

# THE PATH AHEAD

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Let's clear the path ahead.

**WISCONSIN'S TOP-RATED  
IRIS CONSULTANT AGENCY**

## A FAMILY AFFAIR: HOW FUTURE PLANNING HELPS YOU & YOUR LOVED ONES

Sometimes in life, things don't go as planned. Usually, it's not a big deal. Let's say you miss your bus — chances are you can just call a cab or wait for the next bus to get you where you need to go. But what happens when plans for something more important fall through? Perhaps your housing situation is no longer working for you, or you need to train a new caregiver. Harriet Redman, Executive Director of WisconSibs, believes that's why it's important to have detailed plans in place for the big things in your life. She also says it's equally as important to have a good backup plan in case things in your life change.

WisconSibs helps siblings of all ages learn ways to become stronger advocates, supporters and friends to their brother or sister who has a disability.

One of the things they offer is future planning workshops, which teach families how to create a roadmap to guide supports that ensures their loved one with a disability has the life they choose. Harriet says planning helps families stay on the same page about the important things in their loved one's life.

With future planning, families can lay out the details of the person's goals and wishes so that family members can figure out how to help their loved one. It can give families peace of mind and prevent major life changes from becoming a crisis.

This also helps them plan for what to do as life continues to happen, such as if a sibling moves out of state, or if a parent can no longer be a caregiver.

**“We all know [life] doesn't happen as you expect,” says Harriet. “Being prepared for a lot of [different possibilities] is valuable.”**

As the parent of an adult son with a disability, Harriet knows that it's important for families to talk openly and often about the future. This way, they can think through all the options that are available and to come up with a Plan B in case Plan A doesn't work. It's also important to have these plans clearly documented so that the whole family fully understands the expectations. Of course, Harriet reminds people that first and foremost, the person with the disability should have the biggest say in these discussions, and families should work to honor their wishes.

**“What’s better for [the loved one with a disability] is better for us,” says Harriet. “It’s a lot of give and take.”**

Harriet encourages families to talk to other people who might be able to offer their support to the person with a disability. Friends, neighbors, social workers, coworkers, other people in the community and organizations like WisconSibs can be great resources for building a support team. Once that support team is built, Harriet says to not be afraid to ask the team for help with specific parts of the person’s future planning. You might be surprised at how willing people are to lend a hand.



*Harriet (right) and her family: husband Rich, son Philip and daughter Christiana.*

Finally, it’s important to update the plan whenever a major life event happens with the family, such as a marriage, a birth or a change in health. And of course, if the plan isn’t working, don’t be afraid to change it to something better for the entire family.

**“Planning is never finished,” says Harriet. “It’s a continuous process.”**

For more information about WisconSibs and how they can help you and your family with future planning, visit [wisconsibs.org](https://www.wisconsibs.org).

# PREPARING FOR FUTURE PLANNING

Ready for future planning but not sure where to begin? Harriet Redman, Executive Director of WisconSibs, offers these tips on how the person or their family can prepare for their future.



**Get Started Now.** It's never too soon to start. It can be hard to think about what it would mean for the person with a disability if there was a major life change in their family. They might find themselves unprepared without any future planning.



**Talk About the Future.** Families need to make sure they all understand what's on future planning documents. Make sure this plan is clearly written down, and all family members know where this plan is kept. Also, talk often and openly about the plan with each other to make sure everyone is on the same page, and can easily identify when the plan is no longer working for the person or family members.



**Details Matter.** Make sure your future plan has as much detail as possible. Also, make sure it includes important information like what medications the person uses, contact information for doctors, TMG IRIS Consultant and other supports, and a list of where other important documents like birth certificates or guardianship papers are located.



**Find Support.** Don't be afraid to ask people outside of your family to play a role in making future planning happen. Also, talk to your TMG IRIS Consultant or organizations like WisconSibs if you are having trouble creating a future planning document, or if you're looking for ways to expand your loved one's support network.



**Keep Updating the Plan.** It's important to regularly revisit the plan and make sure it's still working for everyone in the family. If it isn't, then it's time to make a change!



## CARLA'S STORY: COMMUNITY TIES LEAD TO A FULL LIFE

Everyone needs people in their life, and Carla Peterson knows just how important it is to make meaningful connections. The friendly Packers fan is a real people person, and uses that to her advantage. Carla, who has an intellectual disability and uses the TMG IRIS Consultant Agency, lives on her own in Cable, WI. Over the years, Carla has loved building connections in her community. She plays hockey on a local team, and she was once part of a group of people who practiced being clowns. She's turned her love of dogs into a small pet walking business. She also enjoys riding her bike into town to her favorite café, and chatting with all the local business owners.

Through her many interests, Carla has developed strong relationships with almost everyone in her small community. In fact, her sister and main support, Cecelia, says that over time, Carla has become well-loved and supported by her community. This not only helps Carla have a

richer social life, but also is a way for her to have other people in her life that she can rely on if her sister is unable to help her from time to time.



*Carla Peterson (left) and Cecelia (right).*

"There's a backup plan. In case there might be [an emergency], I know what to do," says Carla. "[My friend] at Goodwill will help me out."

