



What is Person Centered Thinking?

Person Centered Thinking (PCT) is the philosophy behind everything we do at Tri-Counties Regional Center (TCRC). At its core, PCT is a simple idea: Put individuals first, listen carefully and learn who they are and what they want from life, then work together to set goals, create personalized plans, and put them into practice. Being person centered also means always treating others with dignity and respect. PCT recognizes the right of individuals to make informed choices and to take responsibility for those choices and the related risks. When we use PCT, we strive to build on the strengths, gifts, talents, skills, and contributions of every individual.

Why does TCRC use Person Centered Thinking?

TCRC uses Person Centered Thinking in all we do because we believe that PCT provides the best approach to learning about people and honoring their dreams, capacities, and even their fears. PCT guides all of our activities and provides a common thread among them. We believe that using person centered practices throughout TCRC ensures that being person centered will become our natural approach to problem solving, relating to others, and our work with the individuals and families we support, service providers, coworkers, and our community partners.

We put PCT into action through a variety of person centered practices at TCRC, but the most important of these is Person Centered Planning. Person Centered Planning is a guided process for learning how someone wants to live at home, at work, and in the community and for developing a plan to help make it happen.

Person Centered Thinking ensures that the focus of our work and planning stays on the perspectives of the individuals affected by the planning. PCT can do this by helping us learn what is important TO and important FOR the people we serve. Things that are important TO individuals are what matters most to them and makes

them happy. Things that are important FOR individuals are what they need to be healthy and safe and valued as members of their community. You and your Planning Team will work together to find the best ways to support you to achieve things that are both important TO and FOR you.

Who is involved in Person Centered Planning?

Your Planning Team is made up of you, your service coordinator or other TCRC staff, service providers, support staff, and any family members, friends, or others you choose to involve.

How does Person Centered Thinking guide my interactions with the regional center?

Everyone who works at TCRC has been trained in PCT and has learned creative ways to gather meaningful information and talk about goal setting, problem solving, and action planning. Your Service Coordinator will guide your Planning Team to use person centered practices during all your meetings and as you put your plans into action.

You can expect that your Service Coordinator will:

- Listen carefully to what you say and do their best to get to know you well. If you cannot speak for yourself, they will listen to those who know you best and will find ways to communicate with you.
- Assume the positive and possible rather than focusing on obstacles.
- Support the many different ways people choose to live, without judging people's choices.
- Use People First Language to always put people before disabilities.
- Check to make sure they understand your perspective before they act or respond.
- Seek input from those affected by each decision.
- Be well informed about the services available as options to include in your plan.

TCRC staff as a whole will:

- Honor and solicit different perspectives before making decisions.
- Give thoughtful input on decisions and help evaluate outcomes.
- Be honest in their opinions and assessments.
- Take initiative to act when they hear a need or opportunity.
- Follow through on what they say they will do.

For the process to work best, everyone involved is encouraged to:

- Stay positive.
- Listen to others' opinions and ideas with an open mind.
- Be reflective and honest about what you can and cannot do.
- Follow through on what you have said you will do.

How can I be ready to participate fully in Person Centered Planning?

Before you meet with a Service Coordinator or your Planning Team, take some time to think about what kinds of things they need to know about you to understand you as a person. Write down or record a list of things you admire about yourself, your beliefs and values, your goals right now, and things you dream of doing. Then think about and record any worries you have about getting to your goals and dreams. Finally, think about and record some times in the past when people have helped you to overcome obstacles or supported you in ways that made a difference for you.

Where can I learn more about Person Centered Thinking?

You and every member of your Planning Team are encouraged to attend one of TCRC's Person Centered Thinking Training sessions. During these sessions, TCRC brings together regional center staff members, service providers, the individuals we serve, and their families and friends to learn about the basics of PCT. You will learn creative ways to gather and share meaningful information, resolve problems, and create goals and action plans.

If you enjoy what you learn at the PCT Training session, you can get involved in our Communities of Practice. With meetings every other month at each TCRC office, the Communities of Practice dig deeper into topics introduced at the PCT Training and help to build your skills as a person centered thinker. During Communities of Practice meetings, TCRC staff, the individuals we serve, and service providers collaborate to figure out how we can use PCT to improve all of our working relationships, and the lives of persons with intellectual disabilities.

You can find the schedules for upcoming Person Centered Thinking Training sessions and Communities of Practices meetings online at www.tri-counties.org.

If you would like more in-depth information on Person Centered Thinking, two good places to look are:

- The International Learning Community for Person Centered Practices at www.learningcommunity.us. TCRC also teams up with the Learning Community and a number of regional organizations to host the annual California Gathering for Person Centered Practices, a collective learning event focused on sharing knowledge and furthering efforts to promote person centered system change. Keep an eye out for announcements about the California Gathering on the Learning Community and TCRC websites.
- Helen Sanderson Associates, a UK-based international team that works collaboratively to embed person centered practices in the heart of teams and organizations, at www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk/about. You can read blogs, research papers, and news reports at their online Reading Room at www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk/reading-room/.

"A person centered approach seeks to keep the individual and his or her strengths, abilities and needs at the core of planning and decision making."
~ Tina Calderaro-Mendoza,
Person Centered Thinking Coordinator

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**Tri-Counties
Regional Center**

Person Centered in All We Do

Mission: TCRC provides person and family centered planning, services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities to maximize opportunities and choices for living, working, learning and recreating in the community.