HCBS Settings Rule: Autonomy and Independence

What is Autonomy and Independence?

Autonomy and independence are central principles of the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Settings Rule. These principles ensure that individuals receiving Medicaid-funded HCBS have the freedom to make decisions about their own lives without external pressure or influence, including daily activities, interactions, and schedules, while also receiving support to take initiative and lead independent lives.

Key Requirements for Autonomy and Independence:

1. **Freedom of Choice:**

- Individuals must be able to make decisions about how they spend their time, who they interact with, and the activities they participate in. This includes the freedom to engage in community activities, vote, express opinions, and participate in social, cultural, and recreational activities.
- Individuals must be able to make decisions about health care, such us taking medications, attending appointments, and following health routines.

2. **Control Over Daily Activities:**

- Individuals must have the right to determine their own schedules, including mealtimes, leisure activities, and personal care routines.

3. **Encouragement of Initiative:**

- Settings must provide opportunities for individuals to take initiative in planning and managing their own activities and services.

4. **Support for Independence:**

- Providers must offer support that fosters independence without unnecessary restrictions or regimentation.
- Encourage initiative, motivate to take action, make decisions, and pursue their own ideas.

Provider Responsibilities:

1. Develop Flexible Policies:

- Create policies that allow individuals to have control over their schedules and decisions.
- Avoid unnecessary rules or restrictions that limit individual freedom.
- Regularly assess and monitor the quality of services provided.
- Implement continuous improvement processes based on feedback and evaluation.
- Have a plan in place to address emergencies and ensure the safety and well-being of individuals during crises.

2. Train Staff:

- Ensure all staff are trained to respect and support individual autonomy and independence.
- Provide ongoing education on strategies to promote self-direction and choice.
- Train staff on how to communicate with individuals and their families in care planning.

3. Document Individual Preferences:

- Develop and implement individualized care plans that reflect the preferences, goals, schedules, and needs of each individual.
- Update plans regularly to reflect changes in preferences or needs.

4. Address Barriers:

- Identify and resolve any barriers to autonomy, such as lack of access to transportation or insufficient staffing.

Benefits of Supporting Autonomy and Independence:

- Promotes self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Improves quality of life by enabling individuals to live according to their preferences.
- Encourages personal growth and the development of decision-making skills.

Examples of Compliant Practices:

- **Flexible Scheduling:** Allowing individuals to choose when they wake up, eat, and participate in activities.
- **Personalized Activities:** Supporting individuals in pursuing hobbies or interests of their choice, such as joining a book club or attending fitness classes.
- **Decision-Making Support:** Providing assistance to individuals in making informed decisions, such as offering guidance on financial management or planning outings.

Monitoring and Compliance:

1. **Regular Assessments:**

- DCH will conduct site visits and reviews to ensure settings promote autonomy and independence.

2. **Corrective Action Plans:**

- DCH may require corrective action plans (CAPs) to be developed and implemented by providers to address any deficiencies.

3. **Documentation Audits:**

- Service plans will be reviewed to ensure they reflect individual autonomy and preferences.

DCH Support for Providers:

1. **Training and Resources:**

- DCH offers training programs on promoting autonomy and independence in compliance with the HCBS Settings Rule.
- Templates and tools are available to assist providers in documenting preferences and supporting individual independence.

2. **Technical Assistance:**

- Providers can access one-on-one technical support to address challenges in implementing autonomy-focused practices.

3. **Stakeholder Engagement:**

- DCH works with individuals, families, and advocacy groups to ensure services reflect individual preferences and promote independence.

Resources for Providers:

- **CMS HCBS Settings Rule Guidance:** https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/home-community-based-services/home-community-based-services-guidance/index.html
- **DCH Provider Support and Training:** www.dch.georgia.gov
- **Provider Training Materials:** HCBS State Transition Plan Provider Guidance manual
- **Contact Information:**
  - Email: hcbstransition@dch.ga.gov