



What AMSI Means by “Standards” (Foundational Note 1)

A shared language for caregiving quality — not supervision or enforcement

In caregiving and support services, the word “**standard**” can feel intimidating. Many people associate it with inspection, compliance, or outside control. That concern is understandable — and it is **not** what AMSI standards are about.

At the **American Support Standards Institute (AMSI)**, a *standard* is a **shared, voluntary reference**. It is **not a regulation, not a mandatory service requirement, and not a certification or enforcement system**.

AMSI standards help people describe **quality, roles, and results** clearly and consistently in real support work — across different settings, job titles, programs, and states. They provide **common language** for discussing what good work looks like and what good results mean, **without prescribing how services must be delivered**.

Grounded in real work

AMSI standards are developed from the realities of day-to-day support in homes, communities, caregiving roles, and employment settings. They reflect how support is actually provided — through human relationships, judgment, adaptation, and responsiveness to changing needs.

Rather than starting from organizational charts, funding rules, or compliance checklists, AMSI standards start with the **work itself**: what supporters do, how decisions are made, how safety and dignity are protected, and how outcomes are experienced by the people receiving support.

Voluntary and non-regulatory

AMSI standards are **voluntary**. They do not replace laws, regulations, licensure requirements, or program rules. They do not create new obligations and do not require adoption by agencies, funders, or individuals.

They are intended to be **used, adapted, or referenced** as helpful tools — not imposed.

Why standards still matter

Across the United States, caregiving and support services operate in **fragmented environments**. States differ widely, and programs often use different terms for similar work. Without shared language, quality becomes harder to explain, compare, or improve.

AMSI standards exist to fill that gap — **not by controlling practice**, but by making **expectations, roles, and outcomes visible and understandable**. This approach is called **Inclusive Quality**.

Inclusive Quality recognizes that high-quality support depends on people, relationships, context, and systems — not just procedures. It emphasizes clarity, transparency, and shared understanding rather than inspection or punishment.

How AMSI standards are used

AMSI standards may be used by:

- caregivers and support workers
- individuals and families
- service providers and agencies
- educators and trainers
- policymakers and funders

They can support learning, reflection, communication, service design, and quality improvement. Use of AMSI standards does **not** imply compliance, certification, or approval by AMSI.

A shared reference, not a mandate

AMSI standards are designed to support conversation, understanding, and improvement across diverse service environments. They create a **common reference point** — not a hierarchy of control.

This Foundational Note applies to **all current and future AMSI Quality Service Standards** and defines what AMSI means by the term *standard*.