like Woodlands and Tranquille to individuals with disability and their families. They felt that only with direct control over funding dollars would individuals and their families be able to independently access individualized supports and services.

Individualized funding proposed that funding be directed to each individual after a thorough assessment of their needs and strengths. The person and their family could then purchase the supports they wanted (including generic community supports) rather than waiting for space in an existing program. The group proposed that putting decision-making control into the hands of individuals and families would actually increase the range of services over time.

Another critical piece of the funding model was the premise that that people with disability should also have control over the disability support funds received monthly from the Ministry. Individuals moving into the community would receive a cheque in their own name, out of which they would pay a portion towards rent and bills, as well as be able to pay for their own personal items and activities. It was felt that this autonomy over one's personal funds, and the respect gained from having purchasing power, was essential to being a fully participating member of the community.

To carry out its mission, the Woodlands Parents' Group formed the Community Living Society, led by the volunteer members of the Community Living Board. The Society was set up as an autonomous body to help individuals and families access the services they needed in the community. Board members shared the beliefs and values of the parent's group, and were committed to focusing on the needs of individuals, not systems. However, connecting individuals and families with supports and services in their community could not be carried out by the board alone. A practical process was needed to assist families to explore and assess the various community options. This became the independent service brokerage model