

Employment First Initiative



Office of Developmental Disability Services

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How Not to Be Roadkill on the Road to Transition By Katherine Carol

Helping your child transition from high school to adulthood is a journey. The road trip you have in store as you help your child/student to shift from high school to the high life of adulthood can be as invigorating and rewarding as any great road trip-if you do it right.

Think for a minute-in preparing for any road trip, what is the single most important thing you need to have to make your trip satisfying, meaningful and successful?

Your first guess might be fuel. Every car needs a full tank to get very far. Certainly a well tuned engine makes travel much smoother and worry free.

But, even with all these things in place you still may not go anywhere, unless you have a vision. If you cannot see where you are going or your visibility is impaired, the trip becomes dangerous.

Heading down the road to adulthood with a clear vision of what adulthood looks like for your student who experiences a disability is critical. Vision is what ignites and drives the transition process. The fuel is the passionate person who can communicate that vision to a team of friends, professionals and community members getting them excited enough to become part of the pit crew- to get them to team up for the win.

Concerned teachers may not have all the answers,



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**Oregon wins an
Employment First Mentor
State grant!** [Click here to view
the U.S. Department
of Labor/Office of Disability
Employment Policy
\(DOL/ODEP\) announcement](#)

but they can move school resources. But, which direction will they move them? You need to give them a road map-a vision. Will it be in the direction of poverty planning or prosperity planning?

Most often, a cloudy vision or no vision becomes dangerous for a person with a disability as they get passed through a system which assumes they have a future of poverty in mind. Ask yourself-have you ever seen the goal to get out of poverty written into a transition plan?

The vision of a prosperous life for a person with a disability leads to summer jobs, internships, small business opportunities like cutting lawns, washing cars, lemonade and popcorn stands, perhaps even an internet business. It may lead to home ownership, part time to full time employment outside the sheltered workshop, thus leading to a self-determined life and finances.

Traveling down the road to transition is a little different in the 21st Century than in the last century. Technology has made living in the modern world more like an expressway than a dirt road. If we are truly preparing our students for the future-they need an addition to their Transition Plan. They need an Individual Technology Plan. Most graduates today own at least a cell phone if not a smart phone. Will the student with a disability own one and know how to use it? Most graduating students will have access to an iPad or similar device. How many students with a disability have one?

In most cases the answer is-no. Yet, most jobs will require a working knowledge of such devices. The iPad and iPhone have many "apps" available which can help a person with a disability navigate their path in both their professional and personal life.

While there may be potholes, roadblocks and even a few hazards along your journey down the road to transition, the best chance for a successful journey is the knowledge of where you want to go. Vision, a pit crew of involved believers to maintain and facilitate the vision, and the basic tools of the 21st Century, technology, will drive you on your journey.

Otherwise, there is a good chance that your student



The Employment First Team Grants have been announced. Funded by DHS, these small grants are being made to support local EF team efforts to get more people jobs. Winners included the EF teams from Deschutes, Multnomah, Clackamas, Lane, Jackson, Washington, and Umatilla Counties. Congratulations!



Oregon Employment First Training and Technical Assistance

The WiSe/OTAC/Griffin-Hammis partnership has won the 2012-2013 Training and Technical Assistance contract. Running from June 2012 to June 2013, this partnership will implement statewide training and technical assistance for Employment First. Stay tuned for more!



will become roadkill on the road to transition. The result can lead to a future full of limits rather than unlimited possibilities.

Five things you can do right now.

1. Talk to your student about what they love to do. You can create a work opportunity out of any interest these days.
2. Gather your friends, neighbors, educators, pastors, hair stylists, banker, insurance agent - serve them a light snack and tell them your ideas for the future and ASK them to help you in any way they can. Sometimes this process is called Person Centered Planning, Essential Life Planning, Group Action Planning. I call it a TANGO Team...Take Action N' Go forward with your dreams.
3. Take action. Tell everyone you know where you are going. A portfolio of successes and achievements work really well in setting the impression that this is a goal oriented person. It will focus people on competency rather disability.
4. Be persistent. Doors will open, doors will close. Keep traveling down the road, knocking on doors. Like on the road-be aware. Sometimes opportunity comes knocking on your door.
5. Have fun. After all-it is a road trip. Take snacks. Get out and stretch when needed and enjoy the journey as well as the destination.

Katherine Carol is a 21st Century Rehabilitation and Publishing Expert. Her books include: Tango, The Dance of Self-Discovery (2000), The Tango of Authoring and Publishing, Briles and Carol (2011), and her newly released book co-authored with her daughter, Mikelle Learned, Shining Beautiful, The Brilliance of Community in Action, (2012).

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Upcoming Webinars!

Many thanks to Oregon DHS for funding free webinars for Oregonians! There are only a couple free seats left in the Kathy Condon training, but for the rest, the fee is minimal. Check them out!



May 17: Face to Face Networking in the Digital Age,
Trainer: Kathy Condon

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June 20: Rotary Partnership Creates Jobs for Individuals with Disabilities, Trainer: Debbie Moore, WiSe

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