

Beyond Programs: a parable

- In the beginning, there was placement, and lo we were happy when it happened, as placement was not mandated for adults who experience severe disabilities. And so, we said, this is good.
- And placements multiplied and filled the earth.
- And then we said, let us make programs, which focus on serving clients. And clients were defined and labeled, and grouped according to their labels. And programs created services for each label, and agencies developed unit costs for each service. And programs prospered and multiplied, and we said, this is very good.
- And as programs multiplied, a cry arose: Let us evaluate these programs to see how good they really are.
- And program evaluation, regulations, quality assurance compliance plans and other program measures were created. And they multiplied and filled volumes.
- And in those times, a person arose who was a client and who was also a prophet, and said:

"I don't want to be a client. I want to be a person.

I don't want a label. I want a name.

I don't want services. I want support and help.

I don't want residential placement. I want a home.

I don't want a day program. I want to do meaningful productive things.

I don't want to be "programmed" all my life. I want to learn to do the things I like, and go places which I like.

I want to have fun, to enjoy life and have friends.

I want the same opportunities as all of you: I want to be happy."

- And there was a long silence. And lo, everyone realized that they must look beyond their programs.
- But they were troubled and they asked:

"How can we do this? Would not each person need his own unique program and system of support and his own individual measure of quality?"

- And the prophet replied:

"Even as you say, so shall it be done—just as you do for yourselves."

-Michael McCarthy; reproduced from Contact, Sept/Oct 1991.