

# Families Creating a Vision and Building Inclusive Lives for their Children





## Vision Statement

“Brissa will be self-sufficient, make choices, have meaningful relationships, and give back to her community.”

## Vision Statement

“Nick will participate actively in college, in his community, and make his own life decisions.

He will have relationships with many people and be a responsible adult.”



# Overview

This booklet is for families who want to create a vision that leads to meaningful futures and inclusive lives for their children with developmental disabilities. All parents have dreams their children will grow up to determine for themselves how to live good lives.

You will read about Brissa and Nick whose parents did not allow their dreams to be dimmed by a diagnosis or prescribed by “needs.” They created visions for Brissa and Nick to direct their lives with support from family, friends, community members and service providers. Together, they were guided by visions that focused on living fully in their communities.

## **Follow Brissa, Nick and their families as they:**

- Create a vision of self-determination.
- Apply the vision to everyday life at home and their communities.
- Become active in their communities.
- Find new friendships and natural supports.
- Build a future of possibilities.



# Brissa

## How Things Were

When Brissa's family learned she had a disability, her mother Pat was unsure about what to do. She saw Brissa depending on her for everything. Pat did not believe there could be a "typical" life for her daughter. She was busy finding the best interventions, teachers and school. Pat was worried that Brissa did not communicate like other children and had other developmental needs. There didn't seem to be time to open her eyes, see Brissa's abilities first, and focus on her future.

Brissa's family wanted her to be safe and at the same time interact with other children in their family and in the community.



# Brissa

## Creating the Vision



Pat heard about families who were creating visions for their children's future as active community members. This new way of thinking was not easy. It took time and support from other parents to begin seeing an exciting future for her daughter. Pat saw that Brissa had her own likes, dislikes and made her own choices, if given an opportunity and support.

The family created a dream for Brissa, one that would grow as she matured. Pat and her husband shared their ideas about the kind of future they wanted for Brissa. Step by step, they built a vision in which Brissa has a role in determining her future with family members in support.

The family explored what they wanted for Brissa and what is important to her. They wrote down the dream — without limitations. It was not just wishful thinking, it was a turning point. Here is their personalized vision for Brissa:

*“Brissa will be self-sufficient, make choices, have meaningful relationships and give back to her community.”*

# Brissa

## Applying the Vision



Brissa and her family shared their vision with everyone: at home, school, the Regional Center and with friends. They used their vision to guide daily activities, and geared even small things toward future goals.

The family looked at important words in their vision, like “self-sufficient,” and figured out what they could do at home and in the community to increase Brissa’s independence.

The family adjusted their schedule so they could show Brissa how to prepare simple things to eat on her own when she’s hungry. This led to Brissa helping the family with dinner time and shopping for groceries with her sister.

Together, the family used their vision to discover more community activities and shape services and supports. This enabled them to use family and friends as natural supports in their community while maintaining safety for Brissa as she explored new opportunities.

# Brissa

## Community Connections and Natural Supports



Brissa's mother applied their vision and developed natural supports so Brissa could participate in typical community activities. When Brissa started as a Daisy Girl Scout, she had a person to assist her. She liked her Scouting meetings and as the troop became comfortable in supporting Brissa, paid staff faded assisting her. Brissa now enjoys outings with her troop like any Scout member.

Her family was encouraged and is expanding Brissa's opportunities to engage in typical family activities and spend time away from home with friends.

The family found new ways to be more involved in community activities: at their church and volunteer work. The family discovered that people they already knew and trusted could give support for Brissa to participate in these activities. Building community connections helped Brissa and her family become involved and contribute.

# Brissa

## Making It Happen

The family practiced teaching Brissa to be more independent. As Brissa tried more things that she once considered difficult, she learned to manage and enjoy more activities.



Guided by their vision, the family slowly took the steps for Brissa to participate more fully in family life. Brissa's after-school routine became more typical.

In the past, Brissa had to be stopped from running into the streets. Now she waits with a

friend for as long as 15 minutes until her mother picks her up in front of the school.

She also learned to walk to her grandma's house after school. At home she rests and does her homework or chores, like feeding the dog, cleaning the bathroom or making her bed.



# Brissa

## The Future



Brissa continues to work at learning new skills and applying them to daily life. She and her family benefit from the many community activities they discovered. As a family, they have new friends, more interaction with

their community, and everyone contributes, especially Brissa. The future looks brighter. Brissa is learning to speak up for herself and talk about what she wants in her future.

She loves animals and says she wants to go to college and become a dolphin trainer. She would like to marry some day and have a family.

Brissa's family is committed to helping her move forward, taking time to listen, and adjust when necessary.

