

Better Life Chances

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People with intellectual and developmental disabilities will have better life chances when these five things are true for them and their families and friends.

- **They have experienced a variety of community roles** that provide and good opportunities for contribution, developing competence and friendship, and creating knowledge of their interests and capacities.
- **They have confidence, based on experience, that they can take action to make good things happen**, solve problems, deal with breakdowns and difficulties, and get help that respects their dignity and competence when they need it.
- **They have a hopeful and positive vision for themselves** as contributing citizens of their communities, including as workers in ordinary community jobs.
- **They have an understanding of their individual experience of impairment and disability** that provides practical knowledge of necessary accommodations, what works and what to avoid in providing the specific assistance they require, and how to cope resiliently with risks, including those risks associated with prejudice and discrimination.
- **They have a diverse network** of personal and family relationships with people who recognize that they are "100% there", believe that they have a positive future as a contributing citizen, will contribute to the thinking and action necessary to establish and sustain good opportunities for them, and will reach out to invite more people into the network when they are needed.

It is never too late to start and it is important to continue to broaden and build each of these assets throughout life. Adults and their families can build these resources, but the work is best begun in the early years, as parents form expectations and make decisions about how much to build up their support network and how much to invest in participation in ordinary places and activities.