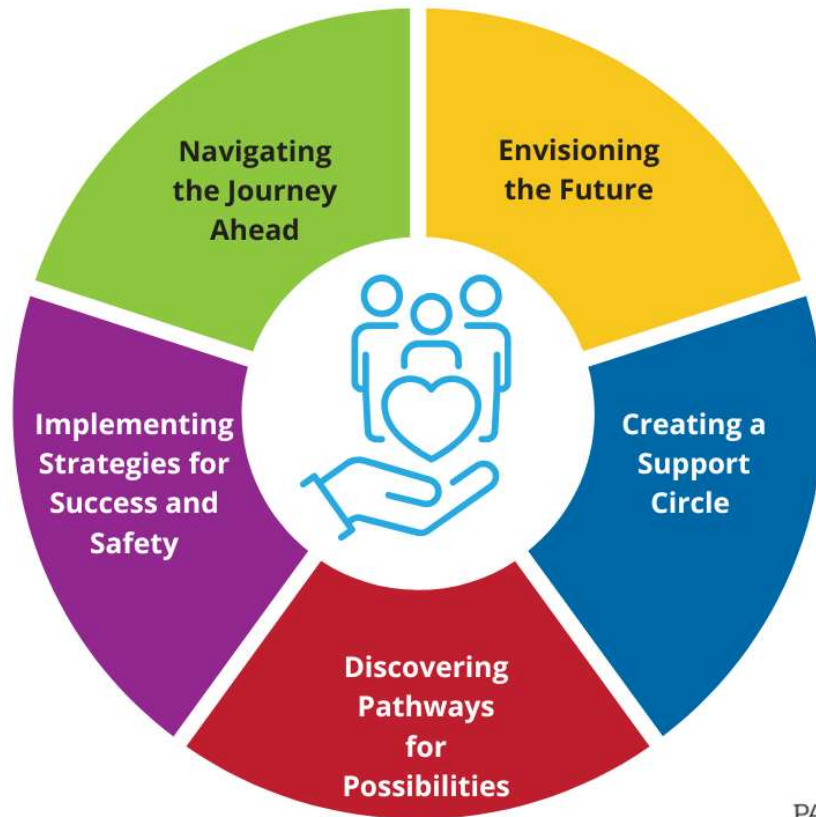


Pathways to Possibilities: Families LEADing the Way

A resource to support people with disabilities to explore
employment and life in the community



Developed by families, for families

Discovering Pathways for Possibilities



Using These Guides Together: A Note to Families and Family Members

“Discovering Pathways for Possibilities” is the third of five guides in the series “Pathways for Possibilities.” This guide helps you and your family take meaningful steps toward employment and self-sufficiency as you plan for the future. This series includes:

1. **Envisioning the Future** - Set high expectations and explore possibilities.
2. **Creating a Support Circle** - Build a team of people who can provide support.
3. **Discovering Pathways for Possibilities** - Find strengths and skills at any age.
4. **Implementing Strategies for Success and Safety** - Identify and nurture daily living and vocational skills from early years through adulthood.
5. **Navigating the Journey Ahead** - Understand services and programs that can provide support.

For Parents and Caregivers: You help your family member with a disability grow and learn new skills every day. This guide suggests strategies to support them while they explore options.

For Family Members with a Disability: Your dreams and ideas are important! You can dream big and ask for help when you need it.

At the end of this guide, you'll find a worksheet called "[Moving Forward](#)." This worksheet has questions for both the individual with a disability and their family members. We suggest you:

- **Take turns filling out your answers.**
- **Share what you wrote with each other.**
- **Talk about where your ideas are the same or different.**
- **Use your answers to make a plan together.**

Let's plan for a great future together!

Why This Matters

Potential isn't something you find once; it grows and evolves over time. This guide helps you recognize strengths at every stage of life.

Skills, talents, and interests don't stay the same. They expand with experiences. By uncovering new skills at each life stage, family members can build a stronger future full of possibilities.

Key Ideas to Remember: Steps to Uncover Strengths

1. **Notice What Clicks:** Pay attention to what excites or motivates your family member; even small things matter. Take notes along the way to remind yourself how their preferences change over time. This is also a good opportunity to identify barriers to skill development, such as sensory needs, physical or environmental challenges, and the need for accommodations.”.
2. **Encourage Exploration:** Trying new things can uncover hidden talents. Create a wish list of new activities during which you could gauge interests, capabilities, and potential growth opportunities. Document these and use them to work with your family member and their support circle, including service providers, to explore opportunities aligned with newly identified interests and talents.
3. **Celebrate Growth:** Recognize new abilities and achievements, no matter how big or small. Reinforce progress with praise, encouragement, and things that are meaningful to your family member. This information will enable you and your family member to identify activities that move them forward on their path to accomplish goals and build their confidence and sense of accomplishment.
4. **Adapt the Plan:** Dreams and interests may shift over time. That's part of the journey. Schedule ongoing checkpoints to see what activities and interests they prefer. Focus on those that enable them to achieve their goals. Everyone learns differently and at their own pace. Recognize and respect this by adjusting your expectations and supports as needed.

