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### MAPS and PATH Differences & Similarities

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Maps and PATH are creative Person Centered Planning tools designed to identify do-able action steps in the direction of desirable futures.

They are only two of many excellent tools. Good facilitators have a full tool belt, and, as they approach a situation, they make judgments about which tools are most appropriate. Good facilitators may even switch tools in mid-stream when new information shows that the initial selection won't help people get where they want to go.

Both Maps and Path can be used with a person, a family, or an organization. Both need welcoming locations and include the people who support the person in focus or the key actors in the organization. Both get to specific next steps. Both use coaching and graphic facilitation.

The major difference between the tools is their starting focus. The center point of the **MAPS process** is the "story" of the person or organization at the center. MAPS encourages people to tell their story; to create a rich portrait of their journey which includes a statement of both a dream and a nightmare. By nurturing the dream, and confronting the nightmare, people increase clarity on a desirable future direction. Next we create a full positive portrait which brings strengths into clear focus before moving to define next steps.

In most cases, when we hear the story, we discover that there are obvious beginning action steps right in front of us - so close we couldn't see them. Thus, the MAP supports a journey to a desirable future, with a coach.

The MAPS process is ideal to know a person or organization. Sometimes its important to get to know someone who is a newcomer. Sometimes it is important to make sense when identity and direction seem to be lost or confused. MAPS is much more powerful and revealing than file cabinets full of data because the story 'makes sense' of all the isolated facts: they fit into the pattern of a life.

If a person or a team is mired in a deep, complex or painful situation, MAPS may not be a good tool. If people have struggled endlessly, revisiting the past may simply irritate open wounds. Generally, organizational situations are multi-layered and the past may be too complex for a quick overview. These are times when it may be appropriate to consider PATH as the tool of choice.

PATH emerged from our own frustration with the MAPS process in complex situations. We needed a 'sharper' tool to cut through and get into action in spite of complexity. PATH is razor sharp and must be used with caution.

PATH moves people through a highly defined set of questions. It is 'pushy' as a process, though it does not push toward any particular answers. PATH sets the 'confusions' of the present aside for a time, creates the opportunity to investigate common values, and then travels into the future. Through "**planning backwards**," PATHfinders create vivid images expressing their dream. Next, we come closer to the present, (still remaining in the future) and invent possible and positive goals that we will have 'accomplished' one year hence. In carefully orchestrated steps, the PATH process then 'grounds' the **PATH** with a brief visit to the "present", then systematically reviews who will be needed (enrollment) and

what we will need to do to be strong enough to sustain this journey. Changing direction, and noticing both our goals and our enrollment needs, we again plan backwards from the future until we arrive at immediate next steps to be taken - with a coach.

In both MAPS and PATH, the process gets to next steps - with a coach. In both, team facilitation provides one layer of safety. Since both tools are person centered, the individual controls the depth and intensity of the process. They have the right to stop or to persevere. There is a simple safety check available to all facilitators; ask the focus person *how* it is going. They will tell you. Listen. A helpful guideline is 'do no harm'.

Choosing the right tool is an art. Make a great tool collection, then practice, practice, practice. Facilitation is an art, but it can be learned. Renewing dreams is a great gift, and with MAPS and PATH, people leave ready to take steps in the direction of their dreams.

*From Inclusion News - 1998*