

What You Can Do - Taking a Next Step

Ideas for people living with a developmental disability and their families who want to take a next step forward living an everyday life as a valued citizen

Start with one idea, taking things one step at a time on your life journey . . .

Have you ever felt stuck? Have you wondered what to do next? Have you felt like the only thing to do is wait on a list for funding? Are you just beginning your life as an adult? If you have said yes to any of these questions, consider choosing an idea from the following pages. Then, just go for it. What you choose will depend on where you are in your life, what you have already tried, and what makes the most sense for you today, now.

The ideas and themes in this document are not meant to be a set of steps to be followed in order. Any one idea can be taken up when the time is right for you! Always a good beginning though is thinking about even one thing you would like to do. If you are a family member or friend, knowing what your son, daughter, sister, brother or friend is expressing for their life is important. There is nothing more powerful than listening deeply to what the person we care about is expressing.

We all need some type of support in our life no matter who we are. We are interdependent beings relying on friends and family throughout our lives. We all need relationships. Yes, Funding for support is helpful – but not as important as relationships and connections with people who care about us.

You may be someone who would need a great deal of paid support to live your life. You may be someone who needs a small amount of support on a regular basis, but are looking to spending more time away from your family. You may be thinking about inviting others in your life to come together to help with ideas and connection – a support network.

Most of us want the same thing:

- an everyday ordinary life with support needed to do that
- relationships with trusted others like families or friends, and
- to contribute and be a part of things through valued in roles that are important to us
- exploring passions that we love

Many people have gotten started on their dreams and goals without waiting for government funding or programs. They just got started on their own, thought about what they could do, took some risks and small steps forward. That approach has meant that when new funding approaches or innovative projects were announced in the province, some people were ready.

We hope that this document gets you thinking about some of the things that might assist you moving forward. Always a good place to begin: listening to what the person is telling us in their own way – with or without words, gestures and actions!

Listening and supporting a person's decisions on the journey

SELF-DETERMINATION, DIRECTING YOUR DECISIONS AND CHOICES, BEING SUPPORTED



To family & friends: Does the person you support have their own unique way of communicating without using words? Have you wondered in the back of your mind if there are other additional ways that could be tried to support their communication. If the person uses words, are you carefully listening and supporting what they want for their life Even with words, we can sometimes miss things.

Choose an idea, a next step:

Explore alternative communication options

The importance of being able to communicate one's decisions and choices cannot be underestimated. Sometimes the people we love communicate what they want and need without using words. People and families have used different ways to communicate with each other. If you have been thinking about additional alternative communication ideas, below are two websites to explore. And there are many other options, make this your beginning.



- Visit www.enablingtech.ca and click on communication and/or apps
- Visit <https://www.assistiveware.com/> and read some of their blogs and more about Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Develop a vision

Having a vision for life helps with setting goals and a path to follow to get there. Think about the life you want. Think about what you want to do for learning, working, leisure, and more. Think about the support you might want or need from family, friends, paid people and what good support would look like for you. Questions below can help with this. They were adapted from Integration Action for Inclusion. When looking at various areas of life, think about:

Education and learning

- What is most important TO you (or the person you support)? What is most important FOR you (or the person you support and love)?
- What does good, individualized support look like for the you (or the person you support)?
- What future is possible if you were to start planning NOW?
- What kinds of post-secondary or continuing education can happen once high school is over?

Working and volunteering

- What about employment?
- If traditional employment doesn't make sense to us, what about entrepreneurship, or a social enterprise, or meaningful volunteer work?

Where your loved one wants to live and what the living option would look like

- Where do you want to live?
- Who do they want to spend their time with?

Leisure and recreation

- Where can they make their contribution to the life of their communities?
- What leisure roles are they interested participating in?

Supports to have an everyday ordinary life

- What is the support they need to make all this happen?
- What combination of formal paid supports and informal natural supports can enable this future?



Research different technology options

What could make you and your family feel safer or make things easier for you?

Visit www.enablingtech.ca for technology that can assist with:

- Daily living
- Home automation
- Security
- Video calling
- And more . . .