Try this at Home: Families Can Help

Person-Centered Planning Tips to Support Pathways for Possibilities

Person-centered planning supports the person in making choices about their own life. It focuses on what they like, what they are good at, and what they want for their future. Services and supports are planned *with* the person, so their voice leads the way. This helps people try new things, reach their goals, and live a life that feels meaningful to them.

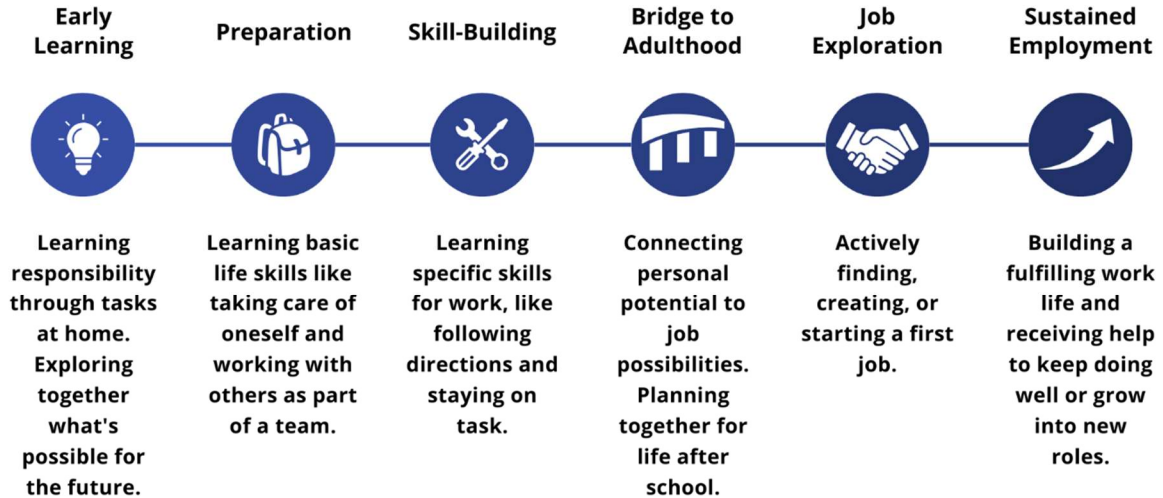
Here are some guiding principles to ensure your family member with a disability fully participates in the person-centered planning process:

- **Communication:** It's important to talk *with* the person, not just *about* them. They should be part of and/or lead the conversation. Planning happens *with* them, not *for* them. You can ensure their voice is heard and their choices are respected.
- **Support:** Develop supports based on the person's strengths, abilities, and goals, with their input and input from people who know them well and support them regularly. Needs and goals evolve over time, so support needs should be revisited regularly.
- **Collaboration:** Collaboration between your family member and their support circle is key to success. Together everyone can provide input and support for your family member in meeting their needs and accomplishing goals.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Whether it's employment, volunteering, or a community activity, families should focus on what aligns with their family member's interests and strengths, remembering that people learn as much from mistakes and experiences that are challenging as they do from successes. They will gain confidence from trying new things and solving problems that come their way.

Resources and Connections

Note: Some of the resources for this guide were also shared in other Pathways to Possibilities guides because they apply to more than one area of exploration.

Discovering Pathways for Possibilities



Early Learning

Your family member is learning responsibility through tasks at home, and families are learning about what's possible for their future.

- [Moving Into Adulthood Resource Center](#): Young people moving from adolescence into young adulthood are defined as transition age youth. New tasks often include moving away from family, becoming independent, developing one's identity, and learning to handle more complex relationships. For this age group, handling these tasks while adjusting to the start of college and/or moving into the working world can be challenging. This website provides resources designed for transition age youth.
- [Goal Setting Worksheet - ABLE National Resource Center](#) The ABLE National Resource Center has created a SMART Goal-Setting Worksheet and a five-step roadmap for setting financial goals, which support employment and independence.



Preparation

Your family member is learning basic life skills like taking care of themselves and working with others as part of a team.

- [10 Personal Hygiene Tips For People With Disabilities | The Lifesciences Magazine](#): Personal hygiene is an essential aspect of an individual’s health and well-being. However, people with disabilities may face various challenges in maintaining their personal hygiene, such as physical limitations, lack of access to assistive devices, or difficulties in finding suitable personal care products and services. Hence, it is crucial to provide them with the necessary support and guidance to help them maintain good hygiene practices. This article discusses ten personal hygiene tips for people with disabilities.
- [Guides for Empowerment: Resources and Support for Individuals with Disabilities - Community Inclusion Program](#): This comprehensive guide aims to outline various resources and supports available for individuals with disabilities, covering topics such as transition to employment, independent living, navigating the educational system, and self-advocacy.



