


## It Takes a Village: Choosing and Managing Your Team

There is a saying that “It takes a village to raise a child”. Most would agree that the support of our village is invaluable. Using a person-centered planning approach has been compared to relying on your village.

### What does your village look like?

When your child was small, you likely had a whole village of supports—relatives, neighbors, school staff, coaches, church leaders, medical professionals, friends and so on. Families often feel that as their youth reaches the age of 14—the time when transition planning with the school IEP team begins, it can be

overwhelming. Discussions with your student and the IEP team now need to include plans and goals for life after high school. These plans, called a transition IEP, include goals that look at the career interests of your student, post high school employment, postsecondary education, independent living and more. There are also many new players to work with and agencies with formal processes that you must navigate. You may feel overwhelmed or that you don’t have the time to become an expert on all the options for these services



"Some parents do not believe that their child is limited or boxed in by a diagnosis. They dream as big for the child with a diagnosis as they do for any other child. The parents set up a circle of friends to help the child by finding ways to remove barriers to full participation and to find ways to include the child in whatever is going on. Sometimes these circles continue into adulthood and continue to provide a range of benefits to all people involved in them."

—TANYA D. WHITEHEAD

and supports. We hope that this information sheet guides you to successfully define and develop your student’s village.

## What is person-centered planning?

A person-centered planning process is a way to bring people together and to rebuild your village to support the individual by including representatives of formal (agencies) and informal (family, friends, etc.) systems of support. By working toward a common goal, families and professionals, and community members can achieve more positive outcomes while putting long-term community supports in place.

## Who should I invite to be in my student's village?

By the time a student is transition age (14 +), the village needs to become more broad, and families need to make sure that the invaluable informal supports a young adult can benefit from are developed.



Depending on the student's needs, some individuals you may want to consider are:

- Family, friends, and neighbors
- Personnel from community programs and organizations
- IEP team members
- High school counselor
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) transition counselor
- Division of Services for People with Disabilities (DSPD) caseworker
- Personnel from the Independent Living Center
- Health care provider (pediatrician)
- Mental health provider

Once the individual becomes an adult (age 18), even more team members may be needed, such as:



- Case managers
- Social workers
- Service providers
- Housing providers
- VR counselor
- Employer
- Health care provider
- Appointed guardians
- Financial planners
- Legal administrators or family attorneys
- Anyone who provides services

It is equally important to consider what natural supports may be available. Natural supports can be very important throughout a person's lifespan and typically do not involve paid agencies or supports, but are relationship based. These natural supports can be a key factor in community inclusion. Some examples are:

- Neighbor who helps a young person find movie theaters on nearby bus routes
- Relative who talks with colleagues about job opportunities for a young adult
- Friend or relative who help the adult find clubs to join
- Volunteer or supervisor in a community organization or committee where the young adult provides a volunteer service
- People from an individual's church congregation
- People at local businesses the individual may use
- Retired community member volunteer

It helps to keep in mind that no person, including parents, can be fully knowledgeable in all of life's domains. Parents need to have the mindset that it is not only OK but necessary to call on experts to give support along the journey. It really does take a team to build the best life for your student!

### *Tips for choosing and managing team members*

- Make a list of potential team members to use in the circle of supports diagram. This will help you identify people already associated with your student. You can access this diagram at the link here.
- Support your young adult/adult in deciding whom they would like to include in their village.
- A manageable team size is a minimum of 3 members up to about 9 members.
- There are important qualities that a team member should have in order to successfully support your young adult or adult with a disability. These team members might be people who:
  - Have an interest in the individual and are committed to serving
  - Allow the individual with the disability to guide their plan and be the center of the plan
  - Are willing to work on difficult goals, be creative and bring out the good in the person
  - Have the ability to make the process happen
  - May have possible connections in the community or with different agencies and services
- Most team members are volunteers and should be able to meet the young adult/adult on a regular basis.
- Remember that good communication is very important. Everyone should know their role and expectations as the support for your young adult/adult.
- Some of these team members will function as a safety net and connection to the community over the years. Membership may ebb and flow with services but a core committed group is essential.
- As your team gets into the seing of things, you may want to set up a rotation system where members serve for a couple of years and then have a break. Having terms of service can be helpful in keeping the energy going. Having people rotate on and off at different intervals can assure that you will always have some old and new team members so it isn't difficult for your young adult to transition to all new members at once.

- You may want to keep past team members and prospective team members in the loop by starting a private Facebook group, web page, blog or vlog.
- Be sure to celebrate successes. This celebration will help keep the energy and motivation going for the long haul.

## Resources

[Circle of Support chart](#) and [instructions](#)

Article describing [natural supports](#)