

## HUMANITY

Our belief is that every person is created in the image of God and therefore has significant value. Our services to persons-in-care are a ministry of compassion based on God's Word that directs all of life and commands us to love and serve one another. We believe that everybody, especially persons-in-care, has God-given potential that should be optimised. This is best accomplished through services that address the needs of the whole person - physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual.

Individuals have the opportunity to develop significant and valued relationships in their lives. They are more likely to increase their potential to have meaningful and valued lives. We support people in "having a meaningful life." If people do not have any meaning in their life, they will behave in a way to cause other people's lives to have no meaning or value, often times in an aggressive and destructive manner. The following phrases best represent enhancement:

- An institution is not a place; it is a state of mind;
- The value is in participation, not community integration;
- Anger communicates an unmet need. Violence is the language of the unheard.
- The more people are surrounded by the things that proclaim who they are and what they are about, the more likely others will treat them as the unique and special human beings they are;
- Where there is no risk, there is no dignity;
- Don't give people privacy, teach them to take it;
- The less able the person is, the higher likelihood that people will treat them inappropriately; and
- You cannot keep people safe by denying them a life.

The language we use when referring to persons-in-care is important. It reveals our true attitude. Speaking appropriately is the first step toward valuing all people. "People first" language refers to the person ahead of the disability. For example, it is better to say people with disabilities instead of disabled people. Referring to people with disabilities apart from "us" is labelling them. Any label that does not carry the connotation of "us" is one that separates people with disabilities from the rest of society.

An institution is not a place, nor does the size of a home guarantee that people will be valued as individuals. It is people who recognize people with disabilities as individuals and include them in every possible decision and activity that creates a quality environment everyone desires. Only if people are willing to raise their standard to the level of asking, "Is this the kind of place where I would like to live?" will they begin to see the indecencies in an institutional environment.

People with disabilities need to be active participants in their services. This is best accomplished by giving people with disabilities choices in all aspects of their life. Person centred planning should be an integral part of services so that other people are not imposing their ideas of a quality life onto people with disabilities. People who live where staff see it as their job to "care for them" end up not caring for themselves. They do not try to meet their own everyday needs or take responsibility for their lives. It is the job of staff to be "partners" not "parents".

Rights and responsibilities for people with disabilities go hand in hand. People with disabilities are taught rights and responsibilities concurrently. Irresponsible behaviour results in realistic consequences for people with disabilities just as it does for people without disabilities. Even people with severe disabilities can be taught accountability for their behaviour.

Balance independence with interdependence. The overarching purpose in disability services is to provide people with disabilities with the opportunity to reach their potential, which focuses on helping them reach greater levels of independence. However, it should be recognized that no one is totally independent. We all depend on various people in our lives for support, and this should be the same with regards to people with disabilities.

Age appropriateness refers to treating individuals with disabilities in a manner consistent with their chronological age regardless of severity of disability. Personal belongings, personal appearances, interpersonal interactions, and activities that are age appropriate help people with disabilities to blend into their communities by reducing stigma. Viewing people with disabilities as children paints an image that they are dependent, needy, and helpless. In our society, children, or people who are seen as children, are not afforded the same rights and opportunities as adults.

Dehumanising practices are behaviours that devalue, degrade, and demean people with disabilities. These behaviours can be deliberate or unintended, but the effect is always the same - people with disabilities feeling separate, frustrated, and lonely. We should talk with people with disabilities about their experiences with a disability so that we can better understand our behaviours that are hindering them.

Role modelling can significantly influence the development of skills in people with disabilities. People's behaviours are contagious and are often modelled by people with disabilities. This places a tremendous responsibility on everyone to model appropriate behaviours at all times and to promote Christian values in all interactions with others.

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Inclusion refers to worshipping, working, living, recreating, and socializing with people without disabilities. Participating in these activities in the community does not necessarily make a person a part of the community. As many people have pointed out, living in the community does not guarantee inclusion. One can be "in the community" without being "of the community". Inclusion is more important than integration.

Overprotection may appear on the surface to be kind, but it can be really evil. An oversupply can smother people emotionally, squeeze the life out of their hopes and expectations, and strip them of their dignity.

Overprotection can keep people from becoming all they could become. Many of our best achievements came the hard way: We took risks, fell flat, and suffered, picked ourselves up, and tried again. Sometimes we made it and sometimes we did not. Even so, we were given the chance to try. Persons with special needs need these chances, too. Of course, we are talking about prudent risks. People should not be expected to blindly face challenges that, without a doubt, will explode in their faces. Knowing which chances are prudent and which are not - this is a new skill that needs to be acquired. On the other hand, a risk is really only when it is not known beforehand whether a person can succeed.