



Building Social Capital

What is Social Capital?

Social capital describes the value of social networks and the tendencies that arise from these networks to do things for each other. It is informal in nature and characterized by trusting relationships. These relationships are influenced by the norms and values within each network. Relationships and interactions with family, friends, acquaintances and strangers all contribute to social capital.

Why is this important?

Social capital is important for everyone. For people with developmental disabilities, it is even more important because they are at risk of being excluded and experiencing diminished self-determination. Social capital furthers inclusion within a community and access to social support networks.

How can I help the individuals I serve to build Social Capital?

Supporting people to create and maintain social roles is a good start. Consider everyday opportunities such as going to the bank or coffee shop. Interactions with a bank teller or barista may seem insignificant but these social roles are an important part of building social capital. These simple connections engage the person in a larger network and can bring more meaning and inclusion into the person's life.

Opportunities for creating and maintaining social roles are all around...

Of course, these opportunities will be as unique as the people you support but once you begin to think about it, you will find opportunities everywhere.

Community Presence Focused on positive interactions	Community Inclusion Opportunities to meet and build relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Go to a local folk or crafts festival ▪ Dining out at a restaurant ▪ Going to the movies ▪ Going shopping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Join a gym or rec center, attend class(es)/participate w/same group ▪ Volunteer at a library, shelve/unpack books/participate in Friends of Library activities ▪ Participate in local neighborhood board meetings / civic league ▪ Join a church; participate in some of their activities (homeless support, acting as ushers/ greeters, etc.) ▪ Meet with work friends after work ▪ Become a peer mentor ▪ Help run the snack bar at the Little League field ▪ Participate in the DBHDS Regional Quality Council