



# Student Resource Guide

## 1. Making Choices

# Making Choices

## OUTCOMES

When you finish this session, you will be able to:

- Identify reasons why making choices is important to individuals.
- Identify reasons why offering choices to individuals is important to DSPs.
- Identify tools and strategies to support individuals to make choices.
- Describe possible non-verbal responses to choice-making opportunities.
- Describe how to honor and respect an individual's choices.
- Identify choices that should be addressed during the person-centered planning process.

## KEY WORDS

Key Word	Meaning	In My Own Words
<b>Approach Behavior</b>	An action that shows a preference for an item or activity, such as smiling, reaching for, leaning toward, or looking at the item or activity.	
<b>Avoidance Behavior</b>	An action that shows an item or activity is not preferred such as frowning, or turning or pushing away from the item or activity.	
<b>Choice</b>	A statement of preference.	
<b>Choice Opportunity</b>	A chance for an individual to decide between two or more items or activities.	
<b>Daily Routines</b>	The way an individual chooses to do everyday activities like sleeping and waking, having meals, and bathing.	
<b>Neutral Behavior</b>	When an individual does not approach or avoid an item or activity.	
<b>Preferences</b>	Likes and dislikes. Choices that individuals make about things that are important to them.	

**A C T I V I T Y**

**What Do You Want to Know?**

**Directions:** *Think about the topic of this training session. Answer the first two questions in the space provided below. You will come back to this page at the end of the session to answer the last question.*

.....  
What do you **already know** about choice making?

.....  
What do you **want to know** about choice making?

.....  
To be answered at the end of the session, during review:  
What **have you learned** about choice making?

## Opening Scenario

*Ben likes to stay up late to watch television. However, Dave, the administrator, has decided that all individuals living in the home should go to bed by 9:00 p.m. Dave says that having everybody in bed at the same time makes life easier for the staff. Each night after dinner, Ben gets in a bad mood and treats other individuals and staff disrespectfully. He resists getting ready for bed when Jeff, the DSP, asks him to do so. Instead of making life easier for the staff, the 9:00 p.m. bedtime and Ben's resulting behavior is making Jeff's life harder. Ben tells Jeff that he feels upset about the bedtime rule. It relaxes him to stay up late and watch funny television shows.*

## ACTIVITY

### Today's Choices

**Directions:** Take a couple of minutes to write down all of the choices that you made since waking up this morning.

1. What kinds of choices - big and small - do you make each day?
2. How would you feel if you didn't have these choices?

## The Importance of Making Choices

**C**hoices are statements of preference. **P**references are an individual's likes and dislikes. Individuals with developmental disabilities have a right to make choices about things that are important to them, such as their home, relationships, community experiences, types of work, fun things to do, and how to be healthy and safe. There are many reasons why making choices is important for the individuals that you support. Most importantly, making choices increases an individual's daily enjoyment. All of our lives are more enjoyable if we choose the things we do.

Individuals with developmental disabilities say that making choices is important because it:

- Helps them to be more independent and in charge of their lives.
- Gives their lives meaning.

**C**hoice opportunities are opportunities for an individual to decide between two or more items or activities. Providing choice opportunities to individuals is important to DSPs because it:

- Helps build cooperative, collaborative relationships between the DSP and individuals, and between individuals living in the home. Cooperation and collaboration mean a better work environment for the DSP.
- Helps them identify things that make learning new skills easier and more fun for individuals. For example, if an individual wants to learn how to ride the bus, the DSP could ask them to choose where they want to go.

## Limited Opportunities to Make Choices

Most of us take choices for granted. For individuals with disabilities though, making choices cannot be taken for granted. Surveys and observations have shown that many people with disabilities

make very few choices in their lives. It is the DSP's responsibility to support individuals in making choices during the course of their daily lives.

