

Informing Families *Building Trust*

Winter 2015

A Partnership for Better Communication
on Developmental Disability Issues in Washington State



Announcing New Online App: *My Life Plan*

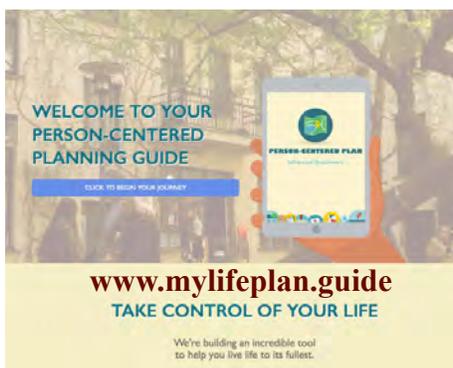
We're excited to announce the launch of a brand new app that helps individuals and families think about and create a plan for all the areas of a person's life.

My Life Plan—created by a partnership between The Arc of Washington and the DD Council—is intended to be a guide that puts a person with disabilities in the center of life decisions at every step of the way.

The questions have been designed with input from families and professionals to identify age-specific questions related to a person's strengths, interests.

All age groups are organized by the same seven categories across the lifespan:

- Home Living
- Community Living
- Lifelong Learning
- Social Activities



- Education/Employment/Retirement
- Health & Safety
- Protection & Advocacy

My Life Plan is a free tool that has been designed for your use only; you can use as much or as little of it as you want.

Now that new federal rules require the state to create a person-center process, *My Life Plan* can help you start to think about goals and support needs at home, school, work, and in the community

prior to meeting with your DDA case resource manager for an assessment and service planning.

Other ways the plan is helpful is in preparing for an IEP meeting, giving you something to share with team members in advance so that you and your child's vision is included in the draft IEP.

My Life Plan is also a great tool for sharing your son/daughter's goals and vision with those who play an important role in his/her life—family members, personal care staff and others who provide support.

To use this exciting new planning app, visit: mylifeplan.guide. We hope you try it out, and let us know what you think. We welcome your feedback.

Ed Holen
Executive Director
WA State DD Council



New Videos Highlight Changes Ahead for Key Services

We've been talking quite a lot about Changes Ahead for DD services.

That's because it's a pretty big deal to tens of thousands of people who receive personal care or Individual & Family Services. Nearly everyone who receives services from DDA will be affected.

To help answer some of the most pressing questions that individuals and families have about these changes, we've produced a two-part video series featuring interviews with Bea Rector of Home & Community Services and Sheila Collins, DDA program coordinator for the Individual &

Family Services program.

Visit the IFBT website at:

informingfamilies.org

to watch the videos and download one page fact sheets on these and other topics. (Also available in Spanish. See back page for more.)



Friendship: Expecting the Best, Preparing for the Challenges

by Susan Atkins

Helping our kids make (and keep) friends is a huge challenge. There never seems to be anyone who can help, or any easy answers; however, over the years, a few tips I picked up along the way helped me with all three of our girls, especially Alexa, who was born with Down syndrome.

Tip #1: Have High Expectations and Hope

When your child is different—diagnosed with a disability—it is more difficult to figure out how to help them make friends, especially if they don't have language and social skills until a later age.

Alexa was one of those kids. She always had a great smile, but did not have the language to interact much with other kids in those early years. I had to hope and expect that with help—from her family, the neighbors, and her school staff—she would make some friends.

Tip #2: Provide or Create Access to Other Kids/Inclusion

Someone told me “you have to have access” to make friends. That means being in class, at church, in the neighborhood—not home sick all the time, not in the house, not in a special ed class all day. Your child has to be around other kids who are talking and acting socially appropriate if you want her/him to learn those skills.

Alexa was a watcher and would imitate what the other kids did or said. I wanted her included as

“I wanted her to be part of our society, not on the outside.”

much as possible, which was often not easy for the schools. But it just felt right. I wanted her to be part of our society, not on the outside. I also wanted the other kids to get to know Alexa and find out she was “more alike than different.”

Once in school, Alexa had a Circle of Friend's group every year. Circle of Friends is a group that's facilitated by special education staff. Usually we would get 6-7 kids (without disabilities) from a class who would come.

