

**Alaska Division of Senior & Disabilities Services  
Aging & Disability Resource Center**

## **PROVIDER SURVEY: OPTIONS COUNSELING**

**ADRC Expansion Project**  
Empowering Individuals to Navigate their Health  
& Long-Term Support Options

*A Report for the*  
Division of Senior & Disabilities Services  
Department of Health & Social Services  
State of Alaska

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## PROVIDER SURVEY: OPTIONS COUNSELING

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## Executive Summary

The Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) system in Alaska is managed through Alaska's Division of Senior and Disabilities Services, under the Department of Health and Social Services. An ADRC Expansion project was funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) in collaboration with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) beginning in October 2009. One of the aims of the project was to increase the capacity of Alaska's ADRC system to provide Long Term Support Options Counseling.

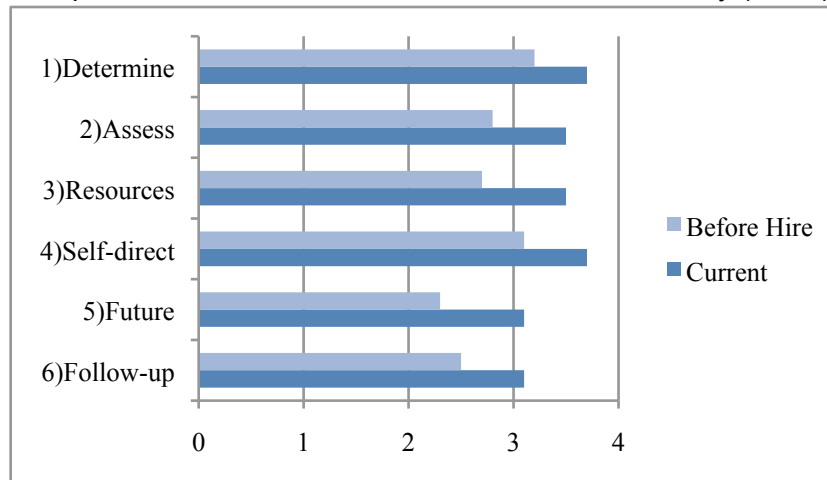
The purpose of a Provider's Survey at this time was to examine capacity across the ADRC system in Alaska to provide options counseling in the context of six core competencies set out by the ADRC Technical Assistance Exchange (TAE):

- 1) Determining the need for options counseling
- 2) Assessing needs, values and preferences
- 3) Understanding and educating about public and private sector resources
- 4) Facilitating self-direction / self-determination
- 5) Encouraging future orientation
- 6) Following-up

An online survey was designed to get an indication of what relevant knowledge and skills people tended to bring with them as they were hired to work for the ADRC, how much this capacity grew while working with the ADRC, how people had learned skills relevant to options counseling, and where there were systemic gaps that could be addressed by training.

Within each competency area, four or five items addressed specific skills. For each item, respondents rated their knowledge/skill before they were hired and at the time of the survey on a 5-point interval scale from "very little" to "a great deal." Figure 1 summarizes overall levels of knowledge/skill across the system aggregated by core competency areas.

Figure 1: Levels of knowledge/skill in options counseling core competencies, before hire and at the time of the survey ( $N = 9$ )



It is important to remember that while there were individual differences in the knowledge/skill of providers, these findings are about the system as a whole. In Figure 1 it appears that there were relative systemic strengths for (1) determining the need for options

counseling and (4) facilitating self-direction or self-determination. There seemed to be strength for (2) assessing needs, values, and preferences, as well as (3) understanding and educating about public and private sector resources. There seemed to be relative weaknesses for (5) encouraging a future orientation and (6) following-up.

It appears in Figure 1 that there were systemic increases in knowledge/skill across all competency areas, but not all of these differences were meaningful in terms of statistical significance. There was more uniformity of knowledge/skills at the time of hire within the first and second competency areas, with more initial diversity in the other four areas. Specific skills tended to become more uniform over time, representing learning on the job, but the pattern of relative strengths and weaknesses of the system stayed very similar over time.

The first competency area (determining the need for options counseling) seemed to be one of the two strongest competency areas overall. The competency level increase over time was not significant. However, at the item level, there were significant improvements in knowledge/skill relevant to establishing a good rapport and asking open-ended questions.

In the second competency area (assessing needs, values and preferences), missing data eliminated an item from competency level analysis, but the increase over time still seemed to be significant. At the item level, there were significant improvements in knowledge/skill assessing both immediate needs and long-term needs in the context of preferences and values, and in considering the breadth of physical, mental, financial, and emotional needs.

In the third competency (understanding and educating about public and private sector resources), missing data eliminated two items from competency level analysis. Thus potential significance of the increase over time was not statistically detectable. However, at the item level there was significant improvement in knowledge/skill relevant to keeping current with what private and public resources are available at local, state, and national levels.

The fourth competency (facilitating self-direction / self-determination) seemed to be one of the two strongest competency areas overall. The difference over time at the competency level was not significant, and there were no significant improvements at the item level.

Even though the fifth area (encouraging future orientation) appeared to be one of the two weakest areas, the increase in knowledge/skill at the competency level was significant. At the item level, there was significant improvement in knowledge/skill relevant to helping people to weigh the pros and cons of what may be the results of different choices.

The sixth competency (following-up) seemed to be the other of the two weakest competency areas. However, in this area the difference over time at the competency level was not significant, and there were no significant improvements at the item level. In this sense, this could be considered the weakest area overall.

Respondents identified the resources they had used to increase their knowledge/skills relevant to options counseling, and rated how much each had been a source of learning. The universally highest rated source of learning was experience, followed by co-workers. Training events and websites were a close third. Please see the main report for all sources of learning.

