

My Self-Directed Life



My name is Douglas Gabler. I am 24 years old.
I have severe autism and am nonverbal.
I am in the DDA Community Pathways Waiver
Self-Directed services program.

Under Self-Direction I have a wonderful daily program that really meets my needs. I am physically strong and love to be outside. I need to be physically active to use up all my energy. I've also been involved in therapeutic horseback riding since I was 14 years old. Putting all of this together, my family helped me set up a program where I work at the Wheaton Park Stables.

I love it! Every day I go there with a helper, and I'm busy all day long. I unload the hay wagon, deliver hay to the barn, feed the horses, and muck the fields. I'm proud to be taking care of the horses and their pastures. Despite my disability, I am making a contribution to the community.

*Choice and Control Matter
Matter to Me!*



Unloading the hay wagon

My Self-Directed program is good for me, but it's a bureaucratic nightmare for my family. This bill is important to me because I need the supports and flexibility that used to be available under Self-Direction but have been taken away.

- I need a voice via an Advisory Council.
- I REALLY need a strong Support Broker who can do more for me than the minor role the current system allows; i.e, I need that role restored so my Broker can be an advocate for me and help with my program.
- I need to be able to hire relatives as staff -- Who knows me better? It is really hard to find qualified people to work with me and in this time of COVID, it is even more difficult.

My family and I support the Self-Direction Act because it will help me build a life based on my strengths and my choice. Thank you for time and attention.

Sincerely,

Douglas Gabler

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