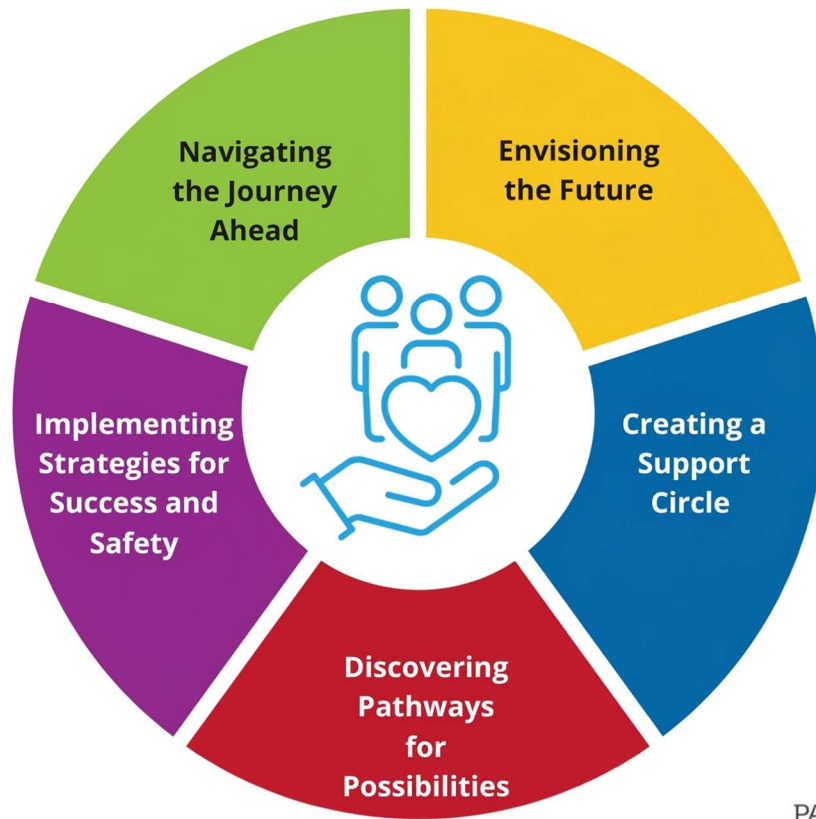


Pathways to Possibilities: Families Leading the Way

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



Developed by families, for families

Navigating the Journey Ahead



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

“Navigating the Journey Ahead” is the last 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. 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

There are multiple service systems that can provide support to your family member with a disability and your family. The good news is that you don't have to figure out services alone! This guide provides information and breaks down the steps to access education, employment, healthcare, and more.

Understanding how to navigate systems builds independence and empowers families and their family members with disabilities to get the services and supports they need across their lifespan.

Key Ideas to Remember: Steps to Navigate Systems

1. **Start Early:** Families can begin learning about systems and building skills when a child is young. Children, teens, and adults with disabilities can practice asking for help, speaking up for what they need, making choices, and exploring their interests. These early steps build confidence and support future independence.
2. **Learn About Options:** Explore programs, services, and supports together and talk about how each one may help your family member pursue their goals.
3. **Ask for Help:** Knowing how to ask questions or seek assistance is a strength. Reach out to local advocacy groups or your local Parent to Parent Alliance Member, who has gone through similar employment or service experiences.
4. **Plan for Milestones:** Think ahead about high school transition, life after high school, work goals, living arrangements, and benefits. Dream with your family member with a disability to help them set and reach goals that are important to them.

