



Technology-enabled Community Service Models

Moving to a New Vision of Care to Support people with I/DD

By Dr. Michael Strouse, CEO GoodLife Innovations, Inc.

Public policy establishes a clear vision for disability services where people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD, and other populations with barriers to independence) are given opportunities to lead purpose-filled, individualized, enriched, safe, highly self-directed, and increasingly typical lives in the communities where they live, work, volunteer to help others, and recreate in small, inclusive homes and in normalized community settings.

This vision of these essential “outcomes” is fueled by landmark legal decisions, federal public policy (e.g., Final Rule), funding requirements, and ultimately consumer/family choice. The critical legal tenants of care include the cultivation of independence; personalized support plans that define preferred lives; clear protections from abuse, neglect, and exploitation; care provided in the least restrictive settings in the least intrusive way possible; observance of basic human rights to include access to critical public transportation and resources, like health/behavioral care; reasonable expectations of privacy; and care that is as self-directed and controlled by persons served and/or their families/guardians as possible.

While the vision and essential requirements/outcomes of care are increasingly clear, the traditional methods of care aren’t delivering these outcomes. Group homes, center-based day services, and health and behavioral clinics are all *places* created to cost-effectively deliver traditional care. However, consumers don’t want place-based models nor will future funding support them. We must move toward smaller homes, more inclusive community activities (day services without walls and not confined to days), and professional services delivered on-demand. These changes are necessary but challenging.

The direct care workforce for supporting people in the community is highly unstable, disappearing, and in crisis. The direct support crisis is fueled by high turnover (75% to 100% annual), high call-offs (15 to 20% of scheduled shifts), virtually a non-existent pipeline of new staff, chronic shift openings,

working hard-to-fill awkward schedules (25% or more), working alone without supervision, low pay (less than \$15 per hour), lack of effective training and support, increasingly challenging populations of need, high reliance on part-time and substitute staffing pools (over 30% of all positions), and the historically high existence of better-paying jobs that offer better life-balance and working conditions.

If we are to achieve better results, we can't just bale water faster and expect improvements. We must learn from other industries that have reinvented themselves and move to better service delivery ecosystems that can redefine what's possible. Netflix, Instacart, GrubHub, Amazon, ghost kitchens, StationMD, and other futuristic companies have all redefined what's possible in the service industry by developing simple, self-directed services that eliminate the storefront, naturally ebb and flow around consumer needs on-demand, and are more cost-effective. Smart automation and AI software are positively changing the way we live every day--and the customer has spoken. Just ask Blockbuster.

National thought leaders know that technology-enhanced service models are the solution for the next generation of care and are the only way we can actually advance the principles of 1) independence; 2) self-direction; 3) privacy; 4) least intrusive potentially effective care; 5) small homes and inclusive settings; 6) and individualized wrap-around supports. Technology-enabled services are the only way we can help staff work effectively in small settings alone and provide them with the on-demand professional help, support, and supervision they need and that our customers demand.

To this end, there is a nationwide need for the creation of the next generation of service approaches that have been designed to leverage technology, such as the **Neighborhood Network**. The Neighborhood Network offers **virtual and on-demand** life coaching, work-coaching, health care, behavior support, night supervision, service coordination, and staff support/supervision. People want to live in their own homes with as much independence as possible, receiving the help they need when and where it is needed to ensure that they are safe; they don't want caregivers or service options to get in the way of their independence, autonomy, or privacy. To do that they need our virtual help.

While there are very promising new service approaches that are moving in the right direction, we are still behind other industries and a long way from where we want to be. Community services providers must embrace, adopt and infuse their service approaches with new and improved infrastructure in order to leverage what *technologies* have made possible. Netflix did not simply bolt-on technology to a Blockbuster business plan. Instead, it re-envisioned how to deliver the same product (movies) to the customer in ways that would not have been possible without technology. Their story reveals the power of evolving traditional services by embracing innovation.

GoodLife has partnered with the University of Kansas Department of Applied Behavioral Science to champion the next generation of care for over four decades. This enduring collaboration produced **GoodLife U**, where the partners create, develop, assess, refine, and disseminate evidence-based, technology-enabled service approaches that improve (1) the lives of persons served, (2) the caregivers that provide support, (3) the agencies that provide services, and (4) the funders that provide resources and ensure accountability--or, *Win⁴ Solutions*.

Quick Links to More Information

For more information on **GoodLife U**, [go here](#).

For general information **iLink Technologies**, [go here](#).

To learn more about how the **Neighborhood Network** service model can improve lives and better support the DSPs who make this possible, [go here](#).

To learn how **iLink Technologies advances privacy and self-direction**, [go here](#).

To explore how **you can support the next generation of care**, [go here](#).

To arrange for free **GoodLife U virtual workshops** for strategies to Enhance your DSP workforce or how to weave an iLink Technologies infrastructure into your services, [go here](#).

For **video/blog series for improving direct support capacity**, [go here](#).

For a **video/blog series on iLink Technologies**, [go here](#).

To learn about the **people behind GoodLife U**, [go here](#).

About the Author

Dr. Mike Strouse is the President/CEO of GoodLife Innovations and its subsidiaries, including iLink Technologies, and also holds a courtesy faculty appointment with the University of Kansas Department of Applied Behavioral Science. His work encompasses research, development, and dissemination of evidence-based, nationally-regarded, community service models which include cutting-edge enabling technologies.