Another way to provide or create access to other kids is to make sure that your child is included in the first and last periods of the day at least. Those are the important times for kids get to know one another, as they listen to announcements, hang up their coats and back packs. And make sure your child is part of a regular classroom, not just included at lunch or recess.

Look for non-specialized programs and groups for your child to join. Girl Scouts and Camp Fire and Boy Scouts can be great inclusive groups for your child.

Tip #3: Make Your House a Really Fun Place for Other Kids

Role play and talk about “fit in” behaviors at every age: not hugging the kids, just saying hi, not standing too close or talking about or doing “too personal of things.”

Age appropriate behaviors include: dressing like the other kids, watching the same movies, listening to the same music,



playing the same computer games, reading or listening on tape to the same books.

Give your child things to talk about and do with other kids that they can enjoy together.

Tip #4: Network and Get Support

Make sure that you get the support you need from other parents. Join Parent to Parent and other support groups. Many of these tips I learned from other parents before I tried them out on Alexa and her sisters.

Today, Alexa is all grown up, working and living on her own (with support). Things are not perfect, of course. She would like to find a “guy friend” to be best friends with. We are still working on that. As always, hoping, expecting, and working for the best.

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Tools for Inclusion: Travel Training

When it comes to high school transition planning, much of what goes into developing goals is grounded in values of inclusion and independence.



a good way to increase community inclusion without causing a lot of stress.

What inclusion looks like in each person’s life may differ, but one thing is for sure: it can’t happen if you don’t show up.

As any family who has a loved one with a disability knows, figuring out how to get from Point A to Point B can be a major undertaking.

Learning to use fixed route transit, especially when your child is in high school, can be

Most transit agencies throughout the state offer free individual instruction to anyone old enough to travel on his/her own.

Travel training (which may be called something different in your area) is for persons of any ability—including riders using paratransit services who would like to explore the increased flexibility and independence that using one or more fixed routes can provide.

Travel Training Basics

While travel training may vary from county to county, most transit agencies provide the following:

Assessment

An in-person meeting to identify the individual’s goals and needs for using transit, as well as any barriers that need to be addressed.

Training

Depending on the individuals specific needs and goals, training may include: learning how to ride specific routes, read and understand route maps, pay fares and purchase passes, get to and from the bus stop, recognize bus stops and landmarks, get on and off the bus safely, use a wheelchair lift, position a wheelchair on the bus, transfer to other buses, get information, and travel with confidence.

Trip Plan

A step-by-step plan to help the individual get where s/he needs to go.

Note: You can have as many lessons as you need, and return for new training when needed (for example, to learn a new route or transfer).

For more information about travel training in your area, visit: wsdot.wa.gov/choices/bus for a link to your local transit agency.



“A Team Effort”

If you have questions about safety and what-if scenarios that specific to your son or daughter, be sure to ask the travel trainer.

Don’t be shy about speaking up and participating. “We always try to include the parents,” says Erin Pratt, Travel Training Coordinator for Intercity Transit. “It’s a team effort.”



Help transit drivers understand how they can assist people with disabilities to make good use of the public transportation system.

Watch and share our video on transit at www.informingfamilies.org

IFBT en Español

As part of our ongoing ethnic outreach, we've begun an initiative to translate materials on important updates and information in Spanish. We've started with our Changes Ahead series of one page fact sheets and video podcasts. To find the information, visit informingfamilies.org, click on the Information Cafe/Changes to DDA Services/en Español.



Documentos correspondientes a los dos cambios más importantes

En el horizonte, se vienen grandes cambios que afectan casi a todos los individuos que reciben servicios de la Administración de Discapacidades de Desarrollo (DDA).

Haga clic aquí para bajar los documentos correspondientes a los dos cambios más importantes: Cuidado Personal y Servicios para el Individuo & la Familia: informingfamilies.org

(Information Cafe/Changes to DDA Services/en Español).



Cambios por Venir en Servicios para el Individuo & la Familia

Sheila Collins, Administradora del Programa Servicios para el Individuo & la Familia del DDA (por las siglas en inglés IFS), habla acerca de cambios en el programa y lo que significa para clientes actualmente registrados.



Cambios por Venir para el Cuidado Personal

Bea Rector de Servicios en el Hogar y en la Comunidad habla del nuevo programa que afectará miles de individuos que reciben cuidado personal. Este es llamado Primera Opción e la Comunidad.

(Information Cafe>Changes to DDA Services>en Español).

Mailing Label