### Words from Brissa

1. Scouting is fun.
2. I help out in my community.

**Brissa has her own vision for the future.**

# GOOD TO KNOW

“Being in the community is fun.”  
*Brissa de la Rosa*



“Be a volunteer and learn about socializing, responsibility and being confident.” *Nick Tanita*



“Believe in your child — if you don't, other people will not.” *Miguel Lugo*



# GOOD TO KNOW

“Inclusion begins at home.” *Carol Tanita*

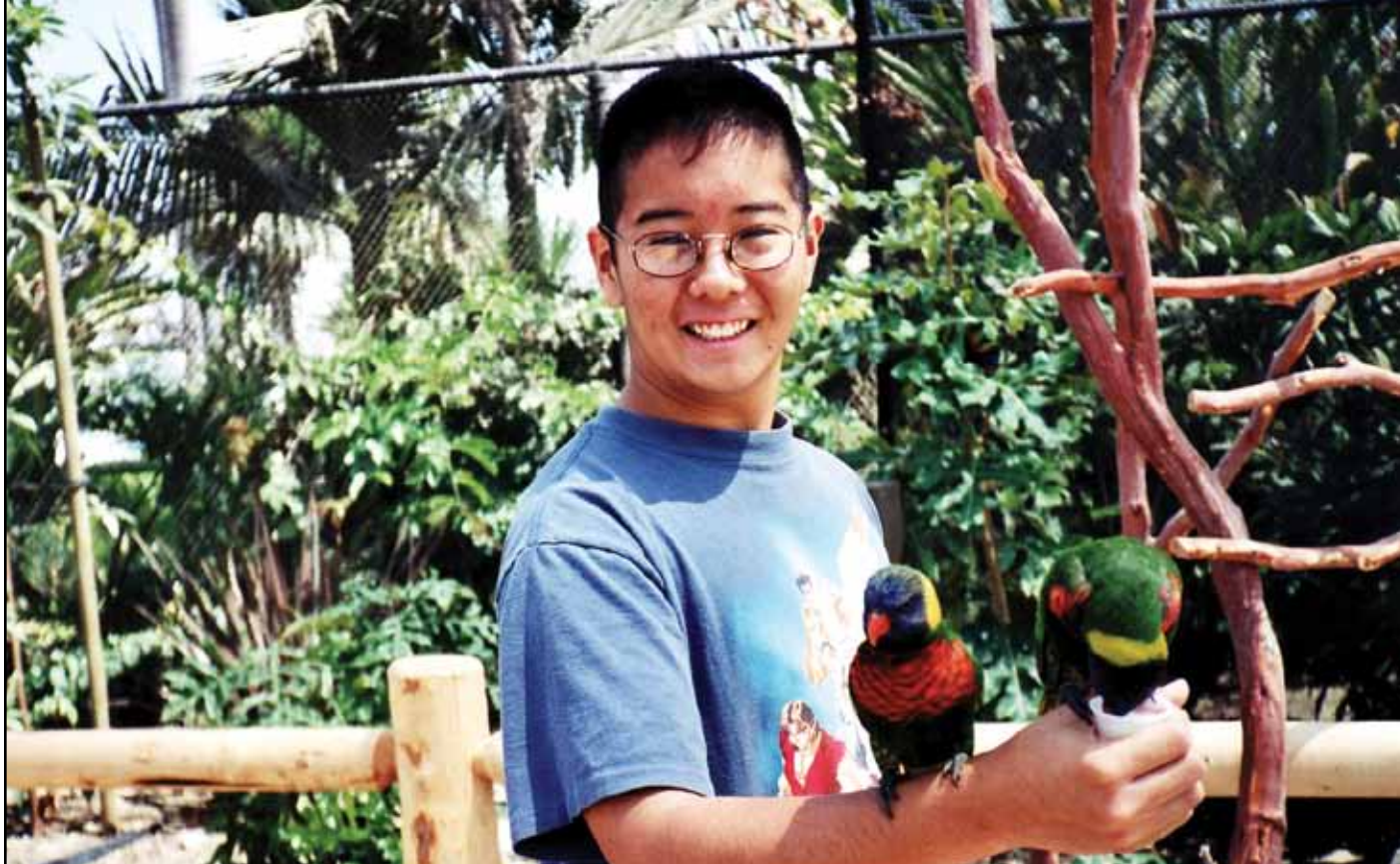


“Inclusion is not a place or service – but a way of thinking.” *Pat Gomez*



“Your community is your network – the place where people help each other.”  
*Eugenia Jones*





# Nick

## How Things Were

When Nick was young, his family wasn't sure what he needed because there was no clear diagnosis. His mother Carole was told he had ADHD and other difficulties. He was sent to a class of students with disabilities. When Nick was diagnosed with autism, it surprised Carole. She had to reach inside to say, "Yes, he has autism, but he just learns differently. I won't let it stand in the way of doing what his peers are doing."

The family wanted to know what other families were doing so they could figure out how to help Nick be an independent adult. Carole enrolled Nick in a regular preschool where he could get special instruction.



# Nick

## Creating the Vision



Carole did not want Nick's disability to stand in his way. The family accepted Nick's different learning and social behaviors. They had a family belief that, regardless of disability, Nick should be exposed to, and have opportunities other kids have. Carole knew if Nick was with others, even for a moment, he would learn more from

his peers.

