

Planning for Life After School:

Looking at Needs and Overcoming Obstacles



The most exciting part of creating a plan is the opportunity to dream, develop goals and brainstorm all of the potential possibilities that motivate a person. On the flip side, and not necessarily as exciting, is having to look at the needs of a person's day-to-day life and the ways in which needs can be accommodated and obstacles overcome. Although, this does not take a lot of time during a plan, it is just as important so that supports can be identified and planned for when looking for opportunities.

Each person's needs are unique. Here are some examples to give you an idea of things to think about.

Daily Routines:

Thinking about a person's existing daily routine

is very important when looking and planning for potential opportunities for the future.

A number of questions to ask when thinking about daily routines are:

- Does the person rely on a structured daily routine?
- How does the person adjust to change in their routine? How much preparation do they need to accept change in their day-to-day life?
- What time of day works best for the person?
- Are there medical considerations that affect the person's routine? For example, if the person is diabetic they may need to eat at certain times of the day or more frequently throughout the day.

By looking at these factors, you improve the chances that the new opportunity will compliment the existing routine.

Length of Time:

When thinking about new opportunities, it is important to consider the person's physical stamina and ability to focus. Maybe the person is only physically able to handle a 2-4 hour shift at a work placement as opposed to an 8 hour day. The goal is to make the chosen activities as enjoyable and successful as possible instead of just trying to fill up an entire day of activity.

Transportation:

Looking at how the person will be traveling from point A to B will also play a role in finding the most appropriate activity and location and should be considered before confirming the new opportunity. It may be a great opportunity, but if you don't know how the person will get to and from the activity then it is not necessarily the right option.

Here are some questions to think about:

- Is there someone to take the person to and from the activity?
- Is the person able to take public transportation?
- Will training on public transportation be needed?
- Is the activity accessible from public transportation?
- Are services such as Wheeltrans needed?
- Will the person require a support staff to take them to and from the activity? Is this affordable?

Safety and Security:

Think about the kind of activity that the person is getting involved in. If it is a work placement at a large retail store, is lifting heavy boxes part of the training? If so, is the person capable of carrying heavy objects? Will there be any

hazardous materials that the person may come into contact with? If so, is there training provided by the work or volunteer placement?

Another area of safety and security is related to our last topic; transportation. If the person travels in the community by themselves, do they know how to use a public telephone if something goes wrong? Does the person recognize who they can direct questions to if they are in trouble, such as police officers or public transit employees?

As you can see there are many areas of concern that need to be addressed prior to committing to a new activity. Entering the community, can be an overwhelming experience at first but by preparing for the transition and covering all bases the person will soon realize that it can be a very safe and meaningful experience.

Coaching & Support:

Knowing what kind of supports the person needs before beginning the new activity is also an area that needs to be considered carefully. Often times, when going into the community and entering a work or volunteer placement initial support and coaching are needed. This is to ensure that the person is receiving one-on-one training in the area that they are working or volunteering in. Once training has begun, the support staff can also determine how long support will be needed. Some people only require initial support which is then decreased, while others will require support throughout their placement. Support may also be needed for recreational activities, either to get to and from the activity or during the activity. The need for support will be clear when an activity is decided on. Once you now what kind of support is needed you can begin to look at the kinds of resources available for this opportunity.

Amount of Training Needed:

It is always a good idea to think about what kind of training is involved in an activity, especially if it is work or volunteer related. Some volunteer positions require volunteer orientations and police checks before beginning to work. Police checks can sometimes take up to 6 weeks to be completed which means it will delay the start date for the person.

Accessibility:

Going to see the environment in which the activity is being held and asking the right questions is also very important when looking for new opportunities. A person's place of work should be accessible in all the ways they need it to be.

Things to look for are:

- Can the person access the building from the outside?
- Are there ramps and elevators?
- Are there accessible washrooms the person can use?

When the above questions are looked at, you will have made sure that the person's needs have been considered and met.

How to Problem Solve:

There is no right or wrong way to problem solve in order to overcome potential obstacles. Perhaps, you may choose to have a follow up meeting (with some or all who were involved in the planning meeting) once decisions on potential activities have been made. If this is done, create a list of possible obstacles that may arise and go around the group to see who can help ensure that the obstacles are overcome. This may just mean making a few phone calls, visiting a site or seeing if anyone within the circle can support the person at their activity. As stated earlier, you may just realize that one of the activities is just not suitable for the person. This simply means that it is time to look at an alternative. Trial and error is the best way to see what works and what does not.

Life can have many obstacles when planning for the future but with careful consideration and the assistance of a strong support network there are always ways to overcome them.

For more information:

Check out these other tip sheets

- [How to Support Someone at Work](#)

Links:

www.prevent-it.ca