

**Empowering the community:**  
the support for persons with psychosocial disabilities  
to mobilize community-based resources

Huang Yi

Shenzhen Autism Society

# The Equal Right to Community Living

- Article 19 - Living independently and being included in the community
  - States Parties to this Convention recognize the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community, including by ensuring that:
    - (a) Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement;
    - (b) Persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community;
    - (c) Community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs.
- People with disabilities being able to live in their local communities as equal citizens
- Choice, Control and Freedom
- Living in own home or with families, going to work, having leisure and entertainment activities , participating in community activities
- Support to participate in every-day life
- Receiving community-based services

# Community vs. Institution

- 'Community' as constructed in the context of de-institutionalization
- Typical institution: the asylums in Goffman's essays
  - prison-like institutions
  - Limited access to the outside world
- 'Institution' understood as the desired response to the need for caring
- The socio-cultural context of China:
  - the traditional practice that disabled people are cared for by their families
  - "we hope that both our children and ourselves can live in the institution and be cared by professional service providers. "

# Q1: Where is the community

- Observations:

- Physically stay in the community
- With personal assistance provided by families
- But have no meaningful connection with the community
  - The neighbors and community members do not know about the person
  - The community does not provide (individualized) support for the person or the family
  - The person or the family do not ask for help from the neighbors or the community

- Cases:

- Yan's death during the COVID-19 times
- Lei's Case (a boy with autism, had lived in the community for 3 years, got no help when he got lost)

# Q1: Where is the community

- Observations:
  - The support coming from people/community far away in a geographical sense
  - A stronger connection built on the same experience and mutual understanding
  - Online community
- Rethinking the meaning and scope of 'being included in the community'
  - A supportive community in a geographical sense
  - Meaningful connection and relationship as the key elements of a supportive community

The key issue concerned in the practice:  
how to build meaningful connections and relationships  
between the person and the community

Community-based services:

Independent living

Supported employment

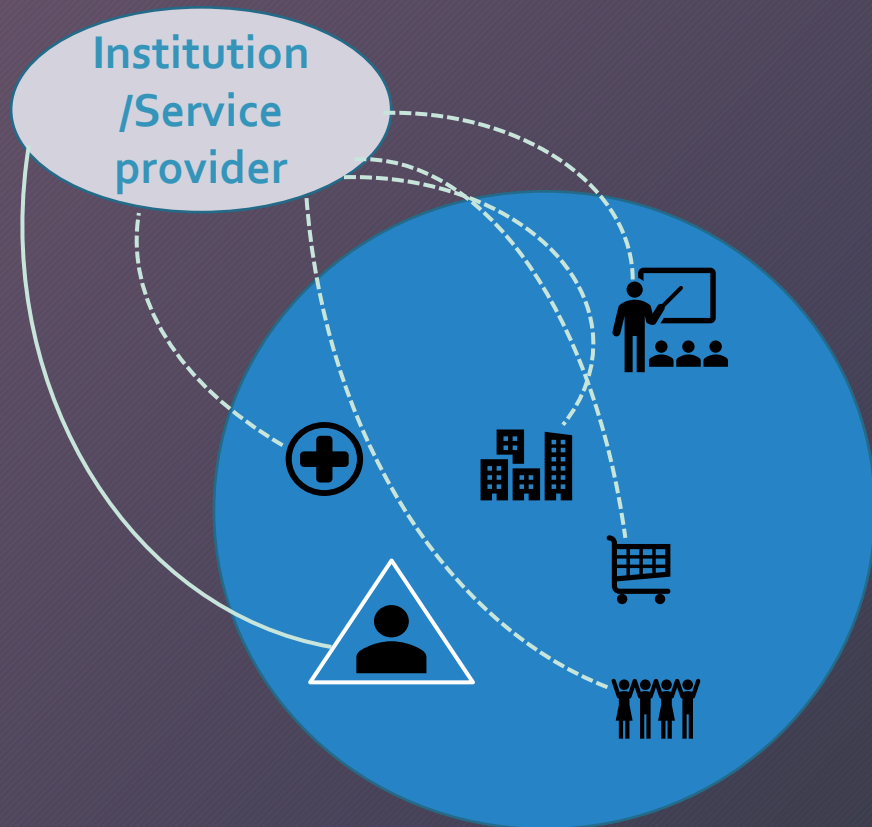
Day center

Peer groups

## Q2: Whose community

- Observations:
  - The service is provided in the community
  - There is Person Centered Planning (PCP)/Individualized Services Plan (ISP)
  - The person can have various activities and services in the community
  - The community-based resources are mobilized
  - **HOWEVER:**
    - The person has to come to the institution/service-provider and wait for the institution/service-provider to make the connection with community-based resources.
- Cases:
  - Tang's case (before the involvement of the case manager, the supporters in the person's community have no idea of the need of the person and his family; the family failed to mobilize the community-based resources)
  - Supported employment case

## Q2: Whose community



- Problems:
  - The support is not person-centered or user-led
  - The person is not provided with sufficient options
  - The person is not provided with sufficient opportunities to develop willing and preferences
  - The connection/relationship with the community members might be fragile



# Empowering the community –efforts in practice

- Understand the interaction between different dimensions of the community
  - Encourage the person to build a direct relationship with others
  - Efforts to promote opportunities for the person to have various experiences (such as different jobs, different places to live, etc)
  - Provide support to both the person and the community members
  - Services providers enter into the person's community instead of that the person comes to the services provider/institution
  - Mobilize the community-based resources and enhance the ability of the person and the family to mobilize the community-based resources
- Cases
    - Yang's case: visiting her colleagues in weekends
    - Xu's case: making the decision of resignation with the support from community-based support network

# Empowering the community –efforts in practice

- Understand the interaction between different dimensions of the community
- Encourage the person to build a direct relationship with others
- Efforts to promote opportunities for the person to have various experiences (such as different jobs, different places to live, etc)
- Provide support to both the person and the community members
- Services providers enter into the person's community instead of that the person comes to the services provider/institution
- Mobilize the community-based resources and enhance the ability of the person and the family to mobilize the community-based resources

