



## Ohio SIBS

Special Initiatives by Brothers & Sisters

## Tips for Talking About The Future with Your Family

Every family situation is unique, but consider the following topics to engage your family in a conversation:

- Direct Support Professionals
- Housing
- Social service supports
- Health/Medical issues
- Finances
- Employment/Day Program
- Community participation
- Recreational activities

### **Begin the conversation as soon as possible.**

The unexpected can happen at any moment. You and your family can reduce the stress, chaos, and uncertainty of a crisis situation if you know the intent and plan for your sibling's future.

### **Involve your sibling.**

To the greatest extent possible, gather information from your sibling. Your sibling's point of view and personal outcomes will provide insight about his/her hopes, desires, and needs for the future.

### **Respect other family members' past experience.**

Seek to understand perspectives, concern, and hope for your sibling's future planning, support, and advocacy. Ask where the important documents are located and for copies in advance of the conversation.

### **Know the professionals in your sibling's life.**

Doctors, therapists, service support staff, and others are important sources of information for this conversation. Maintain detailed lists of the role these professionals have in your sibling's life as well as their current contact information.

### **Be prepared.**

Do your research – make a list of what you want to know, identify your concerns, and provide possible solutions and outcomes that are in the best interest of your sibling and other family members. Ask your sibling if you can be part of his/her planning team – this will support you in learning, preparation, and you will have the opportunity to advocate with your sibling, share important information, and create possible solutions.

### **Seek out the details.**

Having specific knowledge about day-to-day aspects of your sibling's life is critical. When are medications refilled? Is there a favorite food? What recreation activities does your sibling enjoy? Do not assume everyone involved in your family situation has this information. Keep records of this information and update as needed.

### **Consider your sibling's advocacy needs.**

How independent is your sibling? Is he/she able to speak for themselves and express their needs? Who else should be involved to help advocate with your sibling in the decision-making process? Who can advocate with your sibling to ensure that he/she has positive control over the life they desire?

### **Keep the conversations going.**

This is not a one-time talk. Change occurs frequently, and life-changing events can impact previously made decisions. Have frequent check-ins with your family, especially around transition periods.