## Tools for Identifying Preferences



The Department of Developmental Services formed the Consumer Advisory Committee to give individuals a voice about how they receive services. In

2005, the committee introduced "Making My Own Choices," a book that individuals can use to tell DSPs and others what makes them happy and how they want to live their lives. Using this tool, individuals can share their preferences about:

- Their life at home
- Spending time with friends, family and staff
- What to do for fun
- Participating in the community
- Work life
- Health and safety

You can print free copies of "Making My Own Choices," and the "Picture Sticker Book" that goes with it, at the Department of Developmental Services Consumer Corner website at [www.dds.ca.gov](http://www.dds.ca.gov). Think about laminating the stickers and placing Velcro squares on the back and in the "My Choice" boxes. This way, one book can be used many times with different individuals.

**A C T I V I T Y****Using the “Making My Own Choices” Book  
to Learn About Individuals’ Preferences**

**Directions:** *Pair up with a classmate. Read the “Instructions for Using this [Making My Own Choices] Book” on pages S-18 through S-21 (Appendices 2-A through 2-D). Take turns playing the role of the DSP and the individual. Talk about what the individual would like their home life to be like. Select a picture (from the ones given to you by the teacher) that is similar to the type of home the individual would like. Place that picture in the blank space on the HOME page on S-20. Ask the individual questions about their choice and fill in their answers on page S-20. When you are finished, discuss the following questions with the whole class.*

**1. Is this a tool you would use with the individuals in your home? Why or why not?**

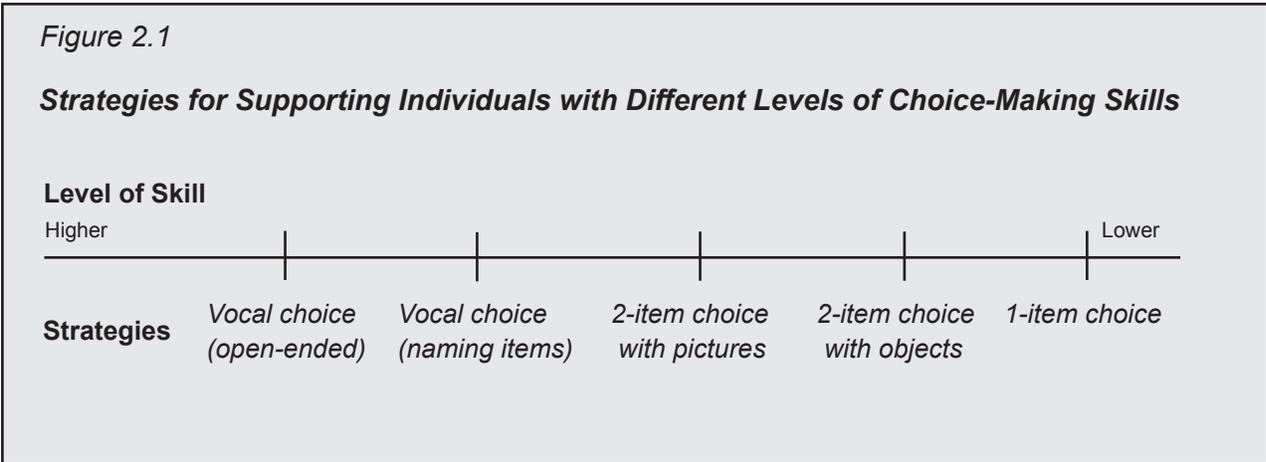
**2. How could you use this tool with an individual who cannot talk?**

**3. What are some other ways to learn about an individual’s preferences?**

## Strategies for Offering Choices

Making choices is a skill. Many of the individuals you support may not have learned this skill yet. DSPs can teach choice making skills. To support an individual in making meaningful choices, you must provide opportunities for choice in a way that they can understand. For example, some individuals can make a choice simply by answering a

question such as, “What do you want?” Those individuals have higher-level choice-making skills; they have good communication and other skills to make a choice in this way. If an individual is not able to use such skills, you must try different ways of offering choices. The following table shows some strategies.



You may need to try different strategies before an individual is able to understand the choices. For example, you might begin by asking the individual during leisure time in the evening, “What would you like to do?” (open-ended vocal choice). If the individual does not seem to understand, you might then ask, “Would you like to look at a magazine or listen to your radio (vocal choice, naming items)?” If the individual still does not understand, you might ask the same question while showing them one index card with a picture of a magazine and another index card with a picture of a radio (two-item choice with pictures). If this strategy does not work, you might show the individual a magazine and radio and ask them to point to what they want (two-item choice with objects). For individuals who are not able

to say or point to something they want, you must provide a choice opportunity in an easier way. In this case, you can offer the individual a magazine (one-item choice). Watch to see how the individual responds to the magazine to determine if they want the item.

