



How Providers Can Use Parent Skills, Contacts & Knowledge

By Virginia De Land and Stephanie Luehr

It is difficult for families, providers and direct care staff to watch individuals languish while waiting to access services. It is also true that building a working relationship with parents and creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities to become more independent while insuring safety can be challenging. This is especially true if safety is the families' primary concern or if they are skeptical of some of the choices that the individual is making. The client in question is usually an adult, and staff often feel that parents are, perhaps, a bit too cautious. Remember it is a delicate balancing act for the family

as well. But a good working relationship creates far better supports, stretches limited services and creates a richer life with more choices for the individual. It is worth the effort.

We find clients in a variety of stages on the path to Adult Services: The Waiting List mode, the Partial Services mode, Waiting for More Services and the Full Services mode (often while being reevaluated and adjusted). Regardless of the stage in which your client or your family member is at, the process is ongoing and so is the relationship.

Tips for Providers Working with Families



Develop Communication

Give parents a chance to tell you about their child. They are very important people who know their son or daughter best. The information they have about their family member's talents and needs is crucial. They also know their child's "hot buttons" and can save everyone some painful experiences.

Build a Relationship of Mutual Respect

Listen to parents and talk in language they can understand. Allow them to ask pivotal questions, try to avoid being defen-

sive about suggestions they may provide. Give hope by furnishing them something to do and keep in touch.

Create an Emotional Bank Account

Emotional bank accounts are just like the ones you have with money in them but are made of contributions that demonstrate your commitment to the individual and his or her family. They are things like making the effort to understand the individual and his family's values, attending to the little things, keeping commitments, clarifying expectations,

showing personal integrity and apologizing sincerely for "withdrawals." Having an emotional bank with a family makes it much easier to ask a favor such as taking their family member to the doctor's appointment because of short staffing. Family will gladly disrupt their life, drive to Helena, stay over and testify on behalf of services, for pay increases for direct care staff and all the other issues that arise (all at their own expense) if you have "funds" in their bank. It works so much bet-

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New at the Library

The TRIC/PLUK Library keeps adding new materials. Contact the librarian at jsand@pluk.org, or call (800) 222-7585 or (406) 255-0540 for more information or to check out these items. Materials will be mailed out to anywhere in Montana at no charge.

Books

The Road Ahead: Transition to Adult Life for Persons with Disabilities

Keith Storey provides strategies and ideas for improving the lives of people with disabilities from assessment and instructional strategies to career development and supported living. (TRA162)

Aging with Developmental Disabilities: An Information Packet on Understanding Age-Related Changes and Supporting Successful Aging

A packet of three booklets gives information on the aging process and its implications, supporting individual choice and community membership, and engaging and supporting families in making future plans for their relative with a disability. (AGE85)

Look 'n' Cook Microwave: Easy-to-Make Illustrated Recipes

This useful volume includes 62 step-by-step illustrated recipes ranging from very basic to more complex. (NUT151)

Look 'n' Cook Microwave: Lesson Plans Toward Independence in Basic Cooking

This companion volume to the book listed above includes 34 lessons dealing with basic microwave cooking concepts and incorporating related kitchen skills

such as hygiene and food storage. (NUT152)

Alternative Assessment: Measuring Outcomes and Supports for Students with Disabilities

This book by Harold Kleinert discusses how to integrate flexible assessment activities into daily instruction in order to measure the progress of students with significant needs. (ASS239)

People Who Own Themselves: Emerging Trends in Rural Rehabilitation

Cary Griffin, *et al*, includes articles on self-employment and staff development as well as self-determination. (VOC503)

No Lone Wolves: Partnering for Self-Employment Success

Shelley Roger, *et al*, profiles 11 successful Montana business owners with disabilities. This is a good resource for people with disabilities who are contemplating business start-ups. (VOC502)

Filling Out Forms

The reader will find out about the different kinds of forms a person as an independent citizen must fill out. (IND815)

Practical English Skills Series: Everyday Writing

As the title suggests, this book deals with basic writing skills. (IND186)

Guide to Building Community Membership for Older Adults with Disabilities

Author Jane Harlan has put together a resource of tools and techniques that are effective in promoting community membership for older adults with disabilities. (INC177)

Writing Letters

This handy book discusses the basics of writing letters. (IND187)

QUALITY MATTERS

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Driver's Manual

It's here at last! The TRIC/PLUK library has received the 2002 revised edition of the adapted version on the *Montana Driver's Manual for Obtaining a License to Drive*.

"This manual is designed to assist new driver license applicants in better understanding and remembering information which is required to obtain and retain a Montana driver's license." It will be useful for helping students or others obtain a driver's license.

It is available for check-out from the library or a copy can be downloaded from the Office of Public Instruction at their Web site by doing a search for "adapted manual" under programs and services.

<http://www.opi.state.mt.us>

Adapting Vehicles

"Adapting Motor Vehicles for People with Disabilities" is an easy to read brochure available from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. It is based on the experience of specialists and professionals who work with individuals who require adaptive devices for their vehicles. It contains information on evaluating your needs, selecting the right vehicle, choosing a qualified dealer to modify your vehicle, being trained on the equipment and maintaining your vehicle. To obtain a copy of this brochure, go to the DOT Web site or call the DOT Auto Safety Hot Line at (888) 327-4236.

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>

Talking Tests

For those individuals who have difficulty taking tests such as the driver's test, there is a new product called TestTalker, which will be available in the market in 2003. It is a software program that displays a

scanned, talking version of tests or other forms. Its form-filling features will be beneficial to individuals taking driver's license tests. To receive information on TestTalker and to receive the soon-to-be-available demo CD, call (888) 223-3344 or E-mail Freedom Scientific's Learning Systems Group.

wynn@freedomscientific.com

Web Sites of Interest

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition has parent briefs that give families information on secondary education and transition.

<http://www.ncset.org>

Transition Planning by Reed Martin.

<http://www.reedmartin.com/transitionservices.htm>

The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth contains information and resources for youth with disabilities, their families, service providers and other front line workers.

<http://www.cnwd-youth.info>

Small Business and Self-Employment Service (SBSES) provides information, counseling, and referrals about self-employment and small business ownership opportunities for people with disabilities.

<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/SBSES>

Montana Law Help is a new web site that will provide four kinds of law-related information:

- ▶ Legal information to help Montanans help themselves with legal related issues;
- ▶ Information about legal service organizations that provide legal services to Montanans;
- ▶ Information about the courts in Montana, and
- ▶ Information about social service organizations and agencies that can help Montanans find shelter, food, health care, public benefits, and other necessary resources.

The subtopics listed under disability are assistive technology, education rights, employment, estate planning, medical benefits, mental health issues, other discrimination, right of the disabled, and social security/supplemental security income.

<http://www.montanalawhelp.org>

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ter if it is all in place before the legislature is in session and lobbying efforts are needed.

Provide Materials

Direct parents to helpful material and “to do” lists. Be a resource.



While Individual's on the Waiting List, Use Parent's as Resources

Remind them of the importance of a continuing routine. Suggest new skills to work on and helpful techniques for maintaining the skills they have already learned that might attract an employer.

Look on Parents as a Resource

Many job leads are parent-generated. Parents can also fill in taking individuals to appointments, etc.

Gain Insight

Gain insight from parents without compromising individual autonomy. Talk to the parent’s fears and first define problems in terms of needs, not solu-


tions. Then brainstorm possible solutions.

Develop Policies That Promote Better Partnerships

Develop an ongoing procedure for building relationships with key people in schools in your area. Remember the first contact with adult services for most families is through school personnel.

- Increase participation in the transition process as it begins in school at age 14.
- Schedule regular tours of your services for school personnel (especially teachers).
- Create opportunities for them to meet the right people (you).
- Provide families and school people with all the options available to potential clients and how to access them.

Start a collaborative process with schools to teach parents how to access services, information and how to make the choices that will be facing them.

We are facing very difficult times for those who need services, the good souls who provide them and for the families who depend on them. We must form ongoing partnerships that are in place throughout the year. And we need to keep our hope alive. 



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