Current providers showed a high level of interest in learning more about options counseling. For each competency, they identified training topics they would like to see relevant to that skill set. Following are the most requested topics. Please see the main report for a comprehensive list of training topics requested.

*Screening and applying for public programs* was by far the most requested training topic, chosen by 89% of respondents. These skills are under the second competency (assessing needs, values and preferences), which was a strong area overall, but these skills are crucial to the work of the ADRC and providers felt they needed to know more.

*Self-determination in challenging situations* was the second most requested topic, chosen by 78% of respondents. A related topic chosen by 56% of respondents was strategies to encourage self-determination. These skills are under the fourth competency (facilitating self-direction / self-determination), which was one of the strongest overall. It might be useful to query providers further for examples of challenging situations to ensure training addresses the kinds of challenging situations they encounter.

*Setting up action plans and tracking progress* was chosen by 67% of respondents and it comes under the sixth competency (following-up), which was a relatively weaker area. While this topic was chosen less often than the previous two topics, it represents a high area of need, as people seem to bring fewer of these skills to the job at the time they are hired. These particular skills are fairly practical in nature and can probably be efficiently addressed with a combination of some targeted training and supervisory guidance.

*Motivational interviewing* was another topic chosen by 67% of respondents. Skills of motivational interviewing come under multiple competencies, but are probably most relevant to the third and fifth areas (understanding and educating about public and private sector resources; and encouraging future orientation). As one respondent noted, “Motivational interviewing is always a good topic.” It is a foundational skill with broad application, and it is probably a unique enough skill set that fewer people have these skills at the time they are hired.

*Future planning in general* was also chosen by 67% of respondents, and it comes under the relatively weaker fifth competency (encouraging future orientation). This represents another high area of need, as it is another area where people probably bring fewer skills to the job at the time they are hired. A related training topic chosen by 56% of respondents is the PATH process and/or other person-centered tools. Motivational interviewing is also a related topic. Some investigation and discussion about the utility of different methods and tools for future planning in the context of typical options counseling sessions might help refine what specific training will be most productive.

*Respecting culture in conversations* was another topic chosen by 67% of respondents. It was offered as a suggestion under the first competency (determining the need for options counseling), but it is a basic skill relevant across all competency areas. The best cultural training teaches people how to respect and assess culture at the individual level *for every person served*. This is a much more valuable skill than learning generalities about specific cultures, which can lead to oversimplified assumptions and greater misunderstandings at the individual level.

All-in-all, the Provider Survey showed that Alaska’s ADRC system has a high level of capacity to provide Long Term Support Options Counseling. People tended to bring a lot of specific skills to the job when they were hired, and they learned a lot about specific skills on the job. Most of this learning came from experience and shared expertise among co-workers, and much of it came from training events and websites. Areas of relative weaknesses and identified training needs probably represent skill sets where people tended to have less knowledge/skill at the time they were hired and fewer accessible resources for learning. These will likely be areas with an ongoing need for targeted training in the natural course of turnover in the workforce.

## **PROVIDER SURVEY: OPTIONS COUNSELING**

### **Introduction**

The Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) in Alaska is managed at the State level through Alaska's Division of Senior and Disabilities Services, under the Department of Health and Social Services. The Division uses a competitive grant application process to fund regional ADRC sites. A Health Program Manager in the Division oversees the ADRC system, and acts as a referral agent for regions not directly covered by a grantee. Currently, Alaska has four ADRC grantees: Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA), Independent Living Center (Kenai Peninsula), Municipality of Anchorage, and Southeast Alaska Independent Living. At the time of this survey, BBNA was in a transition process and preparing to hire new staff.

An ADRC Expansion project was funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) in collaboration with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) beginning in October 2009. One of the aims of the project was to increase the capacity of Alaska's ADRC system to provide Long Term Support Options Counseling.

The ADRC Technical Assistance Exchange (TAE) is an initiative of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. It includes the National Association of State Units on Aging and ADRC grantees. This group offered the following definition for options counseling:

Long-Term Support Options Counseling is an interactive decision-support process whereby consumers, family members and/or significant others are supported in their deliberations to determine appropriate long-term care choices in the context of the consumer's needs, preferences, values, and individual circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

In June 2010, the ADRC TAE set out six core competencies for options counseling:

- 1) Determining the need for options counseling
- 2) Assessing needs, values and preferences
- 3) Understanding and educating about public and private sector resources
- 4) Facilitating self-direction / self-determination
- 5) Encouraging future orientation
- 6) Following-up

The purpose of a Provider's Survey at this time was to examine capacity across the ADRC system in Alaska to provide options counseling in the context of these six core competencies. The survey was designed to get an indication of what relevant knowledge and skills people tended to bring with them as they were hired to work at an ADRC site, how much this capacity grew while working with the ADRC, how people learned these skills, and where there were systemic gaps that could be addressed by focused training.

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<sup>1</sup> All information credited to the ADRC TAE in this report was retrieved from <http://www.adrc-tae.org/>

## **Method**

The ADRC TAE put out a series of handouts covering each of the six core competencies, which were used to determine four or five items covering knowledge and/or skills relevant to each competency area. The ADRC TAE handouts were retrieved on November 3, 2011 from: <http://www.adrc-tae.org/tiki-index.php?page=AdvancedOC>

The survey was conducted online through the vendor Survey Monkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/>). The first page of the survey was an introduction, followed by six pages each covering one core competency, with four or five items per page addressing related knowledge and skills. For each item, respondents were asked to rate level of knowledge/skill before they were hired and then to rate current level of knowledge/skill. A 5-point interval scale was labeled at each end, from “very little” (weight = 0) to “a great deal” (weight = 4). A follow-up question in each competency area asked respondents to identify training topics they would like to see relevant to increasing their capacity in that skill set.

After the six competency pages, a final page presented an item with a list of potential sources of past learning. Respondents were asked to rate on the same scale how much each applicable resource had been a personal source of learning about skills relevant to options counseling. Respondents were also asked to rate their level of interest in expanding their knowledge/skills for options counseling from this point forward. There were 36 items in all, not counting those that simply provided spaces for comments at the end of each page. The appendix to this report has a printout of the survey from Survey Monkey.

An email invitation with a link to the survey was sent to eleven ADRC staff members on November 4, 2011. This included ADRC specialists and their supervisors in the four regional sites. They were invited to forward the survey to anyone else who worked with them in providing options counseling services under the ADRC. Providers were originally asked to respond by Friday, November 11, but the deadline was soon extended to Wednesday, November 16 to accommodate providers who were out of the office that first week.

The survey was designed to be anonymous. The function in Survey Monkey that collects IP addresses was turned off. No identifying information was requested from respondents and they were informed up front that if they added identifying information in comment spaces, it would be removed before results were shared with the State agency.

As appropriate, data from the survey was summarized using frequencies, proportions, and measures of central tendency. Differences between means for ratings of knowledge/skill “before hired” and “current” were tested for significance using paired samples t-tests.

## **Results**

There were nine responses to the survey. It is not known if initially contacted providers may have forwarded the invitation to anyone else. However, the most likely scenario is that the invitation did not go beyond the initial eleven recipients. It is also probable that two recipients whose work is predominantly administrative would have decided it was not appropriate to respond. That is, they were not generally providing services to ADRC clients. Thus it is likely that the nine respondents to the survey included all those who potentially provided options counseling as a service under the ADRC in Alaska at the time of the survey.

## Competency 1: Determining the need for options counseling

As the ADRC TAE describes, the initial call coming into an ADRC and handled by frontline staff is often the gateway to options counseling, and providers receiving calls should be particularly attuned to when people need this more enhanced level of assistance. The need for options counseling might also come into play at critical decision-making points in working with long-term care systems over time. The needs for options counseling are expected to grow as the aging population continues to grow.

The ADRC TAE has suggested several techniques to identify when individuals need more than basic information and referral. Much of this is dependent on the quality of the conversation between callers and frontline staff. The provider needs to establish a good rapport by setting a welcoming tone and conveying openness, creating a space where people are allowed to tell their own stories. Using open-ended questions, listening for underlying problems, and listening for cues that signal when a person is at the point of making a decision are highly useful skills in this process. Respondents were asked to rate their knowledge/skill along these lines, both before they were hired to work at the ADRC and at the time of the survey.

Table 1: Knowledge/skill in determining the need for options counseling (Scale 0-4,  $N = 9$ )

Areas of Knowledge/Skill		Before Hired		Current	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
a	Establishing a good rapport	<b>3.22</b>	.833	<b>3.89</b>	.333
b	Creating a space that allows people to tell their personal stories	<b>3.44</b>	.882	<b>3.78</b>	.441
c	Asking open-ended questions	<b>3</b>	.866	<b>3.67</b>	.5
d	Listening for underlying problems	<b>3.22</b>	.833	<b>3.67</b>	.5
e	Listening for cues that signal a person is at the point of decision-making	<b>3.11</b>	.782	<b>3.56</b>	.527
<b>Core Competency 1 Overall</b>		<b>3.2</b>	.742	<b>3.71</b>	.302

The people hired to work at the ADRC tended to have a lot of initial knowledge and skill that was relevant to the first core competency. The specific knowledge/skills that increased significantly since they were hired were in establishing a good rapport [ $t(8) = -2.31, p = .05$ ] and asking open-ended questions [ $t(8) = -2.31, p = .05$ ]. There was not a significant increase overall in the first core competency.

Requested training topics relevant to this skill set in rank order:

- 67% Respecting culture in conversations
- 44% General interview methods and strategies
- 22% Active listening techniques

## Competency 2: Assessing needs, values and preferences

According to the ADRC TAE, while screening for eligibility for public programs and application assistance are important parts of the process, options counseling needs to go beyond that. Assessment needs to cover a fuller range of needs, values, and preferences. The process needs to help people weigh options including the full range of community supports in making their decisions. This assessment process may need to unfold over several encounters.

The ADRC TAE has noted that quality decision support involves a number of strategies. It includes understanding immediate and long-term needs, and possibly unexpressed needs. It considers the breadth of physical, mental, financial, and emotional needs. It also assesses both formal and informal supports. Thus, creating an environment where needs, values, preferences, and individual circumstances can be openly expressed is critical. The ADRC TAE suggests that person-centered planning methods and tools may be helpful in this process.

Table 2: Knowledge/skill in assessing needs, values and preferences (Scale 0-4,  $N = 9$ )

Areas of Knowledge/Skill		Before Hired		Current	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
a	Creating an environment where needs, values, preferences, and individual circumstances can be expressed openly	3.44	.882	3.89	.333
b	Assessing both immediate needs and long-term needs in the context of preferences and values	2.67	.866	3.44	.527
c	Considering the breadth of physical, mental, financial, and emotional needs	2.78	.972	3.44	.527
d	Assessing existing supports, both formal and informal, including cultural and spiritual supports	3.11	.782	3.56	.527
e	Screening for eligibility for public programs and assisting with applications ( $n = 8$ )	2	1.195	3	.926
Core Competency 2 Overall		2.78	.817	3.5	.428

People seemed to have a little less knowledge/skill at the time of hire relevant to the second competency area, as compared to the first one. Since they had been hired, as a group they made significant increases in knowledge/skill in assessing both immediate needs and long-term needs in the context of preferences and values [ $t(8) = -2.8, p = .023$ ], as well as in considering the breadth of physical, mental, financial, and emotional needs [ $t(8) = -2.3, p = .05$ ].