When presenting two-item choices to individuals, keep in mind an individual’s choice-making behaviors. For example, some individuals tend to always pick something that is presented on their left side. For this reason, it is important to change the side on which you offer items and activities.

No matter what strategy is selected, it is important to give the individual time to respond based on his or her ability. Some of us need more time to think and decide than others.

**A C T I V I T Y**

**Choosing Strategies for Supporting Individuals with Different Levels of Choice-Making Skills**

**Directions:** Read the following scenario. Column one describes three individuals and their choice-making skills. In column two, write down how you would offer breakfast choices based on each individual’s choice-making skills. Refer to Figure 2.1 on page S-6 if you need help. Your answers will be shared with the class.

**Scenario:**

You work during the morning shift and it is your responsibility to provide breakfast. You made pancakes and eggs because it was what was planned on the menu and the individuals enjoyed those foods in the past.

<b>Individual Choice-Making Skills</b>	<b>How you would offer the choice?</b>
<p><i>Example:</i> John has very good verbal skills.</p>	<p><i>I would ask John an open-ended question such as, “What would you like to eat for breakfast?”</i></p>
<p><i>Diana has severe disabilities. She is unable to say or point to things that she wants.</i></p>	
<p><i>Ed has some verbal skills, but seems confused when asked open-ended questions.</i></p>	

## Approach, Avoidance, and Neutral Behavior



When you present a one-item choice, watch the individual to see if he or she approaches or avoids the item.

An **approach behavior** is an action that shows a preference for an item or activity, such as smiling, reaching for, leaning toward, or looking at an item or activity. When an individual approaches an item in this manner, you should give the item to them.

Instead of approaching an item presented, an individual might avoid the item. **Avoidance behavior** is an action that shows an item or activity is not preferred such as frowning, or turning

or pushing away from the item. When an individual avoids an item, you should remove it and present something else.

Sometimes an individual may not approach or avoid an item. This is called **neutral behavior**. If an individual shows neutral behavior you should allow the individual to try the item; that is, make sure the person knows what is being offered by touching, looking at, tasting, or using the item. Present the item again to check for approach or avoidance. If neutral behavior occurs the second time, the item should be removed.

## Respecting Choices

When providing individuals with a choice opportunity, it is essential that you respect and honor the individual's choice by:

- Making sure you are able to provide the individual with his or her choice *before* you offer the choices.
- Giving the individual the chosen item or activity.

Of course, choices may be limited based on the resources at hand. For example, you cannot offer an individual orange juice for breakfast if there isn't any orange juice in the house.

One last thing: It is very important to respect the individual's choices even when you disagree.

This can be tough. It might mean you have to work harder to provide a choice or that you may worry more about the individual's well-being. Nobody said being a DSP was easy! But respecting choices, especially when you disagree, shows the individual that you take seriously your role in supporting their quality of life as they define it.



## Finding Choice Opportunities During Daily Routines

**Daily routines** are the ways we choose to do everyday activities like sleeping, walking, having meals, and spending leisure time. Some choices during daily routines involve *how* to do an activity, such as take a shower or a bath. Other types of choices involve *when*, *where*, and *with whom* to do an activity.

We make many types of choices everyday to make our days more enjoyable. The same is true for individuals. You should try to build as many choices as possible into the daily routines of the individuals you support.

### A C T I V I T Y

#### Supporting Choices

**Directions:** Read the following two examples of choices made by individuals. As a class, discuss how you would support those choices.

**Example #1:**

*An individual wants to go to a different church on Sundays than the rest of the group.*

**Example #2:**

*An individual wants to take a job at a nearby store. The hours are from 6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m., three times a week.*

## Supporting Major Lifestyle Choices

The choices described so far happen during an individual's daily routine. Other types of choices affect an individual's long-term quality of life. These are choices about major lifestyle changes, such as where and with whom to live and what job to do.

