

Financial well being: Reframing the benefits conversation

Institute for Community Inclusion

University of Massachusetts
Boston

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Institute for Community Inclusion
PROMOTING THE INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

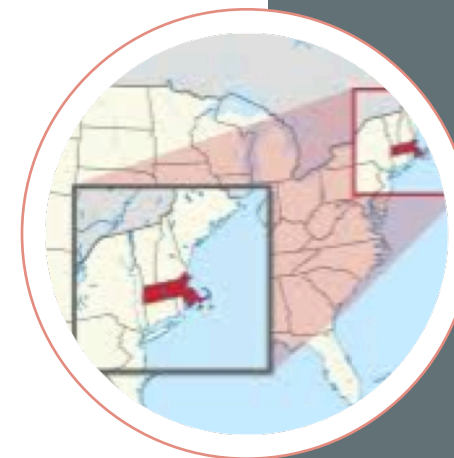
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON • BOSTON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

In Massachusetts...

- Living Below the Poverty Level
 - People w/o Disabilities = 7.8%
 - People with Disabilities = 27.5%
- Employment Rate
 - People w/o Disabilities = 82.3%
 - People with Disabilities = 38.9%. [People with IDD = 19%*]
- Not Working but Actively Looking for Work
 - People w/o Disabilities = 20.9%
 - People with Disabilities = 8.4%

*National Core Indicator 2015/2016

American Community Survey – Ages 21-64, 2016



Why are we talking about poverty?

- A lifetime on benefits is a lifetime in poverty
- Poverty = insecurity



Yet what is one of the most significant barrier to work for people with disabilities?

Potential loss of benefits





Do you know people who have suppressed earnings?

What is the impact?

How do we see things?



OR



**In Addition to
Solving Problems Are
You Creating Vision?**



There is more to moving out
of poverty than money...

- Mental and cognitive resources
- Emotional resources
- Physical resources
- Relationships and role models
- Social capital

Reference: *Bridges out of Poverty* (DeVol, Payne, Smith, 1999)




Let me tell you Dave's story..



So what happens...

- Low expectations
- Risk aversion – surplus safety
- Perceived fix for basic financial instability



Suppressed Earnings
=
Suppressed Quality of Life



So, how can we
reframe this
conversation?

The four elements of financial well-being

	Present	Future
Security	Control over your day-to-day, month-to-month finances	Capacity to absorb a financial shock
Freedom of choice	Financial freedom to make choices to enjoy life	On track to meet your financial goals

