­Navigating Your Way

Ages 21-40

Growing and achieving doesn’t end at age 21. Education, relationships, and career milestones continue throughout life. Whether living in the family home or independently, the ultimate goal is for individuals to be able to live the life they want.

In thinking about these early and middle adult years, help your family member set goals that continue to build on their strengths, interests, and abilities. Work with them to create a plan for each year that includes long-term goals and dreams, and the people/supports/services needed to reach them. ***My Life Plan*** is a free online planning tool that asks questions related to every area of life. It’s a great way for your family member to participate in voicing their desires and preferences, and set goals for living more independently. Visit mylifeplan.guide to get started.

Have conversations with siblings about their roles and responsibilities, now and in the future. For ideas on how to get started, download a free copy of the Adult Sibling Toolkit at informingfamilies.org/sib-toolkit.

Help your family member develop a social network with friends, neighbors, faith community, and others in your community who share common interests. They may enjoy connecting with peers through People First, Special Olympics, Community College and Parks & Recreation activities.

It goes without saying that every family is unique and everyone's circumstances are different, but talking to others may spark an idea that works well for you and your family. You can connect with other families through Parent to Parent, as well as local Arcs and parent coalitions. Visit arcwa.org/getsupport to find a parent group in your area.

For more ideas, the Family Community Connections Guidebook, a free publication of The Arc of Washington State, offers valuable tips and worksheets for identifying people, places and ideas to help broaden your family member’s social circle and community connections. Visit informingfamilies.org to download a free copy in English or Spanish.

Finding meaningful employment is a big part of these adult years. Having a developmental disability does not limit opportunities for your family member to work or pursue post-secondary education as part of their career path.

People with IDD are working in a variety of jobs and careers, going to college, and following their passions. Most individuals receive short-term employment services through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to assist with the initial job placement, followed by long-term supported employment services provided by the Developmental Disabilities Administration. To learn more about these and other services, such as benefits planning and Ticket to Work, visit: informingfamilies.org/employment.

The following questions can help you think about the kinds of supports needed to create a safe, healthy and full life in the community.

WHO CAN PROVIDE SUPPORT?

For individuals who meet eligibility criteria, the Developmental Disabilities Administration (dshs.wa.gov/dda) offers a variety of programs that provide in-home support, personal care, skills training, employment services, assistive technology, therapies, environmental modifications, peer mentoring, nurse delegation, and more.

Personal care services can be provided by parents or others who contract with DDA to provide Community First Choice services, an entitlement program for anyone who meets eligibility criteria. Almost all other services are offered through one of several DDA Home and Community Based waiver programs. A waiver is an agreement to receive services in your own community rather than a state institution, such as DDA’s Residential Habilitation Centers. Waiver programs are not an entitlement. This means that enrollment is dependent on available funding. To learn more, visit: dshs.wa.gov/dda. You can also sign up for DDA news updates by clicking the box on the right of the homepage.

Individuals who are not eligible for DDA may qualify for services through Home and Community Services, a division of the Aging and Long Term Support Administration. HCS provides a range of services to elders and adults with disabilities. A network of organizations, such as local Area Agencies on Aging and Independent Living Centers, provide information, referral and assistance to individuals and family members.

Find your local HCS office at dshs.wa.gov/altsa/resources or through Community Living Connections at waclc.org.

Paid services are just part of the picture, however. Support can come from relationships with family, friends, and others in the community; as well as assistive technology, local resources, and a person’s own strengths and abilities. The Star Form can help you identify sources of support to help reach any goal. To learn more, visit informingfamilies.org/star.

What kinds of living arrangements are available?

There are many types of living arrangements and community residential programs for adults with IDD. Individuals often live with one or more housemates as a way to share expenses and supports, while others remain in the family home and receive personal care services as a step toward more independent living. The setting for each individual will depend on the person’s assessed needs and—in some cases—availability of funding.

The cost of housing is typically considered separate from services. Many people apply for a rental subsidy, such as a Section 8 housing vouchers, from their local housing authority. Assistance programs, availability and wait times vary by location. Visit resources.hud.gov to find a HUD office near you.

For additional information about housing, such as affordable housing locators and home ownership programs, visit informingfamilies.org/housing.

What Kind of Financial Assistance is Available?

Cash benefit programs, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), can be used to pay for housing, food, utilities and other living expenses. SSI is the primary source of income for most adults with an intellectual/developmental disability. If a parent is deceased or retired, an adult child with a disability may qualify for Supplemental Security Disability Income (SSDI), which is a higher amount than SSI. Contact the Social Security Administration (SSA) to apply: ssa.gov.

Anyone eligible for SSI is also entitled to receive Apple Health. Call 1-855-923-4633 or visit wahealthplanfinder.org to apply.

If you haven’t already done so, start planning for your family member’s financial future. A special needs trust, such as the Developmental Disabilities Endowment Trust Fund, shelters and protects assets that would otherwise disqualify your child for government benefits, such as SSI and Medicaid. Visit ddetf.wa.gov to learn more.

ABLE savings accounts are also available in this state, allowing individuals with disabilities to save money without losing financial eligibility for government benefits such as SSI. Visit [washingtonstateable.com](http://washingtonstateable.com) to learn more.

Find links to all of these resources and more at informingfamilies.org, a program of the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council.