



Supported Education

3.2 Involvement of Stakeholders

Implementing a Supported Education program must be an effort made by the educational staff, mental health practitioners, consumers and families, but for its success the program must be developed in the community. To this end, creating a clear vision of the SEd principles and goals is essential, as well as the involvement of stakeholders and partners. Most often, there is no need to develop new resources because each organization, entity or agency has a personal line of intervention: the involvement of stakeholders and creating partnerships can pull out the talents and resources of many consumers, experts and staff, using the existing resources to implement a Supported Education program (Unger, 1998). It is more important to do a resource assessment, to list all the available resources and to determine if required resources are missing (see Resource scan/Social map below).

The involvement of stakeholders can start while implementing the SEd program—the creation of advisory board meetings can be a good first step. A community partnership setting involves the promotion of trading mutually beneficial information and resources and joint efforts to resolve a common problem. In this section, we will address the importance of involving stakeholders and creating community partnerships for the success of a SEd program (Ornelas & Vargas-Moniz, 2011; Wolff, 2010).

A stakeholder can be defined as someone who can be or is already involved with the success of a SEd program and of its consumers, including school administrators, teachers, mental health practitioners, students, family members, schools board members, city councilors, state representatives and mental health experts. Stakeholders may also be organizations, initiatives, committees, media outlets and cultural institutions. They have a personal, professional, civic or financial interest or concern in the SEd program and consumers (Wolff, 2010).

The following is a list of sources from whom SEd program developers are encouraged to seek information.

- Consumer organizations
- Student unions
- Family organizations
- Peer support services
- Day activity centers / Clubhouses
- Vocational rehabilitation agencies

- Local social service agencies
- Student disability services at educational institutions
- Key informants (i.e., parents, mental health professionals, current students with disabilities)

Remember, if possible, do not limit yourself to the sources listed here; try to take advantage of all the individuals, organizations and agencies that you identified in your Resource scan/Social map.

A community partnership setting usually occurs when searching for answers to identified social problems; financial opportunities for a SEd program; or a group, organization, or community perception in relation to a problem or a crisis situation. Therefore, in the development of a partnership, sharing resources usually forms its basis, since the success of a partnership resides in its ability to obtain beneficial results for the different groups involved in the community and in its development process (Ornelas & Vargas-Moniz, 2011).

Community stakeholders/partnership engagement

When engaging stakeholders or possible partners, always pay attention to the following assumptions.

- The community is central to the implementation of a SEd program.
- Learn about Supported Education.
- Learn about community settings.
- Share power and resources.
- Do “with” as opposed to doing “for”.
- Honor consumers’/ students’ knowledge and experience.

Key questions

- Who might you invite?
- Who else is also involved in supporting students with psychiatric disabilities?
- What are the resources and strengths of my organization?
- Which are the resources we need to implement a SEd program?

Formal and informal stakeholders/partners

Formal stakeholders or partners of the community are those organizations, groups, or agencies that represent the major institutions such as government, education, health and business. Informal stakeholders or partners of the community are those parts of the community best connected to consumers/students, such as associations, families, etc.

Stakeholders and partners analysis

Stakeholders/Partners	Formal	Informal	
List			
Which groups, organizations, entities are related to Supported Education?			
What role can they play?			
What benefit do they gain from joining?			
What barriers exist?			
Which are their strategies or programs?			
What resources can they provide?			
How to reach them?			

(Ornelas & Vargas-Moniz, 2011; Wolff, 2010)