One respondent skipped item e in this knowledge/skill set. While that did not seem to have a meaningful impact on statistical analyses at the item level, it did eliminate data from all the other respondents on item e for testing the overall increase in knowledge/skill in the second competency area. The test using the remaining four items showed significant results [ $t(7) = -2.42, p = .046$ ].

Requested training topics relevant to this skill set in rank order:

- 89% Screening and applying for public programs
- 33% Person-centered best practices
- 33% The person-centered approach in cultural contexts
- 22% The person-centered approach in general

One respondent added the following related suggestion: *Specific trainings related to information and resources we need to provide to consumers, i.e., Medicare, Medicaid waiver regulations/changes, scope of services for various providers.*

### Competency 3: Understanding and educating about public and private sector resources

The ADRC TAE notes that providers of options counseling must have a solid foundation of knowledge in long-term support resources, available to people across the income spectrum. This includes public, private, and informal supports, as well as eligibility requirements and costs involved. It necessitates an expertise that is firmly grounded and constantly updated.

However, it is not enough to know and share information. Providers of options counseling are expected to be sensitive to a person’s readiness to hear about options, and able to “dose” information to match a person’s decision-making trajectory. The ADRC TAE suggests motivational interviewing as a tool to help providers assess a person’s readiness for change and to address ambiguity when people are faced with difficult choices. They note these techniques can support informed decision-making by helping people tap into their internal motivation when they seem to be “stuck” (i.e., unable to make decisions or resistant to assistance).

Table 3: Knowledge/skill in understanding and educating about public and private sector resources (Scale 0-4,  $N = 9$ )

Areas of Knowledge/Skill		Before Hired		Current	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
a	Keeping current with what private and public resources are available at local, state, and national levels	2.33	1.225	3.44	.726
b	Being sensitive to a person’s readiness to hear about options	3	1.225	3.56	.527
c	“Dosing” information to match a person’s decision-making trajectory	2.89	1.269	3.56	.527
d	Helping people tap into their internal motivation when it seems they are unable to make decisions or resistant to assistance ( $n = 8$ )	2.5	1.195	3.25	.707
e	Finding and taking advantage of opportunities to enhance knowledge and hone skills ( $n = 8$ )	2.5	1.309	3.38	.744
Core Competency 3 Overall		2.65	1.189	3.5	.535

For the third competency area, people seemed to have more diversity of knowledge and skills when they were hired than in the previous two competency areas. Diversity is evidenced by the higher standard deviation ( $SD$ ) values of the “before” responses. As a group, only knowledge/skill in keeping current with what private and public resources are available at local, state, and national levels increased significantly since being hired [ $t(8) = -2.64, p = .03$ ].

One respondent skipped items d and e in this skill set. This eliminated data from other respondents on those two items for testing significance of an overall increase of knowledge/skill in the competency area. Under this condition, no potential statistical difference was detectable.

Requested training topics relevant to this skill set in rank order:

- 67% Motivational interviewing
- 33% Strategies to gauge readiness or capacity
- 33% Decision-making techniques
- 22% Decision-making in cultural contexts

One respondent added the following comment: *Motivational interviewing is always a good topic.*

#### Competency 4: Facilitating self-direction / self-determination

Self-determination isn't just about being in control or about being independent. A fact that is often lost in discussions of self-determination is that interdependence to some degree is the normal state for most people's lives whether they have severe limitations or not. Following is a definition from the National Gateway to Self-Determination:

Quite simply, being self-determined means making things happen in a person's own life, instead of having others do things to, or for them. People who are self-determined know what they want and how to get it. They choose and set goals, then work to reach them. They advocate on their own behalf, and are involved in solving problems and making decisions about their lives. They don't have to do everything for themselves, but instead, they make or cause things to happen in their lives that improve the quality of their lives.<sup>2</sup>

In the context of options counseling, people should be involved as much as possible in solving the problems and making the decisions that affect their own lives. The ADRC TAE notes that allowing people to weigh all their options and make their own decisions is easy when everyone is on the same page. It becomes difficult when there is disagreement among family members, or when providers disagree with choices made by individuals or families.

The ADRC TAE notes that providers should be able to provide consumers with opportunities to be involved in selecting types of services and supports. Providers also need to be able to help caregivers listen to and respect the perspectives of consumers. At the same time, providers need to recognize and acknowledge the needs of caregivers.

Table 4: Knowledge/skill in facilitating self-direction / self-determination (Scale 0-4, N = 9)

Areas of Knowledge/Skill		Before Hired		Current	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
a	Involving consumers in decisions about their services and supports	3.33	1.118	3.89	.333
b	Educating caregivers about listening to and respecting the perspectives of consumers	3.22	1.302	3.89	.333
c	Recognizing and acknowledging caregivers' needs	3.11	1.453	3.56	.882
d	Accepting final decisions of consumers and families even when they clash with your own opinions	2.78	1.394	3.33	.707
Core Competency 4 Overall		3.11	1.269	3.67	.468

As was seen with the third competency area, people came to the ADRC with a diversity of knowledge and skills relevant to the fourth competency area. But unlike those results, no increases in knowledge/skill in this area were significant, either for specific skills or overall.