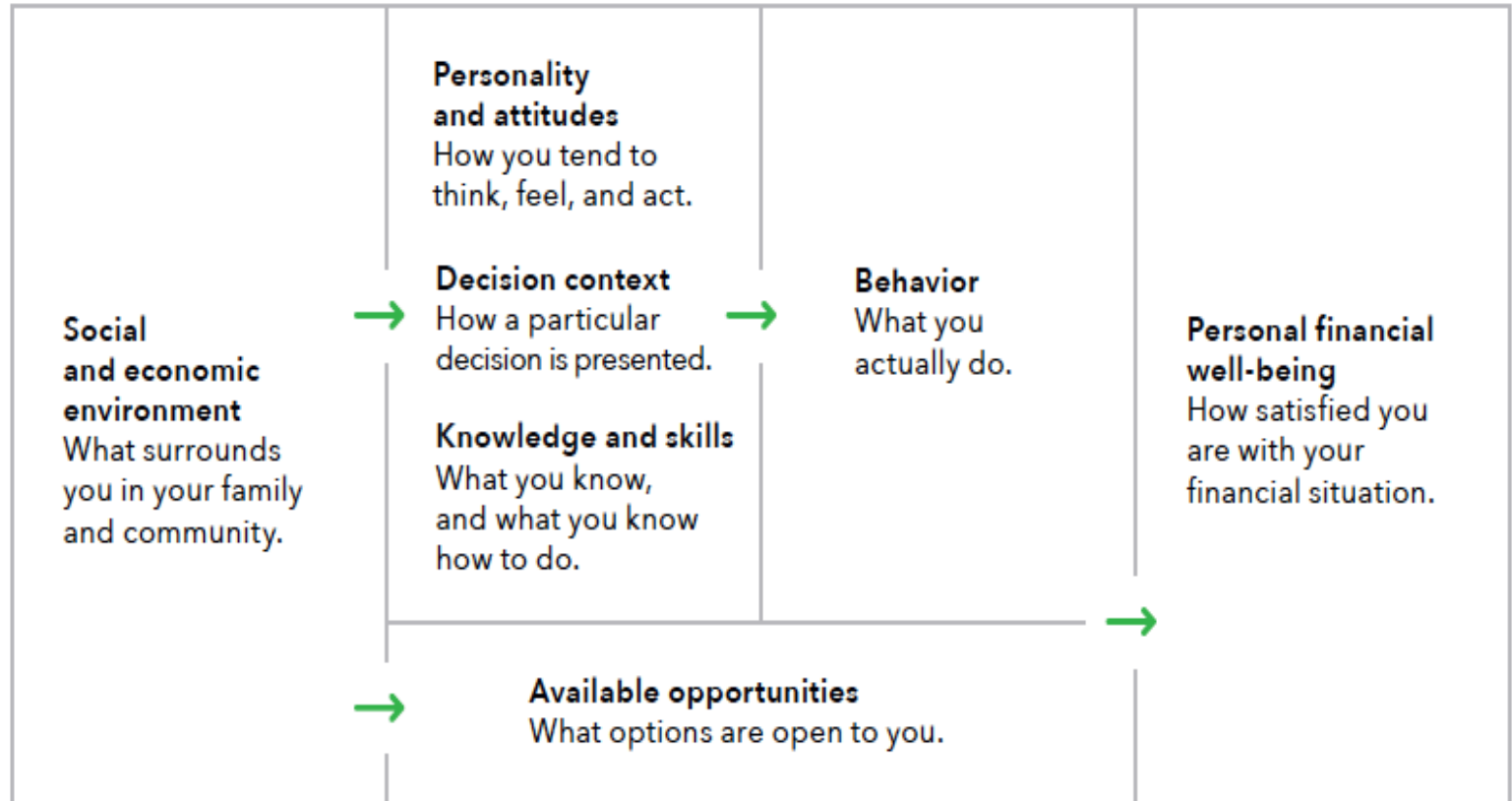
What is financial well being?