Carole didn't understand the word "vision" at the time but wanted as many typical opportunities for Nick as her daughter had. The family used the Regional Center as a resource and attended workshops to learn how to assist Nick.

Expectations for Nick were the same the family had for their older daughter. This vision included what was important to Nick and what the family wanted for his future. Here is the personalized vision statement for Nick:

*"Nick will be an active part of his college and his community, and make his own life decisions. He will have relationships with many people and be a responsible adult."*

# Nick

## Applying the Vision

The family started with what was familiar at home and built from there. They made a plan and took one step at a time.



Nick was asked to take on more responsibilities, like checking the mail, feeding the cat, changing the bed, washing dishes, and making his own meals. This contributed to more independence and feeling good about what he could do. The family looked for community opportunities. Nick went to the local library where a librarian invited him to sort donated

books, after which he could take home a free book. Soon he was a regular volunteer at the library and neighborhood swimming pool.

Nick joined the Boy Scouts where he learned basic life skills and socialization. Now Nick goes camping with his friends and his troop, not just with his family.

The family used their home and community to create new opportunities for Nick to learn and make friends.

# Nick

## Community Connections and Natural Supports

Nick and Carol used their family, friends, and community to build a social network. School, Scouts and after-school programs contributed to Nick's learning about his community and people getting to know him.



Volunteer work at the library, local swimming pool, and city hall helped Nick increase his skills. Nick was building relationships while giving back to his community.

After Nick started at the community college, Carol learned their neighbor also attended classes there. Nick asked his neighbor to help him figure out how to get to and from the college campus. Happy to help, she rode the bus with Nick until he learned the bus routine.

Including family and friends in the community as natural supports, Nick became confident and felt safe navigating the city. Most importantly, he learned he, too, could support others in his neighborhood.

# Nick

## Making It Happen

Nick and his family put emphasis on living by their vision. They looked for people who were doing what Nick and his family valued, like volunteering in their neighborhoods. This enabled Nick to expand personal relationships, be more independent, and make his own choices.



He learned how to be with other people and his personality changed. He has grown self-confident and very sociable. Nick now has a job in the daycare center he attended as a child and worked as a volunteer.

Nick surprises Carole with how wise and savvy he has become. He uses a cell phone responsibly to contact people and manages his ATM card to access his bank account. He writes checks and pays his bills. Volunteering, work and college have given him a great deal of skill and friendships.



# Nick

## The Future

Currently, Nick uses public transportation to attend the community college. He is taking English, math and computer classes. He wants to be an active student, find a girlfriend, and continue working.



He is proud to be making his own money and putting it in the bank to save for his future plans. Nick is building his own future and his family is finding ways to support his vision. They talked about his goals and found out Nick wants to finish college, get a good job, and have

a nice place to live.

### Words from Nick

1. Make your own dreams for how you want your life to be in the future.
2. Don't be scared of trying new things.
3. Volunteer in the community.

**Nick is on his way!**

# Resources

Department of Developmental Services  
Consumer Advisory Committee – Consumer Corner  
<http://dds.ca.gov/ConsumerCorner/ThinkPlanDo.cfm>

Department of Developmental Services SafetyNet  
<http://www.ddssafety.net/Main.aspx>

The Learning Community for Person Centered Practices  
<http://www.learningcommunity.us/home.html>

The SCILS Group  
<http://www.scilsgroup.org/index2.html>

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# Acknowledgements

Thank you to Brissa, Nick and their families for sharing their inclusion vision and family stories.

Pat Gomez and Brissa de la Rosa

Carol and Nick Tanita

Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center  
Gloria Wong, Director

The SCILS Group [www.scilsgroup.org](http://www.scilsgroup.org)



**The Board Resource Center**  
*Making Complex Ideas Simple<sup>SM</sup>*

PO Box 601477, Sacramento, CA 95860 [www.brcenter.org](http://www.brcenter.org)

# Vision Statement

A picture of what you want for your child in the future. Begins with a value; what is important to you? Inspires commitment from others and leads to a plan everyone can carry out.

## Brissa's Vision

*"Brissa will be self-sufficient, make choices, have meaningful relationships and give back to her community."*

## My Vision Statement



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## Key Words

Important words from the vision statement that clarify what you mean.

## Brissa's Key Words


Self-sufficient

## What They Mean

*"Independent at home and in the community"*

Giving back

*"Contributing to her community"*



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"I HAVE AN INCLUSION VISION BECAUSE MY CHILD IS A PART OF OUR COMMUNITY."

*"Bridges the present to the future"*

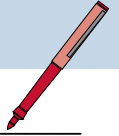
# Ways to apply your vision

Goals and activities that support the vision



## Brissa's Goal

*"Be **self-sufficient** at home and in the community."*



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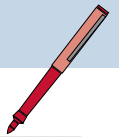
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## Brissa's Home Activity

*"Prepare her own snacks, help at dinner time."*



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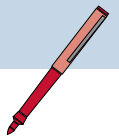
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## Brissa's Community Activity

*"Volunteering at church with her family."*



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*"I have a plan to help him use his community and be included."*