



### Overview of the Trajectory Principle

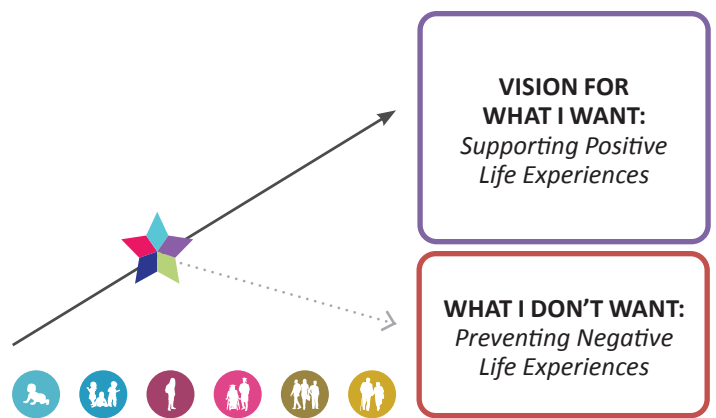
Life is a journey for everyone. In each stage of life, we are paving a path that leads towards a vision for the future. This path, or Trajectory, will have ups and downs where there is a need to stop and consider what to do next. The Trajectory Principle and tool will help you define your vision and consider how your past experiences have helped or hindered you in meeting your goals. You will be able to set goals and list out what may get in your way. The higher the expectations, the more opportunities and experiences will be possible, and will lead toward achieving your goals and dreams.

#### Who Should Use it and Why?

The Trajectory tool is a visual aid to guide and help you explore and plan things in your life. It can be used by anyone at any stage or age of life, for short-term or long-term goals or even problem-solving day-to-day life. The Trajectory can be used as a self-exploration tool to reflect on your own life and organize next steps or by support teams for developing person centered plans to guide services and supports. This specific trajectory is designed to help you define your vision, and plan steps for your successful transition from foster care.

### Important Things to Remember about the Trajectory

- There is no right or wrong way to fill out the Trajectory and each one is unique. **It's all about YOU!**
- The Trajectory is a strengths-based concept designed to help think about life, both short and long term. It can also be used to promote discussion, self-awareness, shared knowledge and facilitate planning.
- It is important for everyone to think about the future, no matter what the age. For some people, this may be hard to think about or describe. If this happens, start with the things you don't want for the future. Thinking about fears, dislikes or concerns can sometimes help you identify what IS wanted. It might also be helpful to consider all the different life domains.
- Each one of us has our own unique life trajectory shaped by our beliefs, cultures, and experiences. Some of these are happy and some of them we want to forget. Thinking about past life experiences might bring back memories that are hard to talk about or remember.
- Completing the Trajectory for the sake of completing the tool should never be the goal. The tool is designed to help you with having interactive conversations and visually organizing your thoughts and ideas



#### How the Tool is Organized

The Trajectory is a visual tool organized in two major sections, Vision and Experiences. The Vision section, on the right-hand side, is further broken down into what is wanted and what is NOT wanted in your life in general. The larger parts of the Vision sections are to think specifically about transitioning from foster care. The trajectory line is depicted as a staircase, where you can list steps to take to move toward your good life. This easy-to-use format organizes the information in a way that enables discussion or review of the current and future Trajectory. There is no “right” or “wrong” answer or order to follow when completing the tool. The focus should be on your goals, wishes, and desired outcomes.





## Suggestions for How to Complete and Use the Trajectory

### Decide the Purpose

The Trajectory tool will help you begin planning for achieving your vision or goals. Think about what is going on right now. Decide the time frame you are thinking about. Are you considering more short-term goals (something achievable in the next month or year), or a longer-term vision (something that takes longer and is further away, like five or ten years, or at a certain age or after a life event)? Inside the vision boxes, there is space for you to consider your “overall” good life, as well as think about your transition from foster care. There is a circle in the middle of the page to write your age or name, or it could be used to write the date.

### Explore Each Part of the Trajectory

You can start anywhere on this tool. We recommend starting with the “Vision” boxes on the right side of the page, because what is listed here will keep you focused on your vision or be a reminder of exactly what you don’t want. Think about your good life in the smaller box inside the vision section, then think about what you want and need as you transition from foster care. You will also want to consider what you don’t want in your life in general, and more specifically as you are transitioning from foster care. The section to the left that looks like stairs is a place for you to think about steps you want to take to help move closer to what you want. What goals and activities can you work on right now that will help you move toward your desired vision? In the box below the stair trajectory line, list the things that could stop you from achieving your vision or might be a barrier to what you want.

Be sure to read through the entire tool again and add information that you might have missed the first time. When you’re done, think about what you have learned while completing the tool and how to keep using this information to help you achieve your vision.

### On-going Use of the Trajectory

The trajectory is designed to be used over and over again, and be updated to reflect your growth and new goals. It is designed to become a problem-solving, planning, or progress tracking process, not a form to be completed and filed away. You can use the tool to plan on your own or with a group of people. It can help you prepare for a meeting or be used during a meeting to help the team stay focused on what is important to you. Your trajectory can be shared with others or kept to yourself to use as notes or to help you communicate.

## Samara’s Trajectory

Samara is 17 years old and has lived in foster care for 10 years. She has lived with her current foster family for 3 years, and gets along well with them. She considers them family and wants to stay in touch. Samara will soon be transitioning out of the foster care system and needs to begin making some decisions about her life moving forward. She is thinking about where she wants to live, what kind of job she wants, and many other aspects of her life, such as health, social life, and relationships. Samara decides to do a trajectory to help organize her wants, needs, and goals.

