

## *Human Rights Committee*

The Human Rights Committee is charged with an awesome responsibility – to protect the due process rights of people receiving services and supports. This committee must be held accountable to understand due process and to question every situation in which a person's rights are restricted for any reason.

### Quality in Practice

#### Role of the Human Rights Committee

- A Human Rights Committee (HRC) is active about ensuring that people have full access to their rights as citizens as opposed to their rights as clients.
- The HRC is not a “rubber stamp” committee that approves anything and everything that comes before it.
- Educate people supported and staff members about the structure and purpose of the Human Rights Committee.
- Develop and implement policies and practices that address the roles and responsibilities of committee members and ensure that all relevant aspects of the full exercise of human rights and advocacy are addressed.

#### Membership of the Human Rights Committee

- People supported and the people who know them best are represented on the HRC.
- People with expertise in the issues that will come before the committee including, but not limited to: alternatives to guardianship, positive behavioral supports, the use of psychotropic medication, various mental health diagnoses, and due process.
- Eliminate conflict of interest issues by assuring that HRC members are not employed by the organization. Staff members may provide information to committee members, but should not be charged with making decisions.
- Provide adequate training and discussion time for members of the HRC on relevant topics (those listed above), as well as issues regarding personal freedom – having privacy for phone calls, private email accounts, enjoying alcoholic beverages, smoking, engaging in sexual behaviors, etc.

#### Meetings of Human Rights Committee

- Assure that people whose rights may be restricted are present at the Human Rights Committee meeting and have the opportunity to present their wishes.
- Assure that the HRC meets regularly and has adequate time and support (someone to keep minutes, send out notices, develop agendas, etc.) to complete the work before it.
- Offer people coming before the HRC a personal representative to accompany them to the meeting – an advocate or attorney – someone the person trusts to support him or her to speak or to speak on behalf of the person.
- Maintain documentation of committee discussions, decisions, and recommendations in a manner that readily identifies the issues reviewed, the decisions reached, and the follow-up that is necessary.

#### Deliberations of Human Rights Committee

- Assure that all appropriate issues are referred to the HRC for review. These issues should include, but not be limited to:
  - individual rights restrictions (money management, freedom of movement, privacy)
  - restrictive behavior support plans
  - allegations and the review of investigations of abuse, neglect and exploitation
  - any use of psychotropic medication
  - issues of informed consent
- Assure that due process is followed in every situation that involves a restriction of rights.
- Assure that any plan that restricts rights includes a plan for restoring those rights and that all rights restrictions are time-limited.