



A FIO PARTNERS PERSPECTIVE:

Client Centered Models: Implications for Management

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There is an enormous transition underway that has been evolving for the last ten to fifteen years. It began in the field of developmental disabilities, has continued in mental health services for those with chronic disease, and has spread to children's mental health and, in some regions, to services to families with children with disabilities. The involvement of consumers in all aspects of service delivery and service design and the creation of systems of care, from the perspective of evaluating health and human services, are among the most promising contributions to service effectiveness of our generation. FIO Partners interest in this issue is not academic as we are asked continuously to help our clients, whether funders or agencies, to grapple with this transition.

The profound shift from agency/funder expert models of service delivery to models that place the consumer and his/her natural support systems at the center of service planning offers the opportunity to rethink how health and human services are delivered. Too often, however, it appears that the funder-consumer-provider relationship is, in fact, yet one more dysfunctional power struggle. Executive Directors complain that the new involvement of consumers at the policy level with funders cuts them out of the policy making arena and leads to policy development that can't be implemented. Funders, in an effort to offset the power imbalance between consumers and providers, do sometimes push providers out of the decision making, behaving as if it is their role to protect consumers from providers. Consumers and consumer advocates realize, however, that undermining the provider system will not work and that providers who are forced to implement programs that can't work practically or financially will not serve them well.

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