

Have you had the talk yet? You know, the "talk". Not the talk that Dads have with their sons or that Moms have with their daughters, but that other talk; the one that you might have with a spouse, a family member, or maybe a friend. This talk is not completely specific to those who have children who have special needs, but it does seem to be of particular importance to them.

It often begins in our heads, as a thought, long before it actually happens. It is that subject that nobody really wants to talk about. We tell ourselves that we have plenty of time, there's no hurry, it probably is not going to happen to us, so we put it off as long as possible. But, it's still there, nagging at us from the back of our minds.

What is going to happen to my child if something happens to me and I am no longer able to care for my child?

Who knows my child's medical history, medications and dosages, eating habits, preferences, and routines? Who understands my child's IEP and the accommodations that are needed in school? Who would best be able to help my child lead a productive and successful life, living as independently as possible and achieving his or her dreams?

Do you have a plan? Have you recorded your thoughts and wishes in writing or in a document? Have you created a Will? Have you thought about a Guardian for your child, or possibly a Special Needs Trust? Have you visited with other parents about their plans? Parents of other children can be a wealth of information and insight, offering us ideas and resources we've not yet considered.

The Oklahoma Autism Network's Life First training series presented a training, *Future Planning and Special Needs Trusts*, that can be viewed on-line. It can be accessed by going to <http://okautism.org> under the middle green heading of Oklahoma Autism Network. On the pull-down screen, go to Workshops and Trainings, On-Line, February 2008. There is a video for viewing and a Power Point presentation that can be printed.

Consider adding the "talk" to your short list of things to do. If possible and appropriate, include your child in the planning of their long-term future. It is never too early or too late to begin.