Requested training topics relevant to this skill set in rank order:

- 78% Self-determination in challenging situations
- 56% Strategies to encourage self-determination
- 44% Advocacy skills

<sup>2</sup> National Gateway to Self-Determination: What is Self-Determination and Why is it Important? (Introduction page) Retrieved November 9, 2011 from <http://www.aucd.org/NGSD/template/link.cfm>

- 33% Self-determination in cultural contexts
- 22% Understanding self-determination in a disability context

One respondent expressed the following observation: *It is hard to educate the public about self-determination, especially caregivers – they want the options counselor to “fix” the situation even if mom or dad doesn’t want it fixed.*

### Competency 5: Encouraging future orientation

The ADRC TAE notes that the trusting relationship established for options counseling makes difficult conversations about the future possible. The provider should be able to help people anticipate and plan for future needs, to weigh the pros and cons of what may happen as a result of different choices. Here again techniques of motivational interviewing are recommended to help people understand how what they do now is important for what they want in the future. Using the PATH person-centered tool is also recommended to encourage a future orientation.

Table 5: Knowledge/skill in encouraging future orientation (Scale 0-4, N = 9)

Areas of Knowledge/Skill		Before Hired		Current	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
a	Assisting consumers and families to anticipate and plan for future needs	<b>2.33</b>	1.118	<b>3.22</b>	.441
b	Helping people weigh pros and cons of what may be the results of different choices	<b>2.78</b>	.833	<b>3.56</b>	.527
c	Helping people understand how what they do now is important for what they want in the future	<b>2.67</b>	1.225	<b>3.56</b>	.527
d	Using person-centered tools like PATH to encourage a future orientation	<b>1.56</b>	1.424	<b>1.89</b>	1.269
<b>Core Competency 5 Overall</b>		<b>2.33</b>	1.031	<b>3.06</b>	.410

Some diversity of knowledge and skills at the time of hire is evident in the fifth competency area. Like other areas, specific knowledge/skills tended to become more similar over time (i.e., much lower standard deviations for current ratings) with one exception. Diversity persisted in using person-centered tools like PATH to encourage a future orientation.

There was only one significant increase for a specific skill, helping people weigh pros and cons of what may be the results of different choices [ $t(8) = -2.401, p = .043$ ]. However, there was an overall significant increase for the fifth competency area [ $t(8) = -2.44, p = .041$ ]. None-the-less, it was one of the weakest competency areas.

Requested training topics relevant to this skill set in rank order:

- 67% Future planning in general
- 56% The PATH process and/or other person-centered tools
- 44% Best practices for helping people work through pros and cons of decisions
- 33% Using person-centered tools in cultural contexts

One respondent added the following: *Future planning is an area we have not gone into as we are often putting out fires. Would be nice to be part of this in the future.*

## Competency 6: Following-up

The ADRC TAE notes options counseling should be a short-term relationship, usually no longer than 90 days, but follow-up is critical. At a minimum, it is important to find out what decisions were made, if further assistance is required, and if options counseling was helpful.

In order to follow-up effectively, the ADRC TAE instructs that providers need complete, accurate, and appropriately detailed documentation of each interaction. These notes cover a succinct description of needs, options discussed, and action plans. Supervisors or other staff should be able to look at the notes and quickly determine what follow-up is necessary. The notes also provide a means to evaluate how well decision support was provided in each conversation.

An action plan should have clear steps, identifying who will do what. It is a tool that facilitates tracking decisions and outcomes. This information, along with self-evaluation and feedback from consumers and families, feeds into continuous quality improvement.

Table 6: Knowledge/skill in following-up (Scale 0-4,  $N = 9$ )

Areas of Knowledge/Skill		Before Hired		Current	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
a	Making effective notes about the assessment of needs, options presented, and reasons for decisions	2.67	1.414	3.22	.833
b	Making action plans with clear steps, identifying who is doing what	2.89	1.453	3.56	.726
c	Evaluating each conversation and assessing how well decision support was provided	2.33	1.323	2.78	.972
d	Using action plans to follow up with decisions made and documenting the outcomes of agreed upon steps	2.44	1.333	2.89	.928
e	Using self-evaluation, progress tracking, and feedback from consumers and families for continuous quality improvement	2.22	1.394	2.78	.972
Core Competency 6 Overall		2.51	1.304	3.04	.792

At the time of hire, people started with a diversity of knowledge and skill in the sixth competency area. While there seemed to be some increase in knowledge/skill over time, and it seemed to become more uniform, no increases were statistically significant at the level of specific skills or at the competency level for the group as a whole. At the competency level, following-up seemed to be the greatest weakness for the system as a whole.

Requested training topics relevant to this skill set in rank order:

- 67% Setting up action plans and tracking progress
- 44% Evaluation and quality improvement
- 33% Effectively utilizing informal supports in action plans
- 22% Effective documentation of options counseling sessions

## Knowledge & Skill Development

Respondents were given twelve options of potential sources of learning and were asked to rate how much those that were appropriate to them had been a source of learning about the

skills relevant to options counseling. The rating scale was an interval identical with previous items (“very little” to “a great deal” weighted 0-4).

The universally and highest rated source of past learning by the group of respondents was experience ( $M = 4.00$ ), followed by co-workers ( $M = 3.44$ ). Training events or workshops, and information from websites came in third ( $M = 3.33$  each). Table 7 shows results for all the rated sources of learning. Note that not everyone rated every source. Respondents were given the option to indicate when any source was not applicable to their situation.

