Agency in the Age of AI

Integrating Generative Tools into Disability-Centered Practices

What We Will Cover Today

Workshop Flow

Brief presentation + hands-on activities structured for reflection and practice throughout the session

Core Question

When does AI support **enable** and when does it **substitute**? This question anchors every module.

Three Practical Patterns

Explain-the-Decision · **Contextual Constraints** · **Critique-the-Support**

Your Goal

Leave with a **personal AI integration framework** tailored to your specific role in disability services

LEARNING OBJECTIVES Participants will be able to apply the three core patterns to real disability-services tasks by end of session.

FACILITATOR Distribute printed agenda. Note any accessibility accommodations in the room (captioning, screen reader users, etc.). Confirm tech setup.

The Core Tension: Support vs. Substitution

Enabling Support

- Facilitates independence and growth
- Maintains the user's central agency

Substitutive Intervention

- Replaces user action or judgment
- Risks removing personal agency and skill

"To accommodate is to invite participation, not to insulate someone from the experiences that constitute growth."

You Are Already Experts in This Territory

Human Support

Decades of managing direct human mediation and ethical boundaries.

Assistive Tech

Expertise in physical tools that bridge the person and environment.

Generative AI

The newest tool in a long history of mediation. The ethics are familiar.

Shared Risk: Obscuring the authentic voice of the individual.

Capabilities and Boundaries

What AI IS (The Tool)

- Cognitive support and planning aid
- Language mediation and drafting engine
- System for complex pattern recognition

What AI IS NOT (The Human)

- A replacement for professional judgment
- A holder of authentic lived experience
- A bearer of final ethical responsibility

Bottom Line: AI can generate content, but only humans can generate context.

The Stress Test for New Tools

Before integrating any AI tool, ask these three questions:

01

Utility

What specific task does it help with?

02

Risk

What does it risk obscuring or stripping away?

03

Agency

What judgment must remain explicitly human?

Pause and Reflect: Think of a current task (e.g., writing case notes). How would you apply these questions to an AI tool helping with that task?

Pattern 1: Explain-the-Decision

The Principle

Do not just accept an AI-generated plan. Explicitly annotate **WHY** it fits the specific client.

Example Annotation:

"Goal: Client attends community center 2x weekly. Rationale: Aligns with client's desire for independent transport (See Oct 12 notes)."

- Moves professional from passive consumer to active verifier.
- Makes professional judgment visible in the record.
- Prevents "Algorithmic Bias" from going unchecked.

Pattern 2: Contextual Constraints

The Gap

AI operates in a vacuum of generalities. Professional agency lies in feeding the **uniqueness** of the situation into the process. We must frame prompts with real-world limitations to ensure safety and relevance.

Activity: Framing the Prompt

1. Identify Task

Standard prompt for a common task.

2. List Constraints

Identify 3 human or environmental limits.

3. Rewrite Prompt

Merge task and constraints together.

Refined Prompt Example:

*"Plan a team meeting agenda. **Constraints:** Must be completed in 45 minutes. Accommodate one remote attendee in a different time zone (no early morning start)."*

Pattern 3: Critique-the-Support

- Treat every AI output as a **flawed draft**, not a final authority.
- Value lies in finding what the tool **missed**. Identifying gaps maintains the distinction between data processing (AI) and human understanding (you).
- Identify missed emotional nuance or client hesitation.

CRITIQUE MODE

"The client is ready to proceed with vocational training based on data..."

[!] Missing: Client expressed anxiety about the commute. Draft ignores emotional state.

🛠️ Final Activity: Critique & Redesign (Patterns 1–3 Combined)

Sample AI Goal

Client Goal:
Attend a full-time coding bootcamp to switch careers.

Does this fully capture the client?

Step 1: Critique & Equity Lens

Critique-the-Support (Pattern 3):

- □ What is missing?
- □ Any emotional nuance overlooked?
- □ Is the AI output treated as a flawed draft?

Apply the Equity Lens:

- □ Consider Bias (training data stereotypes?)
- □ Consider Access (digital divide / resources?)
- □ Consider Transparency (did client consent?)

Step 2: Redesign the Prompt

Contextual Constraints (Pattern 2):

Use this template:

"Client wants to [GOAL], but has [CONSTRAINT 1] and prefers [CONSTRAINT 2]. Generate a realistic, step-by-step plan."

Then annotate:
Explain-the-Decision (Pattern 1):
Why does this plan fit THIS client?

Applying the Equity Lens

As we adopt these tools, we must ask larger structural questions:

Bias

Who benefits and who is harmed?

Whose data trained this model? Does it stereotype disability? Does it reflect dominant cultural norms?

Access

Who has access to these tools?

Are we creating a digital divide between clients with AI-savvy advocates and those without? Who gets left behind?

Transparency

Does the client know AI was used?

Informed consent is mandatory. Clients have the right to know when AI played a role in their plan or documentation.

A Framework for Evaluation

Pattern	For Training	For Documentation	For Assessment
Explain-the-Decision	Define clear reasoning for every content generation choice you make.	Annotate why each AI-generated goal fits the client history and context.	Evaluate the clarity and rationale of AI-informed decisions.
Contextual Constraints	Adapt standard training examples to reflect specific accessibility needs.	Document all environmental and user-specific limitations used to frame prompts.	Test AI outputs against diverse user contexts and real-world constraints.
Critique-the-Support	Incorporate critical analysis of AI output into the training data pipeline.	Record feedback on system performance, gaps, and potential biases.	Review summaries for bias against non-standard communication styles.

Key Takeaways

1

AI is Support, Not Substitution.

It helps us process, but it cannot decide, care, or take responsibility. Those capacities remain irreducibly human.

2

Make Judgment Visible.

Use the three patterns to prove that human reasoning, yours, is steering the ship. Documentation IS the professional judgment.

3

Trust Your Expertise.

Your existing ethical frameworks are precisely the tools you need to navigate AI. You've been doing this work for years.

Image Sources

https://static.vecteezy.com/system/resources/previews/056/614/225/non_2x/smiling-man-in-a-wheelchair-holding-a-digital-tablet-on-a-black-background-adult-with-assistive-technology-png.png

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