Creating relationships doesn't happen overnight — in fact, it took Carla many years to get to know the people in her community. But it's been a fun journey, and has allowed Carla to be

an active member. She can do a lot of things on her own, but she also has a great support system in place when she needs a helping hand. Carla's biggest piece of advice for others is to find ways to get out and about in your community and to not be afraid to talk to people — you never know when you'll make a new friend!

**"Once you find your good friends, stick with them," says Carla. "If you need help, feel free to go to your TMG IRIS Consultant or to your friends and see if you can get the help you need."**

One way Carla can help her friends "stick with her" is to develop her own circle of support. Circles are groups of people who meet regularly to provide support to an individual or family. For more information about circles of support, we invite you to visit [tmgwisconsin.com/circle](http://tmgwisconsin.com/circle).

# MEET CEDRIC: HOW HOME IMPROVEMENTS BUILT A COMMUNITY

**Whenever we work towards a major goal, there's a good chance that unexpected things will happen. These things can sometimes make it feel impossible to finish what we set out to do. Thankfully, if we're willing to ask for help, we can usually find a good solution.**

Cedric Ivory experienced just this when he and his wife Lisa bought a house in Milwaukee. They knew the place needed some work, and they were happy to roll up their sleeves and get started. These first-time homeowners did the simpler things themselves, like painting walls, switching out light fixtures, and planting flowers. After seeing how nice Cedric's yard looked, neighbors were inspired to start painting their homes and planting flowers in their own yards. This made the neighborhood a more beautiful and inviting place to live.

Of course, Cedric and Lisa couldn't fix everything in their home that

needed to be repaired. For the stuff that was beyond their skill set, they reached out to their handier family, friends and local contractors for the large jobs like replacing floors and electrical work. Cedric's outgoing personality and his willingness to ask for help made people happy to pitch in. This also helped him strengthen his relationships with the people he already knew and helped him to build new relationships with others. They were all part of "Team Cedric," and excited to help turn



*Cassidy (left) and Cedric Ivory (right).*

Cedric and Lisa's new house into a true home.

Despite all of their hard work, there were still things that made it difficult for Cedric to be more independent in his home. Cedric, who is enrolled in the TMG IRIS Consultant Agency, has a physical disability and uses a rollator walker to get around. So Cedric asked his TMG IRIS Consultant to help him find ways to make the house more accessible. Cedric and his TMG IRIS Consultant reached out for an accessibility assessment from IndependenceFirst, an independent living center in Milwaukee. While the IndependenceFirst housing expert was at Cedric's home, he noticed that Cedric and his rollator couldn't really fit in the house's very tiny bathroom.

"I couldn't close the door, and [the representative] said, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'Man, I'm dealing with what I've got!'" said Cedric.

The IndependenceFirst housing expert encouraged Cedric to find a contractor who could make his bathroom more accessible. So

Cedric reached out to his new TMG IRIS Consultant, Cassidy, and together they began seeking a contractor to help with the renovation. The contractor drafted a plan that would allow Cedric to have a larger, more accessible bathroom, and to have a closet on the first floor, so he wouldn't need someone else to bring him his clothes from upstairs.

Today, Cedric and his wife are able to live in their home near their family, friends and other supports. Through it all, Cedric wasn't shy about letting his TMG IRIS Consultant, Cassidy, and other people know when he needed help solving a problem. He encourages other people to know that they don't have to do everything on their own, and that others are there to support them to have a better life.

**“I must say thanks to Cassidy — she’s my number one,” says Cedric. “I got what I need now thanks to the IRIS program.”**

## A TOP-RATED YEAR!

As we near the end of 2019, we want to thank you for partnering with the TMG IRIS Consultant Agency (ICA). We know you have choices when it comes to which ICA you enroll in, and we appreciate the opportunity to partner with you on your self-direction journey in IRIS.

Given how much we value our partnership with you, we were especially honored to learn that TMG is the top-rated IRIS Consultant Agency in Wisconsin. In July, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) shared its first ever IRIS Consultant Agency Options Scorecard.

The scorecard rates five of the seven ICAs. (Two of the ICAs have not been around long enough for DHS to score them.) The ratings are based, in part, on IRIS participant survey results about their satisfaction with their ICA. DHS also rated how well each ICA meets different IRIS quality and compliance requirements.

TMG not only received the most stars out of any ICA, but was also the only ICA to receive two 5-star ratings: five stars for IRIS Consultant quality of communications and five stars for quality and timely services. We are beyond proud to be so highly thought of!

The scorecard is now being used at the Aging & Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) during long term care options counseling. Thank you for helping us become the top-rated ICA in Wisconsin, and for inspiring us every day to give you our best work. We're excited to see what 2020 will bring!

We hope you have a wonderful holiday season, and an amazing new year!

*Gwendolyn Dunkin*

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## FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

**A lot has been happening on TMG's Facebook and Twitter pages! Have you visited them lately?**

Catch up on important news and events, learn about others who are living self-determined lives and see what TMG has been doing throughout Wisconsin. Be sure to share your favorite posts and become part of the broader self-determination community in Wisconsin!



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