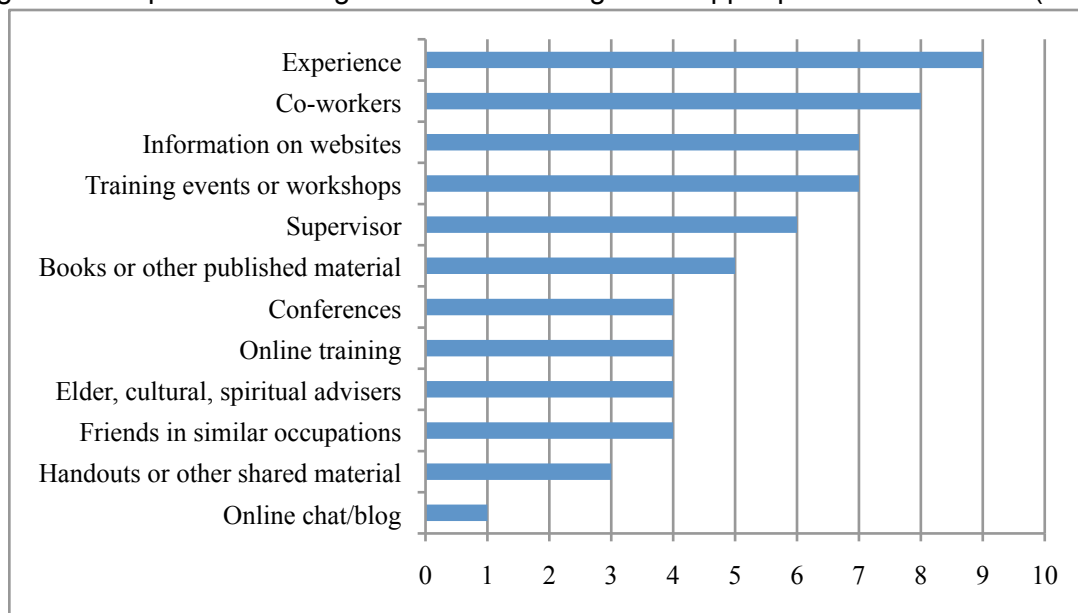
Table 7: Sources of learning about skills relevant to options counseling ( $N = 9$ )

Source of Learning (Scale 0-4)	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
Experience	<b>4</b>	4	4	0
Co-workers	<b>3.44</b>	4	4	1.014
Information on websites	<b>3.33</b>	4	4	.866
Training events or workshops	<b>3.33</b>	4	4	.866
Supervisor	<b>2.78</b>	4	4	1.716
Books or other published material	<b>2.67</b>	3	2*	1
Online training	<b>2.44</b>	2	2	.882
Elder, cultural, spiritual advisers ( $n = 8$ )	<b>2.22</b>	2	2	1.481
Conferences ( $n = 7$ )	<b>2.11</b>	2	0*	1.764
Handouts or other shared material ( $n = 7$ )	<b>2</b>	2	2	1.323
Friends in similar occupations ( $n = 7$ )	<b>1.78</b>	2	3	1.394
Online chat/blog ( $n = 7$ )	<b>.44</b>	0	0	1.014

\*Multiple modes exist; the smallest value is shown

Figure 2 is a diagram of only those sources of learning where individuals rated them in the upper portion of the scale (weighted responses of 3 or 4), presenting them in rank order by how many people gave those higher responses.

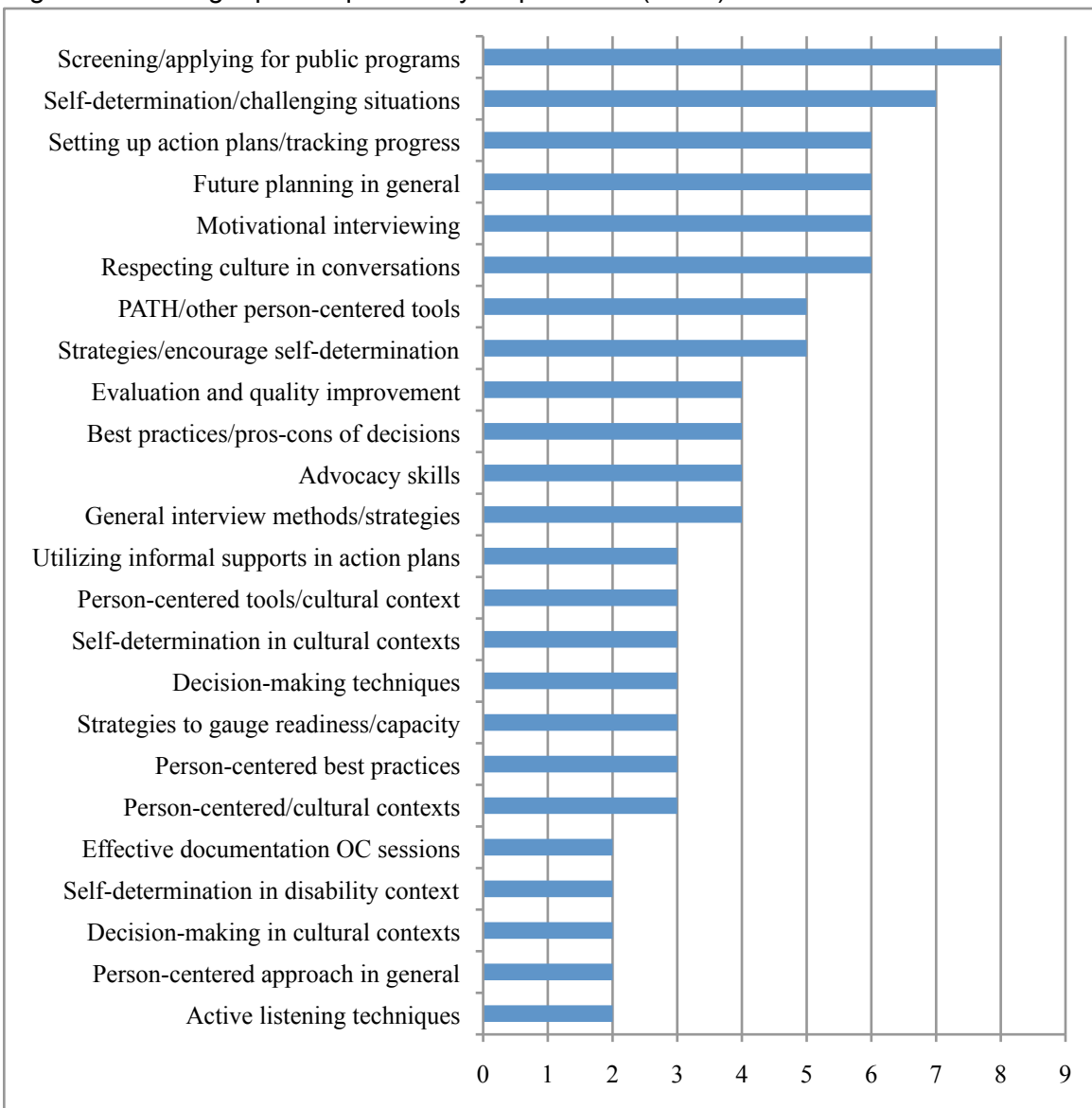
Figure 2: Respondents rating sources of learning in the upper portion of the scale ( $N = 9$ )