Try this at Home: Families Can Help

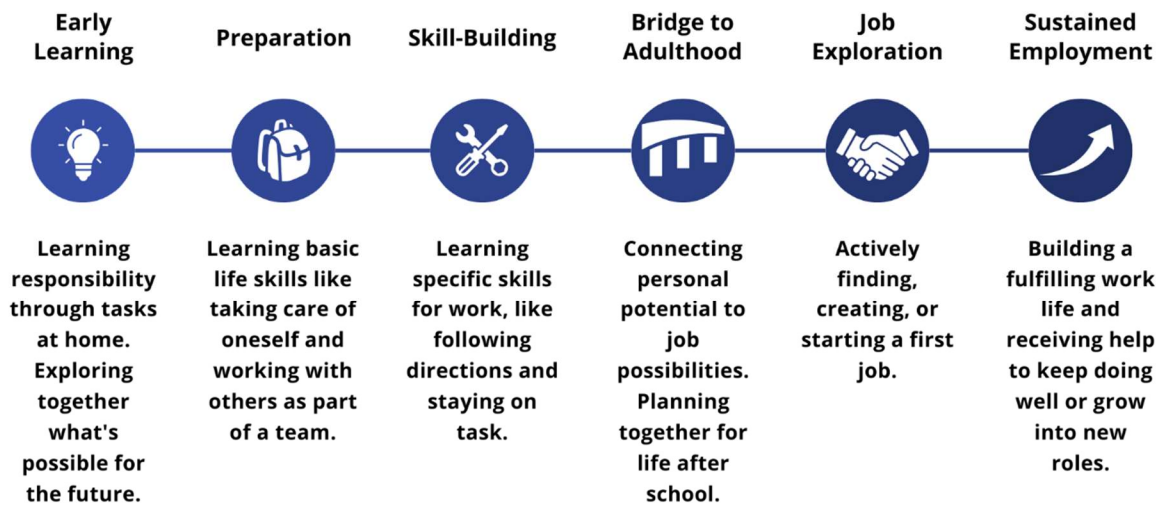
- Visit local employment service organizations together, like American Job Centers, Vocational Rehabilitation offices, or other places that help people set and achieve education, work, or independent living goals.
- Practice filling out forms, making appointments, and asking questions.
- Create a simple checklist of upcoming milestones or newly acquired skills.
- Create an "About Me" document to share with potential providers, counselors, or coaches to help them get to know your family member with a disability and build on their strengths and assets. Here's a [tutorial on how to create one in Canva](#).
- Visit your community bank or Center for Independent Living to see if they offer financial education.
- Seek out potential employers in your community to explore opportunities for job shadowing, training, or employment. Work with your school district, vocational rehabilitation agency, developmental disabilities agency, behavioral health

agency or other partners to learn about their programs, outreach, and collaboration efforts.

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.

Envisioning the Future





Early Learning

You are exploring what's possible for your family member's future. As they take responsibility for tasks at home, you are learning how systems like education, healthcare, and employment work and how to find the right support when your family member needs it.

- [**STAR PCP**](#): This short guide shares the STAR Person-Centered Planning process, which is a team-based method that helps families support their family member in identifying hopes, setting goals, and creating action plans for life after leaving school.
- [**Parent Center Hub**](#): This site connects families to free resources, tools, and local Parent Centers. It explains systems like education, health, and disability services so you can support your family member's growth and independence.
- [**Supported Decision-Making: Update On U.S. Trends and Best Practices | National Resource Center**](#): This resource explains how supported decision-making is being used across the U.S. and offers real-life examples of how families can help their family member make their own choices with the right support.



Preparation

Your family member is gaining essential life skills, like self-care and teamwork, while you're learning how to navigate programs and services that support their growing independence and help them plan for the road ahead.

- [**Disability Help**](#): This page highlights interview prep tools and strategies designed for individuals with disabilities. It includes accessible workshops, practice (mock) interviews, and coaching tips to help your family member build confidence, communicate strengths, and request accommodations effectively.
- [**American Job Centers \(AJCs\) | U.S. Department of Labor**](#): AJCs are free one-stop career centers that help people explore jobs, learn new skills, and connect with employers. AJCs can also help with work readiness during and after high school.
- [**Setting up the "Medical ID" Feature on Apple's Health App and on Android Phones**](#): This tool allows individuals to share important health information quickly during emergencies.



Skill-Building

Your family member is developing key skills, like following directions and staying focused, preparing them for school, work, and life. At the same time, they're learning how to connect with the systems and services that can support their progress.

- **[Zarron Center for Learning Enrichment](#)**: This website offers free curricula and tools focused on teaching self-determination, goal setting, and responsibility. These are especially helpful for families supporting their family member in developing independence and daily life skills.
- **[Autism Focused Intervention Resources & Modules \(AFIRM\)](#)**: Even though these resources are geared toward autism, these free evidence-based practice modules offer practical guidance on teaching skills like staying-on-task, communication, developing and following routines, and life skills that apply broadly.
- **[Future Planning: A Roadmap of Our Future Wishes](#)**: Future planning is an important yet difficult process that involves gathering information, looking at options, making decisions that may change, creating back-up plans, asking for help, and a lot of self-reflection. This Roadmap guides that process with the individual with a disability as the central person, reflecting his or her own hopes and dreams.



