



Planning for Life After School:

Creating Employment & Training Opportunities in Your Community



The term 'community' refers to the people and places that surround you. As you may already know, some people with intellectual disabilities find themselves requiring assistance getting involved in new things, be it through parents, family members, or support workers. Whatever your role, for providers of support it can be challenging to connect with new people.

There is no right or wrong way to approach employers and other community members. Every situation is different. Here are some general tips that might help you in your quest to network within your community.

1. Always give a specific date for a meeting. If the person you are speaking with seems interested, make sure you establish a set time and date to begin, and stick to this agreement.
2. Always ensure whomever you meet with that you will not take up much time. 15 minutes should be enough.
3. In many ways this is a sales call. Don't be unprepared! Go in with a list of reasons how THEY will benefit. If you are only representing one person, give specific examples of the person's strengths as they relate to the community setting.
4. Be yourself.
5. Always leave with a good first impression. If the people you approach are not interested, be ready to move on and don't take it personally.
6. When possible, meeting in person works best.

7. You are not alone, but be ready for a lot of disappointment. It might take 20 or 30 (or more!) calls before you find someone who is supportive of your ideas. Remember that YOU are doing the people you connect with a favour by connecting with them, even if they don't see this right away.
8. For work placements, don't be afraid to negotiate for actual pay (minimum wage or higher). If the person is working for a business, there is no reason they shouldn't be paid for their efforts. While training placements are a great way for people to learn new skills, the unpaid training period should be as short as possible, and the employer should always know that the goal of the placement is to eventually hire the individual. After all, it is illegal to have unpaid workers in a private company.
9. Try to organize an open house. Have people in your community come to your home or office for lunch, and give them a chance to meet the person they could be working with.
10. Don't expect anything from the people you connect with. Go in ready to simply explain your situation, with no pressure, and hope that they are willing to do more than listen.
11. Be confident and direct, but not pushy. Sometimes people have a change of heart later on. This will be less likely to happen if you create a bad first impression.

When deciding on what places you want to approach, keep in mind that the people who already surround you are the best people to begin speaking to. Check with family members, co-workers, teachers, other families, or friends to see what might be available. Networking is a key aspect to creating opportunities within the community. Even if the people you know are unable to help you, perhaps they know somebody else who can assist.

For more information:

Check out these other tip sheets.

- [Looking at Needs and Overcoming Obstacles](#)
- [The First Job and Beyond](#)