Respondents were asked to rate their level of interest in expanding their knowledge and skills for options counseling from this point forward. The rating scale on this item was similar in that it was an interval with end points labeled the same, but the scale had 6 points weighted 0 to 5 (versus 5 points weighted 0-4). The average rating was 4.67 (median/mode = 5), indicating a very high level of interest in additional training and other learning opportunities.

It is useful at this point to bring together the training topics from each competency area of the survey. Grouping them could offer more insight into patterns in where providers expressed a desire for knowledge and skill building opportunities. Figure 3 shows all training topics in rank order from the most to least requested.

Figure 3: Training topics requested by respondents (N = 9)



The most requested training topics:

- ◆ Screening and applying for public programs – chosen by 89% of respondents
- ◆ Self-determination in challenging situations – chosen by 78% of respondents – A related training topic chosen by 56% of respondents is strategies to encourage self-determination

There were four training topics chosen by 67% of respondents:

- ◆ Setting up action plans and tracking progress
- ◆ Future planning in general – A related training topic chosen by 56% of respondents was the PATH process and/or other person-centered tools
- ◆ Motivational interviewing
- ◆ Respecting culture in conversations

### **Summary & Conclusions**

All-in-all, the Provider Survey showed that Alaska's ADRC system has a high level of capacity to provide Long Term Support Options Counseling. People tended to bring a lot of specific skills to the job when they were hired, and they learned a lot about specific skills on the job. Most of this learning came from experience and shared expertise among co-workers, and much of it came from training events and websites.

There seemed to be relative strengths in determining the need for options counseling and in facilitating self-direction or self-determination. There seemed to be similar strength in assessing needs, values, and preferences, as well as in understanding and educating about public and private sector resources. The relative weaknesses at the competency level seemed to be in encouraging a future orientation and in following-up. There was more uniformity of knowledge/skills at the time of hire within the first and second competency areas, with more diversity in the other four areas. Specific skills tended to become more uniform over time, representing learning on the job, but the pattern of relative strengths and weaknesses of the system stayed very similar over time

Areas of relative weaknesses and identified training needs probably represent skill sets where people tended to have less knowledge/skill at the time they were hired and less accessible resources for learning on the job. These will likely be areas with an ongoing need for targeted training in the natural course of turnover in the workforce. Following are some thoughts about the most requested training topics.

*Screening and applying for public programs* was by far the most requested training topic, chosen by 89% of respondents. These skills are under the second competency (assessing needs, values and preferences), which was a strong area overall, but these skills are crucial to the work of the ADRC and providers felt they needed to know more.

*Self-determination in challenging situations* was the second most requested topic, chosen by 78% of respondents. A related topic chosen by 56% of respondents was strategies to encourage self-determination. These skills are under the fourth competency (facilitating self-direction / self-determination), which was one of the strongest overall. It might be useful to

query providers further for examples of challenging situations to ensure training addresses the kinds of challenging situations they encounter.

*Setting up action plans and tracking progress* was chosen by 67% of respondents and it comes under the sixth competency (following-up), which was a relatively weaker area. While this topic was chosen less often than the previous two topics, it represents a high area of need, as people seem to bring fewer of these skills to the job at the time they are hired. These particular skills are fairly practical in nature and can probably be efficiently addressed with a combination of some targeted training and supervisory guidance.

*Motivational interviewing* was another topic chosen by 67% of respondents. Skills of motivational interviewing come under multiple competencies, but are probably most relevant to the third and fifth areas (understanding and educating about public and private sector resources; and encouraging future orientation). As one respondent noted, “Motivational interviewing is always a good topic.” It is a foundational skill with broad application, and it is probably a unique enough skill set that fewer people have these skills at the time they are hired.

*Future planning in general* was also chosen by 67% of respondents, and it comes under the relatively weaker fifth competency (encouraging future orientation). This represents another high area of need, as it is another area where people probably bring fewer skills to the job at the time they are hired. A related training topic chosen by 56% of respondents is the PATH process and/or other person-centered tools. Motivational interviewing is also a related topic. Some investigation and discussion about the utility of different methods and tools for future planning in the context of typical options counseling sessions might help refine what specific training will be most productive.

*Respecting culture in conversations* was another topic chosen by 67% of respondents. It was offered as a suggestion under the first competency (determining the need for options counseling), but it is a basic skill relevant across all competency areas. The best cultural training teaches people how to respect and assess culture at the individual level *for every person served*. This is a much more valuable skill than learning generalities about specific cultures, which can lead to oversimplified assumptions and greater misunderstandings at the individual level.

