

DWP/MFIP ES - Operational Definition

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Operational Definition: Bridging Dreams to Goals

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Dreams and aspirations are the things that some people reach for to bring greater meaning, satisfaction or happiness to their lives. Others have little or no experience reaching for dreams, or have had dreams shattered by circumstance.

Reality is wrong. Dreams are for real.

Tupac Shakur

We are employed to help participants take advantage of the opportunity of MFIP. That includes having the option to dream and pursue dreams, to set goals and achieve them. Goals are the stepping stones toward dreams. Guided self-determination is a concept that supports counselors to help participants explore their dreams and take the steps to achieve those dreams.

For individuals to routinely and powerfully reflect upon and decide what they want to do, they must rely on their sense of self and their understanding of themselves as individual actors capable of making their own judgments and decisions and of successfully acting upon and shaping their environment. This sense of self is the necessary precursor of self-determination that spurs individuals to decide to take action. (Elizabeth Babcock)

When someone else sets an individual's goals, the individual may see the goal as not very important to them. Non-commitment easily puts the goal's accomplishment at risk. In such a goal, there is no internally generated motivation to activate and sustain goal-directed behavior. For this reason, and in the absence of the internal motivating factors, it is important to externalize some artificial means to create extrinsic source of motivation. (Richard Guare)

Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild precious life?

Mary Oliver

When an individual has a goal that is important to her, behavior in the service of obtaining that goal can increase the likelihood of learning and practicing goal-relevant skills. Supporting the participant to think about what they want, investigating options, planning incremental but realistic steps may fall more in the side of intrinsic motivation. (Richard Guare)

A dream written down with a date becomes a goal. A goal broken down into steps becomes a plan. A plan backed by action makes your dreams come true.

Greg S. Reid

Goals serve the role of motivating an individual to action, so long as the individual values the goal and the probability and the probability of success is high. If a participant is not interested in the goal, it is unlikely the participant will reach it. Some participants may have had limited if any past experience setting goals in a context that had the resources and supports necessary for success. As a result, they may be both anxious and initially skeptical or doubtful. Past experience with failure in achieving a dream or goal

can engender thoughts of failure, potential disappointment and feelings of anxiety with new goal setting opportunities. (Richard Guare)

Dream Dust

Gather out of star-dust,
Earth-dust,
Cloud-dust,
Storm-dust,
And splinters of hail,
One handful of dream-dust
Not for sale.
Langston Hughes

Goals serve four primary functions (Guare):
First, they direct behavior toward goal-relevant activities and away from goal – irrelevant activities

Second, they energize – high goals lead to greater effort than do low goals

Third, they encourage persistence

Finally, they motivate individuals to discover or use task-relevant knowledge or strategies.

Remember that goals are:

- Action oriented.
- Future focused (attention is on moving forward, not looking backward)
- Shared responsibilities –
 - Participant Responsibility
 - Goal identification
 - Goal achievement
 - Coach’s Responsibility
 - Goal guidance
 - Encouragement
 - Accountability

Counselors are expected to help the participant bridge their dream identification to goals and actions. Discuss with your supervisor the use of SMART Goals, Goal Action Plans (and for counselors involved with LLI, the My Pathway and My Task, Plan, Do Review sheets).

Remember to value their values. What is important to a participant, important enough to build dreams upon, is likely shaped by his or her values and beliefs. Beginning this process, you may not know what the participant’s values and beliefs are. Finishing this process, you still may not know. It is imperative that you recognize that your values and those of the participant are not the same, so be careful to not have yours get in their way. Allow space for the participant to build dreams and set goals based on their values and beliefs.

The Dream Keeper

Bring me all of your dreams,
You dreamers,
Bring me all of your
Heart melodies
That I may wrap them
In a blue cloud-cloth
Away from the too-rough fingers
Of the world.
Langston Hughes

Finally, don’t forget how you have built dreams for yourself, and how you bridged them to goals and goal achievement. Help your participants follow a familiar path.

Nothing happens unless first a dream.
Carl Sandberg