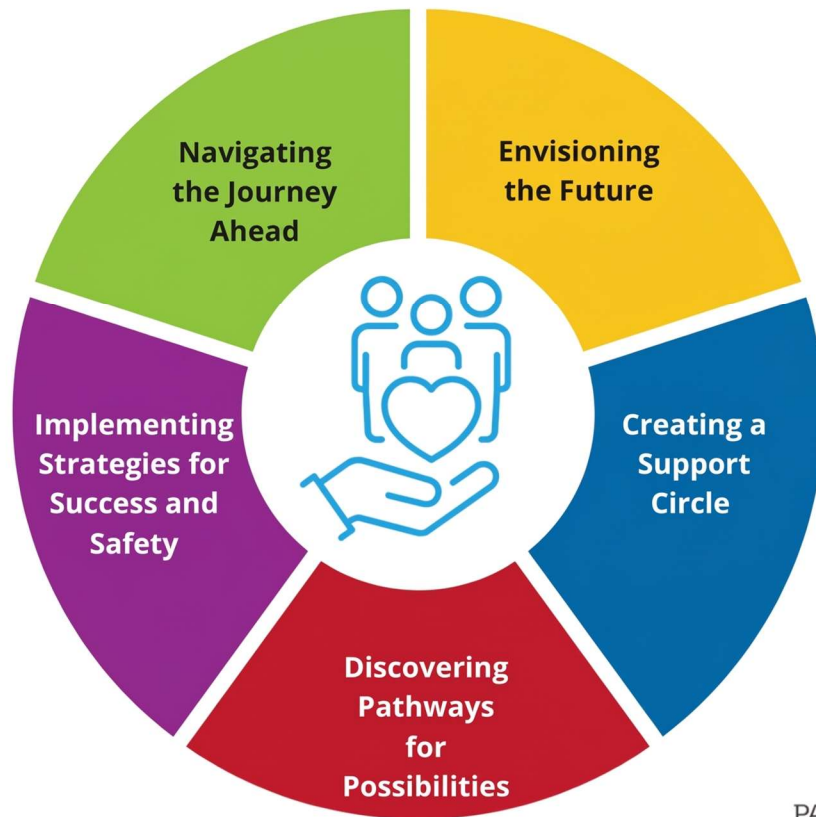


Pathways to Possibilities: Families Leading the Way

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



Developed by families, for families

Envisioning the Future



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

"Envisioning the Future" is the first of five guides in the series, "Pathways to Possibilities." This guide helps you and your family take meaningful steps toward employment and self-sufficiency as you plan for the future. The 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. **Navigate 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. 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 the 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

Dreaming big is important for everyone. Families of people with disabilities can work together to help young adults reach their goals for employment and independence and explore possibilities for their future. This resource is designed to help families believe in what is possible and take steps toward making those dreams a reality.

Our family member has unique talents that can lead to amazing possibilities. With the right support and encouragement, they can achieve success – including finding meaningful work, learning new skills, and participating in the life of their community.

Key Ideas to Remember: Steps to Support Your Family Member’s Dreams

1. **Understand their Passion:** Start where they are. What do they find exciting? What do they want to learn or try? What do they never tire of doing?
2. **Break Down Goals:** Turn big dreams into smaller, achievable steps. For example, if they want a particular job, think about skills they will need. Develop a plan for gaining those skills.
3. **Build a Support Team:** Gather teachers, family members, friends and others who believe in their potential.
4. **Keep Trying:** If something feels hard, it’s okay! Keep going and ask for help when needed.

Try this at Home: Families Can Help

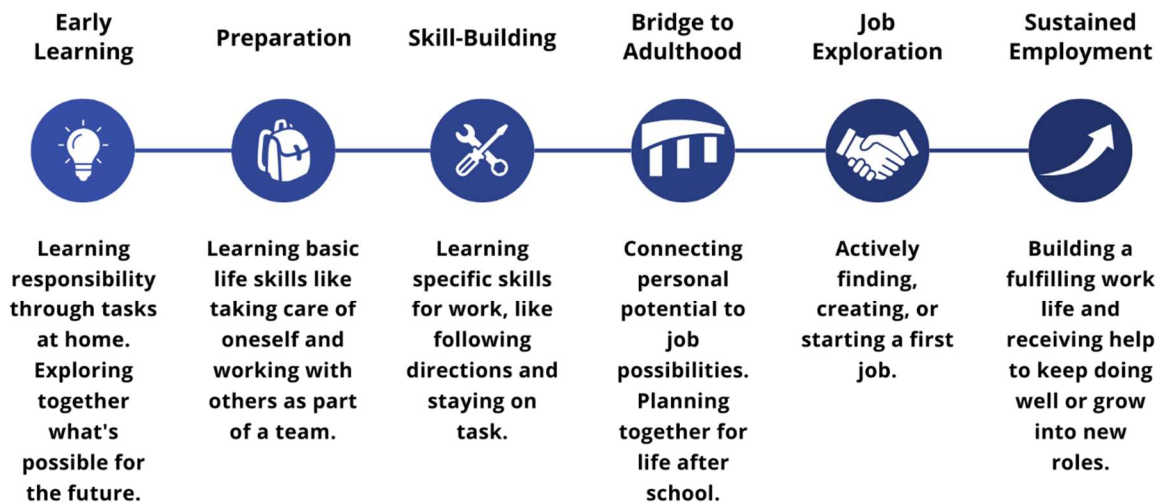
Families play a big role in helping their family member dream big and succeed. Here’s how you can support them:

- **Set High Expectations:** Believe in their potential and encourage them to explore their strengths. Give them age-appropriate responsibilities at home and in the community.
- **Explore Interests Together:** Talk about hobbies and skills to discover what makes them happy. Ask friends, family, and others for ideas too.
- **Plan for the Future:** Work together to set goals and map out steps to reach them.
- **Connect with Supports:** Reach out to community groups, schools, and local resources, like American Job Centers, for help along the way. Ask questions and use your connections.

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.

Envisioning the Future



Early Learning

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

- **Parent to Parent:** Connect with this supportive community with other families who understand or identify another support system.



Preparation

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

- **American Job Centers (AJCs) | U.S. Department of Labor:** AJCs are local career centers that help people explore jobs, learn new skills, complete interest inventories and career assessments, and provide services that

support work readiness during and after high school. (see *Bridge to Adulthood* for more services available from AJCs).



Skill-Building

Your family member is developing essential skills for long-term success and meaningful employment—such as critical thinking, effective communication, adaptability, and problem-solving. These skills will help them thrive in the workplace and navigate their future with confidence.

- **Schools and Libraries:** Many schools partner with local businesses or community colleges to offer career exploration events, job shadowing, or project-based learning that builds real-world skills. Libraries often provide access to free digital learning platforms where individuals can build computer skills, explore career paths, or practice resume writing.
- **Local Community Centers:** Community Centers often offer free workshops and fun activities to build skills, network and expand Support Circles.
- **Kibu:** Kibu offers bite-sized lessons to learn new life and job skills and build confidence.



Bridge to Adulthood

Your family member is connecting personal potential to employment and self-sufficiency after high school.

- **Explore Your Future:** Use this workbook to explore post-school goals.
- **Supported Decision-Making:** This guide for people with disabilities and their families enables people with disabilities to make their own choices with the assistance of a trusted support network or single supporter they choose.
- **American Job Centers (AJCs):** AJCs are local career centers that help people explore jobs, engage in job training to learn new skills, and meet employers.



Job Exploration

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

- Work with your school district, vocational rehabilitation agency, developmental disabilities agency, behavioral health agency, public workforce system, or others to explore their job exploration programs. Tap into your own network to create job exploration experiences so your family members can learn about different careers, jobs, and businesses.



Sustained Employment

Your family member is building a fulfilling work life and receiving support to maintain employment, gain new skills, and pursue advancement.

- Work with your local vocational rehabilitation agency, developmental disabilities agency, behavioral health agency and/or other workforce-related agencies to identify sources of ongoing support. These supports can include job coaching, benefits counseling, guidance through the Ticket to Work program, and workplace supports available to all employees so your family member can succeed in their job and career. (You will find more information about these programs in the other guides.)

Remember: *Dream big, work together, and believe in what's possible.*

Envisioning the Future



Moving Forward

Strengths & Interests:

For Parents/Caregivers: When is our family member at their best? What activities do they never tire of?

For your family member with a disability: One thing I'm good at is:

Concerns & Supports:

For Parents/Caregivers: What worries us about employment or other activities? What supports would help?

For your family member with a disability: What makes me nervous about being independent or having a job? What kind of help would I need?

Outside Perspective:

Ask someone who knows your family member well: What is something you admire about him/her? What strengths do you see? What jobs might be a good fit?

Next Steps:

For Parents/Caregivers: What small step can we take this week?

For your family member with a disability: One thing I'd like to try or learn about is:

Dreams for the Future:

For Parents/Caregivers: Our biggest dream for our young adult's future is:

For your family member with a disability: My biggest dream for my future is:

Tips:

- *Talk about how your answers are the same or different. Use what you learn to plan your next steps together.*
- *Write down your answers or create a photo collage to make this fun and visual. If you can picture it, you can plan for it!*