

Us and Them: Understanding the Family Experience and Making them Your Most Valuable Partner

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2019 Wisconsin Employment First Conference



MEANINGFUL
WORK
+
COMMUNITY
INCLUSION

No Heroes or Villains



- Families want the best for their child
- Professionals want the best for job seekers

Effective family engagement is rooted in understanding, relationships, communication, and focus.

Having a Child with a Significant Disability

Initial Emotions

- Denial
- Anger
- Guilt
- Fear/Uncertainty
- Strength

Having a Child with a Significant Disability

Real World Impacts

- Marriage
- Employment
- Finding healthcare
- Finding Supports
- Social Relationships

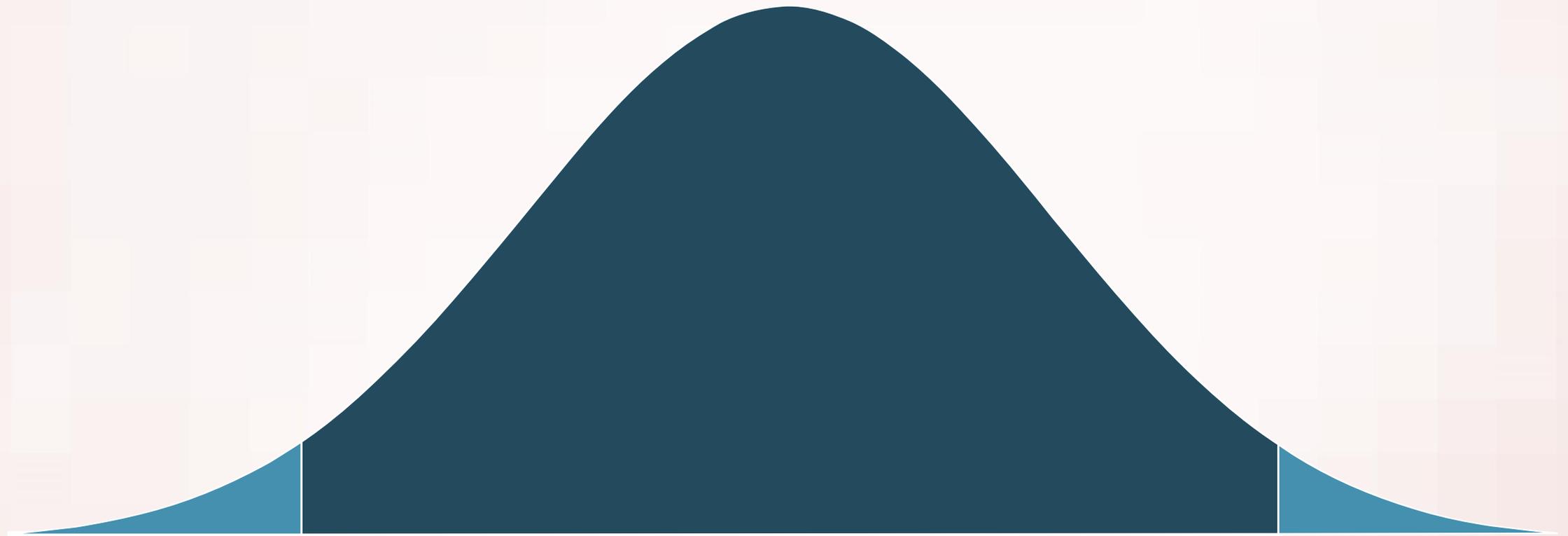
Large Group Question

What do you currently do that helps families be a partner in the employment process?

Reasons for Resistance to Employment

- Fear of disruption
- Mistrust of system
- Wariness of professionals
- Concerns over vulnerability and safety
- Lack of belief in ability to work
- Myths about benefits
- What others have you heard?





Are not ready yet.
Our goal is to be patient and get families to consider possibility

Tell me more.
Families want to know how this will impact things

Already sold.
Families might push you harder than you push them

Source: Don Lavin, *Strengths at Work*

Large Group Question

What do you think families of youth, young adults and adults with significant disabilities wish for their sons and daughters?

Common Pitfalls

- The myth of “letting go”
- Lack of communication
- Cross purposes
- Now Now Now!!
- Not caring or being invested
- Not understanding the impact of disruption



Strategy 1: Root Yourself in High Expectations

A two-way street

1. Helping families see that employment is possible for people with all types of disabilities
2. Helping professionals believe the same thing and convey positive messages

It's not always easy.



Words that Harm, Words that Heal

Torn

Ripped

Damaged

Punctured

Herniated

Deteriorated

Sensitive

Tired

Deconditioned

Sore

Fatigued

Stiff

Strategy 2: Relationships

Building honest, two-way relationships is the most crucial element of effective family engagement

- Parents want to know that you know their son/daughter
- No relationship = Defaulting to “I have to do this myself”
- Takes time and effort



Strategy 3: Seeing Youth in a Different Way

Can you help move parents from low expectations to seeing possibilities?

- Positive Personal Profile
- Positive Picture (WI)
- Be patient - it's a big leap for some
- Generational or cultural considerations

Vision Statement

Great tool to help youth tell their story.

Can be used as a resume.

Great classroom activity.

Parents love it.



Andy Meredith, High School Senior

Strengths

*Social
Determined
Shows initiative
Hard working
Independent
Musical
Creative*

Areas I need help:

*Reading
Math
Counting money
Managing time
Keeping track of a
schedule*

Vision Statement: I get my own studio. My job is taking pictures. I get a small house. I get married to Maggie. I also work at Publix. It is really fun. I keep my money in the bank. I want to go to college and live in a new house by myself. My friends will come to my new house.

Accomplishments:

- Worked at Publix since April 2017
- Earned Eagle Scout Award 2018
- Worked on Yearbook staff and lettered in Woodstock High School Mountain Bike Team
- Photography exhibited at Anna's Angels benefit auction and Russian Medical Colleges

What works for me:

*Peer modeling and support
Age-appropriate awards: breaks, money, music,
Specific explanations*

What doesn't work for me:

*Babysitting
Removing me from friends*

Strategy 4: Setting Focus and Seeing Impact

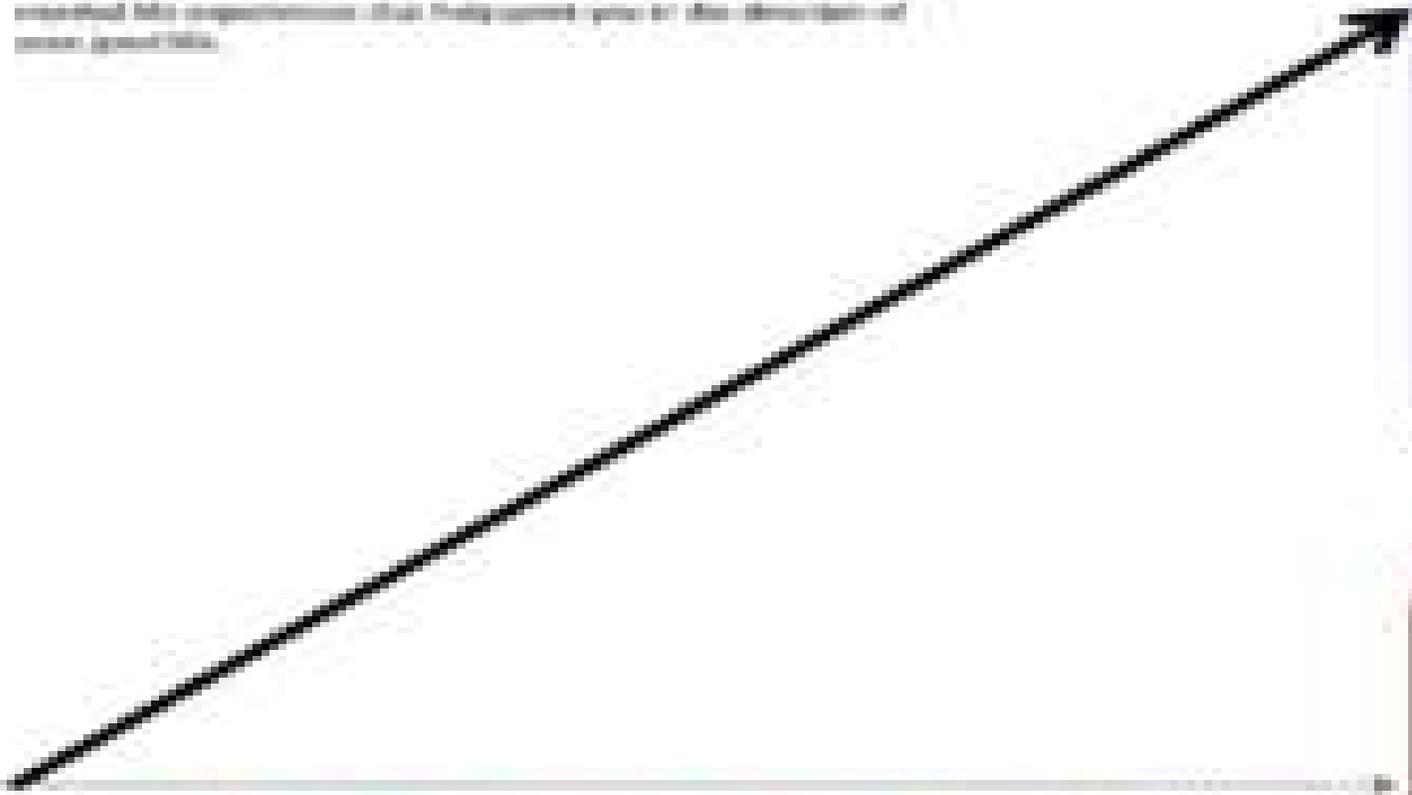
Families don't always see the long-term impact of certain decisions.

- Families often presented with only 1 pathway
- Families become over-reliant on “services”
- Help them start with a vision, then consider services and supports from there

CHARTING the LifeCourse

Life Trajectory Worksheet: Family

Everyone wants a good life. The activities on the right will help you think about what a good life means for you or your family members, and identifying what you hope you don't want. You can use the space around the arrow to think about current or expected life experiences that help send you in the direction of your goals.



What are your goals for life?



What are you NOT doing?

Strategy 5: Create a Family Support Plan

What needs to happen to make CIE work for families?

- Acknowledge fears of potential impact
- Negotiate risk taking
- Explore braiding of services to fill holes in the day
- Have solid plan: “What will happen if something goes wrong?”

Strategy 6: Benefits Counseling

Fear of losing benefits, or a family reliance on the benefit check continues to be a big barrier.

- Working improves quality of life
- Working tends to lead to more \$\$\$
- Acknowledge that SSI is hard to navigate
- Partner with or become a CWIC

Strategy 7 : Staff Training

Your staff needs training on how to effectively engage families.

- Does not always come naturally
- Build into staff performance expectations
- Engage partners to help



Lessons For the Future

(Butterworth et al – T-TAP Mentor Guide)

Consider these strategies that employment providers and agencies can implement.

Lesson 1

Establish ***clear and uncompromising*** goals

Lesson 2

Communicate expectations to everyone, and communicate often.

- Staff
- Board
- Administration
- Partners
- Community



You are invited to WorkLink's

Whine-n-Cheese Night

We need your input to help us to make our program services better.
Please come- bring your thinking caps. Refreshments will be provided.

Monday, March 9th, 2016, 6:00-7:30
WorkLink office, 785 Market Street, Suite 670
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415)979-9520
Call Sara for more information.

Lesson 3

Reallocate and restructure resources

“You can look at an agency’s budget and know what they really prioritize.”

Lesson 4

Just do it! Find jobs one person at time,
one business at a time.

- One of the best ways to build better partnerships with families is to be good at what you do.

Lesson 5

Develop partnerships – internal and external.

- Assign parent lead
- Partner with advocacy orgs for training
- National technical assistance

Final Large Group Question

Now that you have heard the information, what is one or two action steps you or your organization can take immediately to help improve partnerships with families?

www.transcen.org

Offering web-based and in-person training for state agencies, school districts, provider organizations, and others, designed from working directly with individuals with disabilities

Thank you!!!

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www.transcen.org

www.yestoemployment.org