



What is self-directed care?

Self-directed care is a way of managing mental health services that puts people with mental health issues in charge of how their mental health funds are spent. In a traditional care model, the options are limited to standard mental health services like case management, day programs, or seeing a psychiatrist. Self-directed care allows the person getting care to have a say not just in how their funds are used, but what their options might be.

Self-directed care is based on the idea that the person getting treatment knows what kind of care or support would help their mental health and wellness the most. In the past, it was sometimes thought that people with mental health issues were not able to make the best decisions for themselves, which can lead to them feeling like they are not in control of their own lives. By giving people with mental health issues the power to make more choices about their care, they can feel more independent and self-confident – and just feeling more in control could help increase community inclusion.

In self-directed care, the treatment choices that people with mental health issues make are not limited to traditional mental health services. Self-directed care lets people with mental health issues access most goods and services that may help them reach their personal goals. Here are examples of the choices people with mental health issues could make to pursue their goals:

Goal	Traditional Mental Health Services	Self-directed Care
Transportation	Community mental health center offers a van service to take people to appointments.	Self-directed care funds are used to buy a bicycle to get around the community.
Find a job	Enroll in a supported employment program at a mental health center.	Use funds to buy business attire for job interviews.
Connect with family	Work in group or individual counseling to address personal issues that get in the way of connecting with family.	Purchase a cell phone to be able to make weekly calls to family members.
Better health	A case manager helps people to get connected with affordable health insurance or find a physician.	Pay for a membership at a nearby gym to help lose weight and increase physical activity.
Make and keep friendships	Attend social skills groups or anger management classes.	Use funds to buy tickets to a sporting event with friends or buy materials to join a hobby group.