Skill-Building

Your family member is learning specific skills they’ll need for a positive future, like following directions and staying on task.

- [Home - Digital Skills Library](#) This artificial intelligence (AI) website was developed by former teachers and Gen Zers to explore innovative ways to help learners build digital skills and explore new ways to shape their future.
- [Financial Resources for People with Disabilities](#): This site offers resources and assistance to help people with disabilities and chronic health conditions navigate financially through difficult times.
- [What is Self-Determination? – The Self-Determination Interchange](#): Self-determination will not only encourage individuals and families to “think outside the box” about the kinds of lives they could lead, but it also stimulates discussion on how the traditional system can become more person-centered and provide more choice and control for the people they serve.



Bridge to Adulthood

Your family member is discovering what’s possible for their future.

- [Self-Determination & Dignity of Risk - MHDD National Training Center](#) *(from the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities National Training Center)*: This fact sheet explains why it’s important for people with disabilities to make their own choices and take reasonable risks. It helps families and

supporters encourage independence while providing the right level of support.

- [**Getting Ready for Independent Living at the Age of Majority - Center for Parent Information and Resources**](#): This resource series helps families understand what happens when a young person with a disability reaches the age of majority, at which time they gain legal rights to make decisions for themselves. It offers practical tips and tools to support growing independence while balancing guidance and support at home.
- [**Exploring Your Transition Goals**](#): Created in Alaska, this resource includes activities to help your family member find a career that is interesting to them through exploring dreams and goals.
- [**Timeline: What happens to Special Education students after high school? - Exceptional Lives**](#): For students with disabilities or learning challenges, the transition from high school to adult life can feel unsettling, but there is support in their school and community. This resource provides suggestions for what you can do to help your middle-schooler or high schooler prepare for what's next, whether it's college, a job, or supported living.



Job Exploration

Your family member is actively searching for a job or has just started their first job.

- [**AskEARN | Home - Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability**](#): This website offers information and resources to help employers recruit, hire, retain, and advance people with disabilities in the workplace.
- [**JAN - Job Accommodation Network**](#): Job Accommodation Network is a source of free, expert, confidential guidance on workplace accommodations. This website provides people with disabilities and employers with resources and information to promote employment outcomes and job retention.
- [**Technology and People with Disabilities | The Arc**](#): The Arc's technology programs are designed to increase the effective adoption of technology by people with disabilities and support technology companies to create accessible and usable products for people with developmental and other disabilities.
- [**Resources for People with Disabilities and Their Families**](#): This site offers links to Centers for Independent Living, Ticket to Work, and state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs to support job exploration, planning, coaching, and retention.
- [**CareerOne Stop AJC Locator**](#) – Find your nearest American Job Center to access free employment services, training, and support, including disability-related resources and accommodations.



Sustained Employment

Your family member is building a fulfilling work life and receiving help to keep doing well on the job or grow into new roles.

- **[Competitive Integrated Employment \(CIE\) | U.S. Department of Labor:](#)** This site brings together resources from across the federal government to provide practical guidance, policy information, and evidence-based best practices that support steps to increase the participation of people with disabilities in CIE.
- **[Money Smart | FDIC.gov:](#)** This program can help people of all ages enhance their financial skills and create positive banking relationships.
- **[Supplemental Security Income: SSI Disability Benefits for Your Child | Exceptional Lives:](#)** This resource explains what parents need to know about SSI disability benefits for their child.
- **[ABLE National Resource Center:](#)** This website provides detailed information about tax-advantaged ABLE accounts and savings plan for individuals with disabilities.

Remember: Reach out, stay connected, and believe in your strengths.

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Moving Forward

Documentation/Strengths Journal

For Parents/Caregivers: What are your family members' favorite activities? What are their talents? What makes them feel accomplished?

For your family member with a disability: What are my best skills? What is a new skill that I have learned recently?

What skills would I like to work on?

Is there anything that I find too difficult to try?

What would you like to explore?

For Parents/Caregivers: What is something that you think your family member would like to try?

For your family member with a disability: Is there something that I would like to try? Are there people in my support circle that might be willing to explore these activities with me?

Learning

For Parents/Caregivers: What hobbies, classes, and volunteer work do you think your family member could try to discover new talents? What are activities in which they are already involved?

For your family member with a disability: What types of activities can I think of that could help me learn new skills and explore new experiences?

Tips:

- *Talk about how your answers are the same or different. Use what you learn to plan your next steps together.*
- *Recognize the strengths each support team member brings to the circle and remember that a support circle can change over time.*