

## SECTION 4: MEANINGFUL DAYS, WORK, AND MAXIMIZING PUBLIC BENEFITS

What we do during the day plays a big part in determining our quality of life. As adults, our work and day-time experiences are the ways we step into adult roles. We become contributors. We become workers, employees, volunteers, gardeners, musicians, sports fans, members, aunts, uncles, and more. We develop interests and unique personalities that help us connect with other people.

Your family member with a disability can also use his/her day time experiences to help identify and build up unique skills and interests and make a contribution. Good day time experiences can help your family meet other people and participate in community life – which increase the chances of building a personal network and attaining the good things in life. Work and day programs are one way to do this. Evenings and weekends also offer opportunities to be intentional about building toward a good life.

It's important to take time to examine how your family members spend his/her days now – so that we maximize opportunities – and help avoid the path that leads to our fears and worries. As caregivers, you can help your family member get on the path now, and make your intentions and hopes clear for the future. This section of the Letter of Intent, along with the conversation and information during Session Four of the Future is Now (FIN) series, can help outline hopes and plans for meaningful day experiences.

Understanding public benefits such as Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and Medicaid and Medicare is a critical piece of planning for the future. Understanding how work and retirement impact benefits can help us make good decisions. This section contains some information about these topics as well. The FIN session can help families get answers to their unique questions.

### **Taking Inventory of Day Experiences Now**

Use the space below to record the places where your family members spends his/her day time now. If your family member participates in day services, list the names of the programs/services. If your family member does not participate in day services, list the places he/she might go or the things she/he might do in a typical week.

Where My Family Members Spends Day-Time NOW



Look back on Section One at the “Hopes and Worries” worksheet that you completed. Take time to add to it if you’ve had new ideas about hopes or worries.

Use the worksheet on the next page to record a few ideas about how the current day-time situation helps your family member move along the path to the good things you hope for, as well as how it might put limits on that path.

## CURRENT DAY EXPERIENCES: HOW THESE HELP AND LIMIT



HOW THE PLACE(S) HELP MY FAMILY  
FAMILYMEMBER GET ON THE PATH TO "HOPES"



HOW THE PLACE (S) LIMIT MY  
MEMBER'S PATH TO "HOPES"

### Imagining the Future: Day Experiences that Lead to a Good Life



- ✓ "Say your dreams out loud": if the service or program isn't putting your family member on a path to a good life, talk to people who can help change this. Programs and services count on the ideas and feedback from family members to make changes that better meet people's needs.
- ✓ Help your family member "say their dreams out loud": help your family member express (with words or however he/she best communicates) their own hopes for their future. Help your family member get connected with self-advocacy efforts.
- ✓ If you have an SSA, ask that person to meet for coffee. Talk with them about your hopes for the future. Ask their ideas about how to improve your family member's day experiences so that they are on a better path to the good things in life.
- ✓ Be intentional about how you invest time and energy on weekends and evenings. Think about how you might invest this time with your family member in order to be on a solid path to the "hopes" you've outlined.

Use this space to list the next steps you will take:

## Maximizing Public Benefits

Family members often have questions about how benefits will be impacted if/when the family member gets a job. There are myths and misinformation that family members need to be aware of. The handouts provided during the session, as well as the information provided by the speaker(s) can answer these questions.

As a family member, you want to make sure that you are taking full advantage of the benefits to which you are entitled based on age and income. The handouts provided during the session, as well as the information provided by the speaker(s) can answer these questions as well.



- ✓ Hamilton County DD Services (DDS) employs staff who are benefits experts. They can assist the families of people they serve with answering questions related to public benefits. Call DDS and ask for the Benefits Specialists: 513-794-3300
  
- ✓ The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities has a web site with lots of information about work and benefits: [http://www.ohioemploymentfirst.org/view.php?nav\\_id=84e](http://www.ohioemploymentfirst.org/view.php?nav_id=84e)  
[Document](#)

Use this space to list the next steps you will take to get answers to your benefits questions: