

Family, Friends and Others

We know that happiness and well-being are closely connected to the relationships in our lives. We seek out our family and friends when we need someone to talk to, someone to share time with and when we are looking for support and encouragement. These relationships form the basis of our **support networks**.



Remember, everyone has the potential to form meaningful relationships. It is never too early, or too late, to build and nurture friendships with others.

Why is this important?

Often the reason people with disabilities are able to live and participate in a rich way in their neighbourhood and community, is because of the connections and friendships they have with other people. Sometimes this group of friends and family is referred to as a **Support Network** or **Circle**.

Support Networks or Circles can:

- help people to think of new ideas and opportunities ;
- share information and help with decision making;
- join in celebration and having fun;
- be there during difficult times;
- ensure the person is safe and secure.

Do You Already Have a Network?

Some people already have a support network of trusted friends and family. Other people may need help to start, to expand their network or to strengthen the relationships they already have. It may be helpful to find someone who can assist with this process. You may want to consider working with an **Independent Facilitator**. However, there may be other people in your life to consider for this role.

The **Facilitator** will....

- listen to and treat the person, along with his/her friends and family, with respect;
- support the person's right to make decisions ;
- provide helpful information about community resources and opportunities;
- ask questions to create conversations with the person and his/her network of support.

About person-directed planning...

A **person-directed plan** is generated, directed and owned by the person who is at the centre of the plan. *It is built on the strengths, gifts, dreams and aspirations of the person.*

A **person-directed plan** identifies what the person wants, what he/she needs and how he/she would like things to occur.



From a Support Network to a Microboard™

Support Networks or Circles can be an important source of support and friendship throughout a person's life. Some people, after having a Support Network for a period of time, may choose to create a Microboard™.

A Microboard may be developed to support decision making and to assist with the exploration of supports and services. In addition, the legal structure it provides may help to sustain a group of family and friends around the person. This helps to provide long-term security for the future.



A Microboard is a small not-for-profit group of family and friends who join with a person who has a disability. It is a non-government organization made up of at least five people.

A Microboard can:

- assist with hiring and scheduling direct support providers;
- advocate with the person, or at his/ her direction;
- receive individualized funding and use the funding as directed.

The Principles of a Microboard

1. The people who are members of the Microboard are not paid. They are there because they want to be.
2. Microboard members trust that the person for whom the board is created, knows what he/she wants and will help him/her to think through choices and decisions.
3. Everyone will consider the person's wishes, well-being, interests, and strengths.
4. The members of the Microboard will spend time with the person. This may include attending family and/ or community events, or doing other enjoyable activities together. This will help to build and nurture relationships between the person and Microboard members.
5. If the person wants to be active in and contribute to his/her neighbourhood and community, the Microboard will help to ensure this happens. Members will act as a "think tank", offering ideas and exploring connections and opportunities with the person.
6. All of the people on the Microboard will work together, respect one another, and be there for the person with a disability.



Quotes from families and people with a **Support Network** or **Microboard**:

"Things happen because of the connections people have."

"Problems that seemed big were solved."

"You need to create a space in your life for a circle of support. They aren't the answer but a circle can be a terrific safeguard and source of inspiration."

"An important aspect to remember is that the whole is greater than its parts. The circle becomes its own community of people working together."



For more information please call:

Family Respite Services:
519.972.9688

**Windsor Essex Brokerage
for Personal Supports:**
519.966.8094

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Thinking about Friendships, Circles of Support and More

*It is never too early or too late to
start connecting with others.*