

**Effective Date:** January 1, 2014

**Contact Person:** Your Agency Planner

## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITION:**

### Motivational Interviewing

The Ramsey County Workforce Solutions contracts for 2014 and beyond require agencies to use motivational interviewing (MI) as a tool throughout delivery of all services. Agencies are expected to allocate a portion of their budget to provide MI training to new staff and/or to refresh current staff.

In a memo regarding motivational interviewing to Counties in April, 2013, the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) stated “A central challenge in all of MFIP services is facilitating behavior change in adults who have had little experience with success, are suspicious of the county and other service providers, and are exhausted by a struggle to meet basic needs. Since the implementation of statewide welfare reform and subsequent changes to the program, a central issue has been how to provide services that are effective with participants who have great difficulty finding and keeping work. The reason for these difficulties are myriad, and include physical and mental health issues among parents and children, chemical use, lack of education, domestic violence, a sense of hopelessness, and generational poverty. The demands of the MFIP program (work participation rate, verification and documentation, sanctions, perception of limited choices, time pressure) create an atmosphere that is not always conducive to building relationships, taking time to understand the participant’s situation from their point of view, identifying and working from a strength-based perspective, and developing an employment plan based on participant- identified goals. The result is often resentment and a lack of engagement that can appear and sounds like hostility, resistance, or a lack of motivation and inability to follow through.”

DHS recommends the use of MI and describes it as “a sophisticated form of collaborative conversation with a participant about change. It is participant centered and designed to address the common problem of ambivalence or low confidence about change. MI helps the counselor avoid persuasion by drawing out the participant’s own reasons and ideas for change within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion, thus sparking increased motivation and forward movement.” DHS continues by stating that “MI helps counselors move away from confrontation and fixing into a guiding, yet participant-centered approach to bring about change in behavior. MI gives counselors an effective alternate way to address ambivalence, reluctance and resistance; to help participants recognize discrepancies between their stated goals and their behavior, and then to facilitate change.”

For several years, Ramsey County Workforce Solutions Direct Services and provider agencies have supported counseling staff use of MI in the work with MFIP participants. To ensure staffs are prepared and supported in MI, agencies have identified and trained coaches, and facilitated proficiency in the model through onsite coaching circles.

Ramsey County continues to expect that agencies comply with County and State policies regarding the use of MI, training and MI Coaching Circles.

In mid-2013, the Minnesota Department of Human Services began providing MI training to counties throughout the state. Ramsey County agencies are welcome to sign new staff up for the DHS funded training. DHS is also providing coaching training to foster the development and on-going use of coaching circles in counties. Ramsey County Workforce Solutions will forward to Ramsey County ES Provider agencies information provided by DHS regarding the MI training. Agencies can best determine their strategies for training and supporting staff in the use of MI.