Think about your current home and what changes can be made

Changes within: Would a renovation or change to some existing space make a difference for you? Sometimes having a bigger bedroom OR a bathroom that accommodates extra showering time works. Could another room be re-purposed for you to hang out in? Check out the book called *Making Homes that Work* for ideas. It is in the library at Windsor-Essex Family Network or Windsor-Essex Brokerage for Personal Supports.

Creating a second unit: Would you be able to renovate within your home to create private living space or second unit? Read about your options, steps to start and how to prepare for the future:

- The following link leads to a booklet called *Adding a Second Unit in an Existing House*: https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-adding-a-second-unit-in-an-existing-house-en_0.pdf
- Ontario government webpage called *Add a second unit in your home*: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/add-second-unit-your-house>

Visiting your municipal building department: Not all towns in Essex County have bylaws in place for second units. Such a bylaw would need to be in place if a person or family wants to apply for renovation through government programs for a second suite. Currently such a renovation program is on hold because of the pandemic.



Consider affordable home options like renting an apartment or townhouse

Sometimes people who have low income could use a portable housing benefit to be able to afford a private market rental, or they may apply for rent-gear-to-income housing.

If renting is a possible future option, it is recommended that your family member applies well in advance to the Central Housing Registry; wait lists are long. For young people, it could mean applying as soon as they turn 18 years old.

For either option in Windsor and Essex County, rent-gear-to-income housing or the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) people must first apply to the Central Housing Registry to determine eligibility.

This application is on the Central Housing Registry website and can be found under *How Do I Apply* at: <https://www.chrwec.com/>

For the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) only your family member has to be approved for eligibility. (Family income is not used for eligibility!) Call 519-254-6994 for information on the application to use for this purpose.

Inform government about what support options are missing, take action

Think about what support options are needed but not available to assist you to live an everyday ordinary life as an adult citizen in your neighbourhood and community? What is missing? You can make a difference by making your voices heard. People & families have shared the following examples where they have experienced barriers:



- **Independent Facilitation:** There are not enough independent facilitators in Windsor and Essex County to support everyone who wants this support. Independent facilitators assist you with your vision, goals and actions by getting to know you, building trust and listening deeply to what you want. Independent facilitators help you bring family and friends together for ideas, helps with developing a vision, and more. Some people and families in Windsor-Essex have written the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) requesting that this support be expanded and available to people with developmental disabilities who want this option in our community. There is a better chance for natural relationships to be in a person's life with independent facilitation than without it. In the end, it will be the relationships that people have in their life that keep them safe - especially after parents are no longer around.
- **Adequate Individualized/Direct Funding to develop supports for every aspect of life:** Some people and families have developed individualized residential/housing support proposals based on what the person has expressed for their full life. They have done this knowing that Passport funding is not enough. There is no clear path for getting adequate support funding for a full life therefore informing government what your family member wants for the future is important.
- **Affordable Housing Options:** This could be funding options for rent benefits/allowances, renovations, a down payment for a small home and/or the actual building of more housing stock that is affordable. The newest option the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) is a great option for renting. (Currently programs have waiting lists, are on hold and/or have allocated all funding.)
- **Supported Decision-Making:** A legal framework is needed in Ontario that would ensure people can be supported in their decision-making so that guardianship is not the default option. Many people and families have been asking that Ontario line up with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for years. In addition, the federal government has asked that provinces look at this issue with regard to the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) because of limitations it has put on people and families without a progressive legal framework. The government in Ontario has not yet put in place a mechanism to support people's decisions legally, instead of having to resort to guardianship. There are many examples of how people have been supported to make decisions in their life by families/networks in this province, but these are not legal avenues. There are legal mechanisms for supporting decisions in others areas of Canada.
- **Secondary Units/Suites:** If you are interested in the option of a secondary unit and your municipality does not have by-laws in place that would allow for the creation in your home, call your mayor. There are municipalities in Windsor and Essex County that do not have by-laws that would allow secondary units/suites to be officially created in homes. In order to be considered eligible for Ontario Renovates funding for a Second Residential Unit, (once funding comes available) by-laws would need to be in place. Preparing ahead is important. Funds for this type of renovation are on hold currently, however, making calls ahead, and looking at preparing for the future is important!