

# Discovering the Person's Gifts, Interests and Capacities

## 1. What have the person's life experiences been like?

- What have been the important events and circumstances?
- Where has the person lived, worked, gone to school?
- How has the person's life been different from a 'typical' person of the same age? Different from other members of his/her family?
- How would you feel if this is what your life had been?

## 2. Who are the people in this individual's life? What kinds of roles does the person play in those relationships?

- Construct a social / relationships map.
- Who are the people who are most important to the individual?
- Who else do they see on an individual basis? (Family, neighbours, work, church, weekends, evenings...)
- Is there anyone with whom the person feels close that they haven't seen for a while, and would like to have contact with again?
- Which people are being paid to be there?
- Who are the other people with disabilities in the person's life?
- How often do they see each of the people on the map? Talk to them on the phone? Write or receive letters from them?
- When they see each other, how do they spend their time? Do they spend time just with each other or in a group?
- Who initiates the contact?

(May need to speak with family or others to complete the picture?)

## 3. Where does the person spend time? In what activities does the person participate?

- How often do they participate in each activity?
- Who do they do it with? In a group? Alone? With staff?
- How likely is it that they would know people without a disability in each of these activities or places?
- Which of these activities do they enjoy most?

## 4. What works and what does not work for this person?

Make 2 columns. What works? What doesn't work?

### What works?

- How do they like to be treated?
- What kinds of people do they seem most comfortable with? Respond to best?

### What doesn't work?

- What kinds of situations / events frustrate or upset the person most? What kinds of people do they respond to worst?

## 5. What are the person's gifts, interests and abilities?

- What are the person's interests?
- What are their strongest gifts and capacities?
- What sort of service does this person have experience offering?
- What contribution does the person make to other people's lives?
- Which of the person's skills and attributes are wanted and needed by others?

## 6. What does this person have to contribute to others?

- What do they do well?
- What is there about them that people like or might like?
- What do they have to offer that others would see as a contribution?

## 7. What assistance does the person need? (in order to spend time with another person in a typical community setting)

- How much assistance does the person need? (understanding communication, being interested in someone else, transport....)
- Under what circumstances does the person need help?
- Who provides this assistance now?
- How could someone be trained to provide this assistance?
- What are the implications for the person's participation in various community activities?

## 8. Creating a vision

- What kinds of relationships does the person want?
- What is the most ideal situation, in terms of relationships, that we can imagine for the person?
- Is there anything about existing relationships that we or the person would like to see changed?
- Who are the people who would benefit from being involved in a relationship with this person?
- Constantly ask – what would an ordinary life look like for this person?

## 9. Deciding on first steps (can be done with the person, staff, family member...)

- Given these interests, what's worth looking into?
- Do I know anyone who shares similar interests?
- What groups or associations are worth looking into?
- Who can I ask about this?

From Amado, A.N., Conklin, F and Wells, J. (1990) *Friends: A Manual for Connecting Persons with Disabilities and Community Members*.  
Minnesota: Human Services Research and Development Center. p10-20