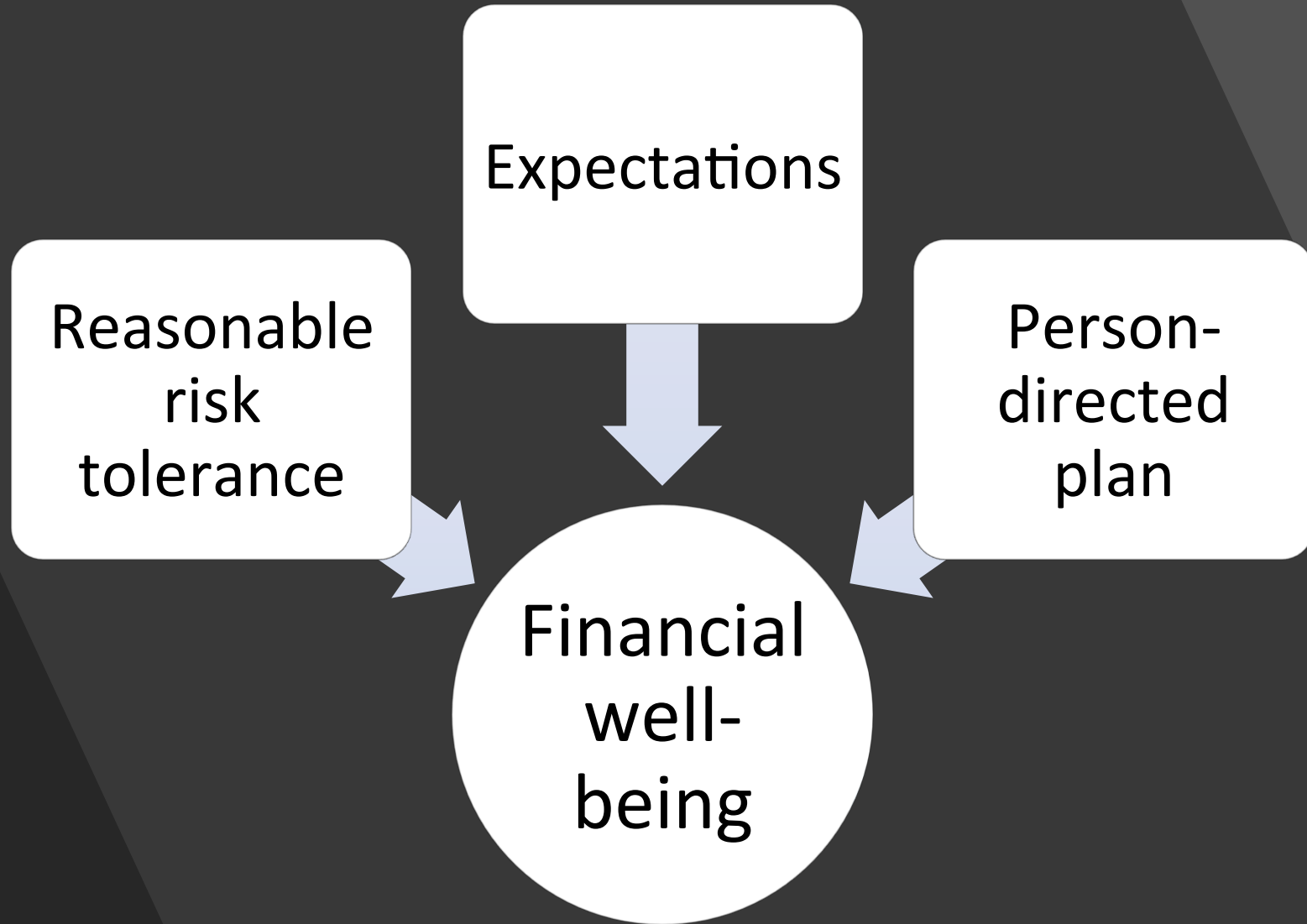
Consumer Finance Protection Bureau

Factors that influence financial well-being

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

What influences financial well-being





- Person-directed vision and plan
- High-quality employment supports
- Pro-employment benefits information and counseling
 - ✓ *Benefits are part of the discussion, but they don't drive the discussion!*

Essential supports for financial well being

Integrating financial needs and wants into the person centered planning process

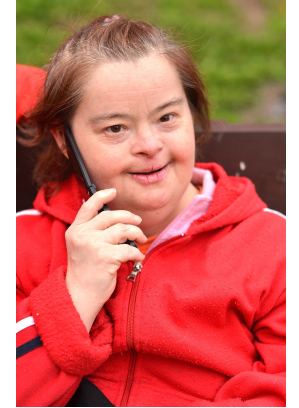


- What are your financial obligations?
 - Living expenses – rent, food, etc.
- What are your goals for the future?
 - A new place to live?
 - A vacation?
 - A little breathing room financially?
 - Money to buy birthday and Christmas presents?
- How much money would you like to have each month?

Working through the options



- Jeanne's story....



- Alexander's story...





