

**Case Study: Individual with a Developmental Disability**

*Related issues: Person-centered decision-making, limited cognitive abilities, family issues, and advocacy.*

Dee is a 66-year-old African American woman who was born with a developmental disability and several physical disabilities, including limited use of her arms and legs. Dee can sometimes walk short distances, but she has used a wheelchair for many years. She has a difficult time controlling the chair alone and will often bump into objects around the home when attempting to move from room to room if she is not assisted. She is able to make her needs and wishes known, though she must be spoken to in clear, simple language. In the past few months, Dee has also been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

For most of her life, Dee lived at home with her mother, Elsa, and Dee’s younger brother, George. They lived in a rural area about a 2-hour drive and across a county line from a major U.S. city. This location makes public transportation to the hospital and Dee’s doctor difficult to access. Elsa drove Dee to and from appointments and acted as Dee’s primary caregiver until 2 years ago when they hired a Medicaid funded in-home caregiver, Frances, to provide hands-on care and drive Dee to appointments. Elsa passed away 6 months ago from heart disease and Frances continued working with Dee until two weeks ago. Frances has been terminated due to a Medicaid fraud investigation. Dee and George also have two younger siblings who live in the city and come to visit only once or twice per year for holidays.

Due to France’s recent and sudden termination, George has taken over as Dee’s primary caregiver. George is 65 years old and recently retired from a grocery store management position. He has always been involved in Dee’s life and enjoys being close to her, but he resents his new responsibility as a caregiver, especially since his two younger siblings have not offered any assistance or showed any interest in her care. George decided to approach the social worker from DSHS to consider plans for Dee’s long-term care. He does not wish to continue caring for Dee in the home alone, but Dee is adamant that she does not want to leave the home. George would like to work with all three of his siblings to make plans for Dee’s future.

How might you go about assisting Dee and George? What ethical issues must be considered? How would you approach this family from a person-centered perspective?