Bridge to Adulthood

Your family member is connecting their strengths and interests to real-life opportunities. They're learning how to navigate adult services, build supportive networks, and take steps toward a more independent and fulfilling future.

- **[What is Self-Determination? – The Self-Determination Interchange](#)**: This resource introduces self-determination as a process that starts with person-centered planning, helping your family member identify what matters most, dream big, and make their own choices. It also provides practical tips on finding facilitators, managing individual budgets, and using ongoing support to build a life led by your family member with a disability's own goals and strengths.
- **[Moving Into Adulthood Resource Center](#)**: This resource center is a family friendly hub offering clear, practical support for young adults and others who may be transitioning to new situations and/or services, including people with mental health needs. This site includes Frequently Asked Questions,

planning tools, facts sheets, videos, and links to community and clinical resources to ease the transition into college, work, and independent living. It offers practical tips on building independence, finding community providers, managing services and insurance, and planning ahead for life changes.

- [Got Transition® - Youth & Young Adults - Health Care Transition Quiz](#): Are you ready for health care transition? Take this quiz. Health and health care are essential in ensuring successful transitions, employment, and community living.



Job Exploration

Your family member is exploring job opportunities or beginning their first work experience. You are learning how to access employment services, understand workplace expectations, and support their journey toward meaningful, long-term employment.

- [Resume and Employment Guide for People With Disabilities: ResumeBuilder.com](#): This guide supports individuals with disabilities in building strong resumes and preparing for the job search. It covers key topics like workplace rights, disclosing a disability, and practical tips to help your family member confidently take the next step toward employment.
- [SSDI and SSI benefits for people with disabilities | USA Gov](#): This resource explains how SSDI and SSI benefits work for people with disabilities. It helps families understand how benefits may support their family member with a disability while they explore job options, and what to consider when transitioning into the workforce.
- [Benefits Counseling and the Path to Employment | Choose Work! - Ticket to Work - Social Security](#): If you receive Social Security disability benefits (SSDI/SSI) and are considering returning to work or are working for the first time, you might be wondering how that extra income will affect your benefits. This site provides information on benefits, employment, and work incentives. This site also can link you to a benefits counselor in your area.
- [Transportation | U.S. Department of Labor](#): This resource highlights efforts to improve transportation options for jobseekers with disabilities. It helps families understand how federal programs are working to make getting to and from work more accessible, which is an important part of exploring and maintaining employment.
- [Inclusive Volunteering | The Arc](#): Volunteering is an important part of community life. Every day, Americans spend time and energy making a difference in their communities. Volunteering is about making sure everyone

can make contributions to their communities, and it provides opportunities for career exploration and employment.



Sustained Employment

Your family member is building a meaningful work life. Your family is supporting their continued success by connecting with services, resources, and strategies that help them grow, stay employed, and thrive on the job.

- **[ABLE National Resource Center](#)**: This resource helps families and individuals with disabilities save money without losing access to critical benefits. ABLE accounts support long-term financial stability, which can be a key part of sustaining employment and planning for the future.
- **[SSI Quick Calculator](#)**: This Social Security tool helps track work hours and estimate how earnings may affect SSI benefits, giving your family member the confidence to keep working while managing their income and benefits responsibly. People can use this tool in addition to the [Choose Work](#) resources, which can link them to a benefits counselor.
- **[Explore NDI's Free Financial Wellness Tools!](#)**: Use National Disability Institute's free financial wellness tools to help individuals, families, financial institutions, and community partners improve the financial future and stability of people with disabilities.

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

Navigating the Journey Ahead



Moving Forward

What else do you need?

For Parents/Caregivers: Your family member is entering the world of employment. What might they need to feel prepared?

Are there specific questions or information you need from your family member's employer/provider? Please list.

For your family member with a disability: Am I feeling comfortable with my transition to employment? Into a new service? Into community living or exploration? What might I need to feel comfortable and prepared?

What major accomplishments are in your future?

For Parents/Caregivers: What is something that your family member would like to accomplish as it pertains to employment, and how would you measure that?

For your family member with a disability: What is something that I want to accomplish in my employment journey (regardless of where I am in my employment journey) and how would I celebrate it?

Tools

For Parents/Caregivers: Can you think of any additional tools that you and your family member could use to make navigating the journey a success?

For your family member with a disability: What am I most excited about and what questions do I still have?

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.*