We can help individuals make choices that may have a big impact on their lives by making sure our supports and services are person-centered. As you will recall from the Year 1 training, person-centered planning is the process of focusing on supporting people with disabilities in making their own choices for everyday

and major lifestyle decisions.

Following the principles and practices of person-centered planning as much as possible gives individuals more control over their lives. Control means choosing how one lives and choosing how one lives makes life much better for everyone. One way that DSPs can help individuals have more control over their lives is to use the information gathered from the "Making My Own Choices" book to inform the person-centered planning process.



You will learn more about person-centered planning in the next session.

### S U M M A R Y

This session was about identifying and supporting individuals' choices. The things that you learn about individuals' preferences and choices can help during the person-centered planning process, a more formal way of learning about individual's preferences, and planning how to support them in meeting their goals. In the next session, called Person-Centered Planning, we will learn more about this process.

### P R A C T I C E A N D S H A R E

Think about an individual who you support. Pick one of their daily routines (for example, their routine when they get up in the morning or go to bed). First, think about the choices that you have offered that individual during that routine before today. Then think about additional kinds of choice opportunities that could be created during that routine. Be prepared to discuss your thoughts with the class at the beginning of the next session.

### Making Choices

- 1. Individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities say that making choices is important because:**
  - A) It is fun
  - B) They do not usually get to make choices
  - C) It is difficult
  - D) It gives their lives meaning
- 2. It is important for DSPs to provide opportunities for individuals to make choices because it:**
  - A) Is required by the law
  - B) Helps build a cooperative relationship between DSPs and individuals
  - C) Gives DSPs more responsibilities
  - D) Makes individuals behave the way they should
- 3. One way to learn about what makes individuals happy is to:**
  - A) Use the "Making My Own Choices" book and picture sticker book
  - B) Guess what is important to them
  - C) Ask the individual's parents to tell you what makes them happy
  - D) Read about individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities
- 4. If an individual has good verbal skills, a good strategy for offering a choice is:**
  - A) Ask them which item they want
  - B) Show them one item and watch for their non-verbal response
  - C) Name two items and ask them to point to the one they want
  - D) Give them the item you prefer
- 5. If an individual is not able to say or point to things they want, a good strategy for offering a choice is to:**
  - A) Ask them what item they want
  - B) Show them one item and watch for their non-verbal response
  - C) Give them the item you prefer
  - D) Name two items and ask them to point to the one they want
- 6. When an individual is given a choice between reading a magazine or listening to music, one possible non-verbal response is for the individual to:**
  - A) Ask for something else
  - B) Say, "I want music"
  - C) Reach for the magazine
  - D) Say, "I want to read"
- 7. When an individual pushes away an item, she is demonstrating:**
  - A) Verbal behavior
  - B) Approach behavior
  - C) Neutral behavior
  - D) Avoidance behavior
- 8. One way to honor and respect an individual's choice is to:**
  - A) Ask them to choose something else
  - B) Tell them you disagree with their choice
  - C) Give them a different item or activity than the chosen one
  - D) Give them the chosen item or activity

## Session 1 Quiz (cont.)

**9. An individual choice that should be talked about during the person-centered planning process is:**

- A) What the DSP wants for dinner
- B) Who the individual should vote for
- C) What job an individual wants to have
- D) Where the individual's roommate wants to live

**10. One way for a DSP to help with an individual's person-centered planning process is to:**

- A) Talk to other DSPs about the individual's needs
- B) Share knowledge of an individual's preferences from using the "Making My Own Choices" book
- C) Share what you think the individual's goals should be
- D) Not be a part of the planning process



## Appendices



## Appendix 1-A NADSP Code of Ethics

### National Alliance of Direct Service Professionals (NADSP) Code of Ethics

#### Advocacy

As a DSP, I will advocate with the people I support for justice, inclusion, and full community participation.

