

Tips for Siblings:

Getting the Future Planning Conversation Started



Your family needs to plan for how your sibling will live in the future, but starting the conversation can be very difficult. Here are some tips to prepare you to start talking with your family.

What do you want to say to your parents and sibling?

Think about what you want to tell your family about the importance of planning for the future. What role do you foresee playing in your sibling's life in the future? What other obligations do you have in your life that you need to balance? What information do you need to know to support your sibling?

❖ *Who Should Be Part of the Conversation?*

Think about who in your family should be part of the conversation and whether to start all together or with one or a few people at a time. Would it be best to talk with your parents first, either together or separately? How do you think your sibling with a disability should be brought into the conversation? What about your other siblings and family members? Who could help you start the conversation or join the discussion at another time?

❖ *When Is A Good Time to Talk?*

Find a time to talk when there are not a lot of activities or events occurring.

❖ *Where Do I Feel Comfortable Bringing This Up?*

Look for a quiet place where your family can have privacy to talk in a safe environment. If you live out-of-state, start the conversation by phone or via Skype.

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MISSION

The Arc's Center for Future Planning® aims to support and encourage adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families to plan for the future. The Center provides reliable information and practical assistance to individuals with I/DD, their family members and friends, professionals who support them and other members of the community on areas such as person-centered planning, decision-making, housing options, and financial planning.

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Breaking the Ice

Here are examples of things you can say to your family to start the conversation:

- ❖ “I love you and I am worried about what will happen to [brother’s or sister’s name] when you aren’t around. I want [brother’s or sister’s name] to have a good life. Can we talk?”
- ❖ “I need your help with something I’ve been concerned about”
- ❖ “I have been thinking about my own life and future, and it made me realize that [brother’s or sister’s name] may need to think about these things, too...”
- ❖ “I know we all have a lot of responsibilities in life, and I want to make sure that I am doing my best for the family. Can we talk about what that will mean in the future?”

Be Patient and Realistic

Your family may not be ready to discuss the subject when you first bring it up. It is important for every family member to share their views of the future. These discussions will help develop a plan for your sibling’s future.

Taking a Break

Think about a natural break to end the first conversation that will allow your family to talk again.

Find more help

Consider checking out these resources for more help and support:

- ❖ The Arc’s National Sibling Council (www.thearc.org/siblings) ensures that siblings are well-informed about I/DD related policy updates and developments. The council also engages siblings on national, state, and local policy advocacy efforts.
- ❖ A chapter of The Arc (www.thearc.org/find-a-chapter) to learn about the service system and providers within the community.
- ❖ Sibling Leadership Network (www.siblingleadership.org) provides siblings of individuals with disabilities support and information to be better advocate for their entire family.

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