

## **PATH – Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope**

Making a plan or writing goals for an organization can be confusing. A PATH can be a very useful tool in identifying hopes and dreams for an individual or a group.

PATH stands for *Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope*. PATH is an example of a Person-Centered Planning process, developed by Jack Pearpoint and Martha Forest, and brought to TN by Dave and Faye Weatherow. PATH can also be used for a group of people who want to work together to make systems function better.

PATH is a guided process, with a facilitator and a recorder. A group of people (the person if the PATH is for a person and those who care about the person or organization at the center of the PATH) come together for a few hours. The facilitator helps to move the group through a series of questions and exercises, with most time spent on expressing hopes and dreams for the person's future. The responses are recorded by the recorder on a large sheet of paper, using graphics, and color – anything that captures what the participants have to say. One of the coolest aspects of doing a PATH is that you end up with a beautiful, often profoundly moving visual record of the plan.

Other elements include figuring out who else needs to be involved, and what will keep the group strong. Finally, the group identifies very specific next steps, usually within a relatively short timeline (e.g. one month).

It is never too early or too late in a person's life or the life of a group or organization for a PATH. PATHs can be especially useful in a person's or group's beginning or time of transition. For a person, transition is an especially good time for a PATH. Whether it is the move from preschool into kindergarten, from high school into the postsecondary life, or at a time when a significant decision is ahead. If you are feeling uneasy about your loved one's future, celebrating the possibilities, utilizing the PATH process to develop workable strategies to move towards those possibilities can be amazingly energizing.

Several team members at The Arc Tennessee are trained PATH facilitators with years of experience doing PATHs, and found the experience to be enlightening. Many families have used the graphic PATH as a basis for their child's Individualized Education Plan and/or Circle of Support planning. If you would like to talk about the possibility of having a PATH for your group or loved one, or even yourself, please contact Peggy Cooper, Membership, Chapter and Communications Manager at 615/248-5878 X15 or [pcooper@thearctn.org](mailto:pcooper@thearctn.org) for more information.