#### *Interpretive Statements*

As a DSP, I will –

- Support individuals to speak for themselves in all matters where my assistance is needed.
- Represent the best interests of people who cannot speak for themselves by finding alternative ways of understanding their needs, including gathering information from others who represent their best interests.
- Advocate for laws, policies, and supports that promote justice and inclusion for people with disabilities and other groups that have been disempowered.
- Promote human, legal, and civil rights of all people and assist others to understand these rights.
- Recognize that those who victimize people with disabilities either criminally or civilly must be held accountable for their actions.
- Find additional advocacy services when those that I provide are not sufficient.
- Consult with people I trust when I am unsure of the appropriate course of action in my advocacy efforts.

#### Person-Centered Supports

As a DSP, my first allegiance is to the person I support; all other activities and functions I perform flow from this allegiance.

#### *Interpretive Statements*

As a DSP, I will –

- Recognize that each person must direct his or her own life and support and that the unique social network, circumstances, personality, preferences, needs, and gifts of each person I support must be the primary guide for the selection, structure, and use of supports for that individual.
- Commit to person-centered supports as best practice.
- Provide advocacy when the needs of the system override those of the individual(s) I support, or when individual preferences, needs, or gifts are neglected for other reasons.
- Honor the personality, preferences, culture, and gifts of people who cannot speak by seeking other ways of understanding them.
- Focus first on the person and understand that my role in direct support requires flexibility, creativity, and commitment.

#### Promoting Physical and Emotional Well-Being

As a DSP, I am responsible for supporting the emotional, physical, and personal well-being of the individuals receiving support. I will encourage growth and recognize the autonomy of the individuals receiving support while being attentive and energetic in reducing their risk of harm.

### *Interpretive Statements*

As a DSP, I will –

- Develop a relationship with the people I support that is respectful, based on mutual trust, and that maintains professional boundaries.
- Assist the individuals I support to understand their options and the possible consequences of these options as they relate to their physical health and emotional well-being.
- Promote and protect the health, safety, and emotional well-being of an individual by assisting the person in preventing illness and avoiding unsafe activity. I will work with the individual and his or her support network to identify areas of risk and to create safeguards specific to these concerns.
- Know and respect the values of the people I support and facilitate their expression of choices related to those values.
- Challenge others, including support team members such as doctors, nurses, therapists, co-workers, and family members to recognize and support the rights of individuals to make informed decisions even when these decisions involve personal risk.
- Be vigilant in identifying, discussing with others, and reporting any situation in which the individuals I support are at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or harm.
- Consistently address challenging behaviors proactively, respectfully, and by avoiding the use of aversive or deprivation intervention techniques. If these techniques are included in an approved support plan, I will work diligently to find alternatives and will advocate for the eventual elimination of these techniques from the individual's plan.

### **Integrity and Responsibility**

As a DSP, I will support the mission and vitality of my profession to assist people in leading self-directed lives and to foster a spirit of partnership with the people I support, with other professionals, and with the community.

#### *Interpretive Statements*

As a DSP, I will –

- Be conscious of my own values and how they influence my professional decisions.
- Maintain competency in my profession through learning and ongoing communication with others.
- Assume responsibility and accountability for my decisions and actions.
- Actively seek advice and guidance on ethical issues from others as needed when making decisions.
- Recognize the importance of modeling valued behaviors to co-workers, persons receiving support, and the community at large.
- Practice responsible work habits.

### **Confidentiality**

As a DSP, I will safeguard and respect the confidentiality and privacy of the people I support.

#### *Interpretive Statements*

As a DSP, I will –

- Seek information directly from those I support regarding their wishes in how, when, and with whom privileged information should be shared.
- Seek out a qualified individual who can help me clarify situations where the correct course of action is not clear.
- Recognize that confidentiality agreements with individuals are subject to state and agency regulations.
- Recognize that confidentiality agreements with individuals should be broken if there is imminent harm to others or to the person I support.

## Appendix 1-A NADSP Code of Ethics (cont.)

### Justice, Fairness, and Equity

As a DSP, I will promote and practice justice, fairness, and equity for the people I support and the community as a whole. I will affirm the human rights, civil rights, and responsibilities of the people I support.

#### *Interpretive Statements*

As a DSP, I will –

- Help the people I support use the opportunities and the resources of the community available to everyone.
- Help the individuals I support understand and express their rights and responsibilities.
- Understand the guardianship or other legal representation of individuals I support and work in partnership with legal representatives to assure that each individual's preferences and interests are honored.