Alaska Division of Senior & Disabilities Services  
Aging & Disability Resource Center

PROVIDER SURVEY: OPTIONS COUNSELING

## **APPENDIX**

The survey instrument printed from Survey Monkey

# ADRC Provider Survey

## Introduction: Level of knowledge and skill for options counseling

This survey covers six competency areas related to Long-Term Support Options Counseling.

Within each competency area, there are 4-5 items where you are asked to rate your level of knowledge/skill BEFORE you were hired to work for the ADRC, and then to rate your CURRENT level of knowledge/skill. Each rating is on a 5-point scale from "very little" to "a great deal."

Example: Andie had "very little" awareness about how to use open-ended questions before she came to work for the ADRC. Now she feels she understands how to use them effectively, but she needs more practice and experience before she can do it naturally. Her current level of knowledge/skill is somewhere between the two extremes of "very little" and "a great deal."

It is estimated this survey will take 10 to 20 minutes. A progress bar at the bottom of each page will let you know much is completed at the end of that page. You can move back and forth inside the survey and change answers until the "done" button is clicked at the end.

Please note that this survey is set up to be anonymous. If you add any identifiable information, it will be removed before results are summarized and provided to SDS. If you want a personal response from SDS, please contact them directly with your questions or concerns.

## 1. Determining the need for options counseling

### a) Establishing a good rapport (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### b) Creating a space that allows people to tell their personal stories (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### c) Asking open-ended questions (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### d) Listening for underlying problems (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# ADRC Provider Survey

## e) Listening for cues that signal a person is at the point of decision-making (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## What training topics would you like to see to increase your skills in this area? (mark all that apply)

- General interview methods and strategies
- Active listening techniques
- Respecting culture in conversations
- Other (please specify)

### Comments:

## 2. Assessing needs, values, and preferences

### a) Creating an environment where needs, values, preferences, and individual circumstances can be expressed openly (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### b) Assessing both immediate needs and long-term needs in the context of preferences and values (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### c) Considering the breadth of physical, mental, financial, and emotional needs (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# ADRC Provider Survey

## d) Assessing existing supports, both formal and informal, including cultural and spiritual supports (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## e) Screening for eligibility for public programs and assisting with applications (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## What training topics would you like to see to increase your skills in this area? (mark all that apply)

- The person-centered approach in general
- The person-centered approach in cultural contexts
- Person-centered best practices
- Screening and applying for public programs
- Other (please specify)

### Comments:

## 3. Understanding and educating about public and private sector resources

### a) Keeping current with what private and public resources are available at local, state, and national levels (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### b) Being sensitive to a person's readiness to hear about options (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# ADRC Provider Survey

## c) "Dosing" information to match a person's decision-making trajectory (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## d) Helping people tap into their internal motivation when it seems they are unable to make decisions or resistant to assistance (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## e) Finding and taking advantage of opportunities to enhance knowledge and hone skills (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## What training topics would you like to see to increase your skills in this area? (mark all that apply)

- Strategies to gauge readiness or capacity
- Decision-making techniques
- Decision-making in cultural contexts
- Motivational interviewing
- Other (please specify)

### Comments:

## 4. Facilitating self-direction / self-determination

### a) Involving consumers in decisions about their services and supports (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# ADRC Provider Survey

## b) Educating caregivers about listening to and respecting the perspectives of consumers (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## c) Recognizing and acknowledging caregivers' needs (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## d) Accepting final decisions of consumers and families even when they clash with your own opinions (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## What training topics would you like to see to increase your skills in this area? (mark all that apply)

- Understanding self-determination in a disability context
- Strategies to encourage self-determination
- Self-determination in cultural contexts
- Self-determination in challenging situations
- Advocacy skills
- Other (please specify)

### Comments:

## 5. Encouraging future orientation

### a) Assisting consumers and families to anticipate and plan for future needs (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# ADRC Provider Survey

## b) Helping people weigh pros and cons of what may be the results of different choices (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## c) Helping people understand how what they do now is important for what they want in the future (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## d) Using person-centered tools like PATH to encourage a future orientation (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## What training topics would you like to see to increase your skills in this area? (mark all that apply)

- Future planning in general
- Best practices for helping people work through pros and cons of decisions
- The PATH process and/or other person-centered tools
- Using person-centered tools in cultural contexts
- Other (please specify)

### Comments:

## 6. Following-up

### a) Making effective notes about the assessment of needs, options presented, and reasons for decisions (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# ADRC Provider Survey

## b) Making action plans with clear steps, identifying who is doing what (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## c) Evaluating each conversation and assessing how well decision support was provided (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## d) Using action plans to follow up with decisions made and documenting the outcomes of agreed upon steps (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## e) Using self-evaluation, progress tracking, and feedback from consumers and families for continuous quality improvement (rate knowledge/skill)

	Very Little				A Great Deal
BEFORE hired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CURRENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## What training topics would you like to see to increase your skills in this area? (mark all that apply)

- Effective documentation of options counseling sessions
- Setting up action plans and tracking progress
- Effectively utilizing informal supports in action plans
- Evaluation and quality improvement
- Other (please specify)

### Comments:

## Sources of knowledge and skill development

# ADRC Provider Survey

**For each option below, please rate how much each has been a source of learning about the skills relevant to options counseling, or note when any option is "not applicable" to your situation.**

	Very Little				A Great Deal		N/A
Supervisor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Co-workers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friends in similar occupations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Elder, cultural, spiritual advisers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training events or workshops	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online chat/blog	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Handouts or other shared material	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Books or other published material	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information on websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conferences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please specify "other" source of learning

**How interested are you in expanding your knowledge and skills for options counseling from this point forward?**

	Very Little				A Great Deal		N/A
INTEREST in learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Thank you for your time! If there is anything you would like to add, please use the space below. When you are finished, click the "done" button.**