

Family, friends and a secure future

by Jo Dunaway

How are RAs used in the "real world"? Transition spoke with some people who have made Agreements and used them.

The Cucek Family

"Our Representation Agreement has given our family peace of mind," says Linda Cucek. Her 19-year-old son Jamie recently made a Representation Agreement (RA) with his parents Linda and Stan as his representatives, and his brother Brian as his alternate representative.

Jamie has high-functioning autism. He graduated from high school and is a talented pianist. But there are times when the side effects of his various medications cause him to act in an irrational manner.

"It can be the roller coaster from hell," says Linda. "His medications can

make him very paranoid and angry. He will sometimes just take off if no one is watching."

In the past, Jamie was placed briefly in a group home against his wishes and those of his parents. When Jamie was admitted to hospital to have his medications adjusted, he was kept in the psychiatric ward or in isolation, a situation that frightens and frustrates Jamie and his entire family.

Not long ago, side effects of his medications caused Jamie to hallucinate and become paranoid, and he fled to his neighbours for protection from his family. Fortunately, a knowledgeable policeman was able to help resolve that situation.

To Linda, this latest episode was a signal that something had to be done to protect Jamie who was now an adult and legally beyond his parents' control.

"We knew that once Jamie had turned 19, we would no longer have parental control," says Linda. "It really frightened us—and it frightened Jamie too—that if he were having an episode, decisions could be made for him that he wouldn't want."

Linda and her family were referred to the Representation Agreement Resource Centre by advocates at the BCCPD and found, Linda says, "peace of mind and security."

With the Representation Agreement that he helped draft, Jamie



From left to right: James, Linda and Brian Cucek

knows that the wishes he has expressed when he is calm will be honoured when he is suffering from the side effects of medications. And his family feels empowered because they have the legal standing to speak up for Jamie and carry out his wishes. With older brother Brian a party to the RA as alternate representative, the family feels more comfortable about Jamie's future.

The Cuceks have registered their Representation Agreement with Nidus so a copy will be available, 24 hours a day, if it is needed.

"Our Representation Agreement has made such a huge difference. We're like a different family now, not always dreading what is going to happen next," says Linda.

Fay Sherlock

Fay lives with her two dogs, Polo and Skippy, in a co-op in Burnaby. She used to live in Woodlands, a facility for

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