### Respect

As a DSP, I will respect the human dignity and uniqueness of the people I support. I will recognize each person I support as valuable and I will help others understand their value.

#### *Interpretive Statements*

As a DSP, I will –

- Seek to understand the individuals I support today in the context of their personal history, their social and family networks, and their hopes and dreams for the future.
- Honor the choices and preferences of the people I support.
- Protect the privacy of the people I support.
- Uphold the human rights of the people I support.
- Interact with the people I support in a respectful manner.

- Recognize and respect the cultural context such as religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class of the person supported and his or her social network.
- Provide opportunities and supports that help the individuals I support be viewed with respect and as integral members of their communities.

### Relationships

As a DSP, I will assist the people I support to develop and maintain relationships.

#### *Interpretive Statements*

As a DSP, I will –

- Advocate for the people I support when they do not have access to opportunities and education to facilitate building and maintaining relationships.
- Assure that people have the opportunity to make informed choices in safely expressing their sexuality.
- Recognize the importance of relationships and pro actively facilitate relationships between the people I support, their family, and friends.
- Separate my own personal beliefs and expectations regarding relationships (including sexual relationships) from those desired by the people I support based on their personal preferences. If I am unable to separate my own beliefs/preferences in a given situation, I will actively remove myself from the situation.
- Refrain from expressing negative views, harsh judgments, and stereotyping of people close to the individuals I support.

## Appendix 1-A NADSP Code of Ethics (cont.)

### **Self-Determination**

As a DSP, I will assist the people I support to direct the course of their own lives.

#### *Interpretive Statements*

As a DSP, I will –

- Work in partnership with others to support individuals leading self-directed lives.

- Honor the individual's right to assume risk in an informed manner.
- Recognize that each individual has potential for lifelong learning and growth.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THIS BOOK

This booklet has been developed to help people identify things that are important to them in their life such as their home, relationships, community experiences, types of work, fun things to do and how to be healthy and safe.

### 1. Show these sections of the book to the person:

- Home,
- Friends, Family and Staff,
- Fun,
- Community,
- Work,
- Health and Safety

**2. First Section: Home** - Talk about what the person would like their home to be like, e.g. what kind of house (apartment, house, group home, in a city, etc.) and the qualities (having their own room, a garden, etc).

### 3. Sticker Book

PLACE STICKER HERE



Look through the Picture Sticker Book for the color coded **HOME** section and find a picture that is similar to the type of home the person is interested in living in and/or the qualities of a home that are important to them. Place the sticker on the **HOME** page in the blank space.

**Note:** If there isn't a sticker that matches the person's interest you can:

1. Draw a picture in the empty "My Choice" box
  2. Look for a picture (e.g. from magazines and/or photos)
  3. Take a photograph, and if possible, with the person in it.
- 4. Ask Questions:** Use the completed sample as a guide. Ask questions about their choice using What, Who, When, Where, and How. Fill in their responses. Not all of the questions will fit every picture.



**5. Notes:** Use this section on the page to write down important notes about what will need to happen or additional information that is needed. This is an important part to ensure the person's choices will be taken seriously. The next section will include how the person can participate in the process.

Complete the same steps for as many sections as the person is interested in. Work with the person to follow up on their ideas and plan, or help the person take the booklet to their planning meeting to ensure their choices become reality.

# Appendix 2-B "Making My Own Choices" - Section



## HOME

DESCRIPTION  
PLACE STICKER HERE →

What \_\_\_\_\_  
Who \_\_\_\_\_  
When \_\_\_\_\_  
Where \_\_\_\_\_  
How \_\_\_\_\_

HELPER \_\_\_\_\_ NOTES \_\_\_\_\_

HOW DO I START MAKING THIS HAPPEN?

PERSON \_\_\_\_\_

Page 4



## FRIENDS, FAMILY, STAFF

DESCRIPTION  
PLACE STICKER HERE →

What \_\_\_\_\_  
Who \_\_\_\_\_  
When \_\_\_\_\_  
Where \_\_\_\_\_  
How \_\_\_\_\_

HELPER \_\_\_\_\_ NOTES \_\_\_\_\_

HOW DO I START MAKING THIS HAPPEN?