Real Work Stories

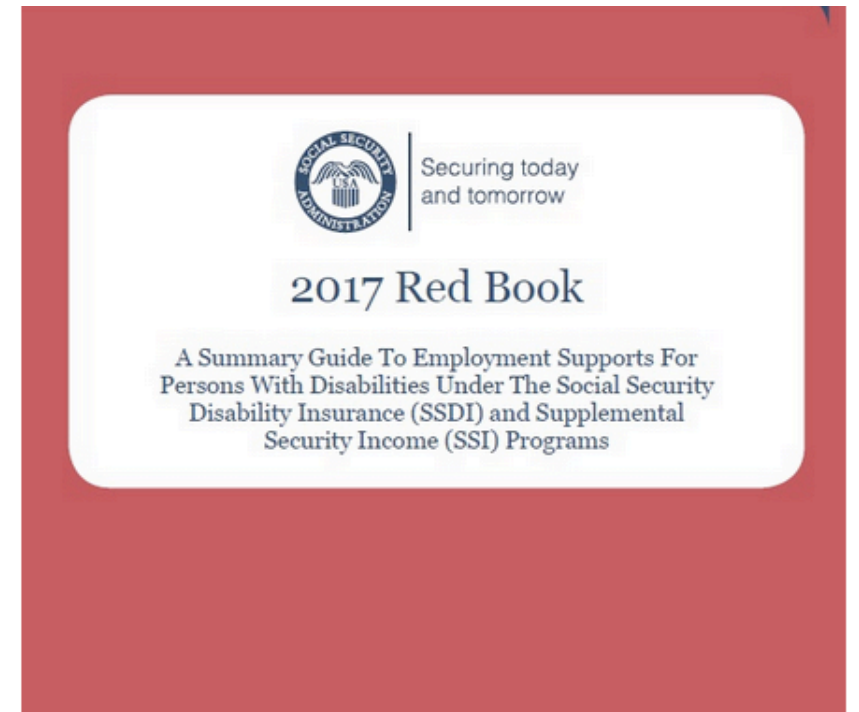
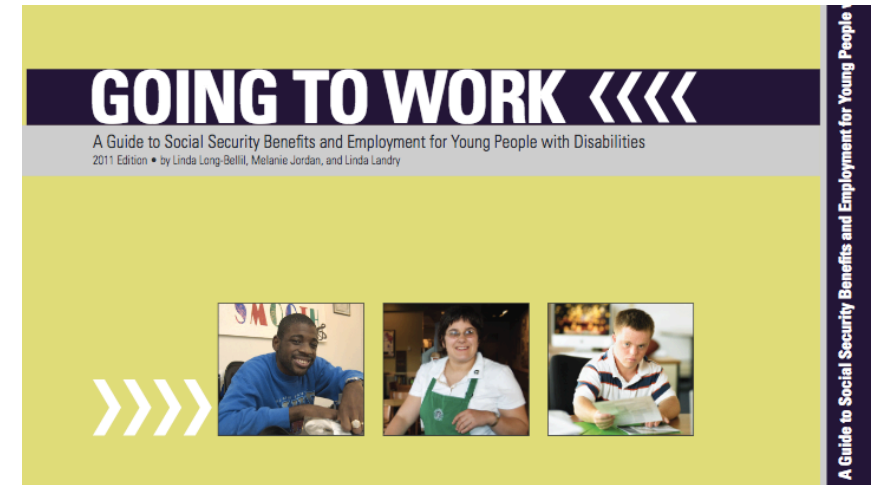
<https://www.realworkstories.org/transition/jeremy-how-early-work-experiences-supported-personal-and-career-development>

Jeremy's Perspective

- “I would like to move into different areas of the company. Get raises and be able to one day support a family. I am happy helping the green movement and doing comfortably for myself. Helps burn off energy and gives me purpose.”
- “[My job] contributes to my independence and freedom from government handouts. Don't like taking my neighbors' taxes...Without my current job I wouldn't be as independent.”

Resources to help you “do the math”

- Benefits planning services-
 - Work Without Limits Benefits Planning
www.workwithoutlimits.org/benefitscounseling
 - Project IMPACT
<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/statewide-employment-services>
- Social Security Online Red Book
- Going to Work: A Guide to Social Security Benefits and Employment for Young People with Disabilities
https://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=211



Understanding the safety nets

Unemployment

- People with disabilities have the same access to unemployment benefits as anyone else

Expedited reinstatement

- If you stop working anytime within five years of when your disability benefits stopped because of earnings, you may be able to get your benefits reinstated without starting over.

Options for healthcare

- Work Incentives – 1619B
- MassHealth/CommonHealth
- ACA
- Continuation of Medicare

Coming soon....

- Nuts and Bolts of SSI and SSDI, Public Health Insurance and Other Public Benefits
 - May 2 and 3
 - June 6 and 7
- Foundations of Community Employment
- Strategies for Discovery and Career Planning
- Job Development and Business Engagement
- Job Coaching and Support Strategies
- Earnings and Benefits: Using Social Security Work Incentives

Go to www.employmentfirstma.org
to learn more and to register





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