PERSON \_\_\_\_\_

Page 5



## COMMUNITY

DESCRIPTION  
PLACE STICKER HERE →

What \_\_\_\_\_  
Who \_\_\_\_\_  
When \_\_\_\_\_  
Where \_\_\_\_\_  
How \_\_\_\_\_

HELPER \_\_\_\_\_ NOTES \_\_\_\_\_

HOW DO I START MAKING THIS HAPPEN?

PERSON \_\_\_\_\_

Page 6



## WORK

DESCRIPTION  
PLACE STICKER HERE →

What \_\_\_\_\_  
Who \_\_\_\_\_  
When \_\_\_\_\_  
Where \_\_\_\_\_  
How \_\_\_\_\_

HELPER \_\_\_\_\_ NOTES \_\_\_\_\_

HOW DO I START MAKING THIS HAPPEN?

PERSON \_\_\_\_\_

Page 8



## FUN

DESCRIPTION  
PLACE STICKER HERE →

What \_\_\_\_\_  
Who \_\_\_\_\_  
When \_\_\_\_\_  
Where \_\_\_\_\_  
How \_\_\_\_\_

HELPER \_\_\_\_\_ NOTES \_\_\_\_\_

HOW DO I START MAKING THIS HAPPEN?

PERSON \_\_\_\_\_

Page 7



## HEALTH & SAFETY

DESCRIPTION  
PLACE STICKER HERE →

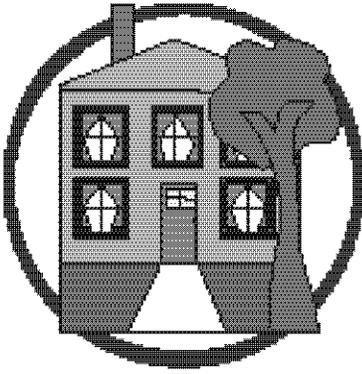
What \_\_\_\_\_  
Who \_\_\_\_\_  
When \_\_\_\_\_  
Where \_\_\_\_\_  
How \_\_\_\_\_

HELPER \_\_\_\_\_ NOTES \_\_\_\_\_

HOW DO I START MAKING THIS HAPPEN?

PERSON \_\_\_\_\_

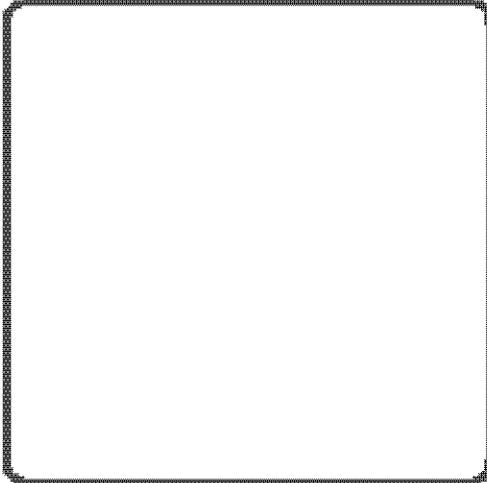
Page 9



# HOME

DESCRIPTION

PLACE STICKER HERE



What \_\_\_\_\_

Who \_\_\_\_\_

When \_\_\_\_\_

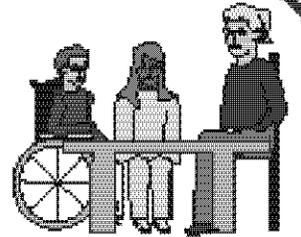
Where \_\_\_\_\_

How \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES:

HELPER:

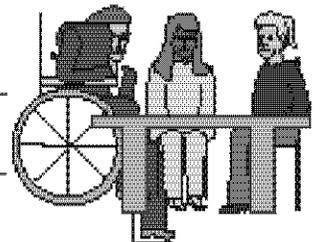
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



HOW DO I START MAKING THIS HAPPEN?

PERSON:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Appendix 2-D "Making My Own Choices" - Home Pictures

