

The Columbus Family

Navigating the Teen Years with Direct Care Worker Support

When Kristen Columbus' son reached adolescence, he had the same needs as any other teen. He wanted to explore his world and become more independent. The only problem? Multiple developmental disabilities stood in his way.



Here's how one young man's thoughtful parents employed Direct Care Workers to help open their son's world—and their own.

"As any person gets older, who wants to hang around with mom and dad all the time?"

This was the primary driver behind the Columbus family's decision to employ Direct Care Workers in support of their son's growth and personal freedom.

"We're so close, thankfully, to Eastern Michigan University, which is known for its special education, occupational therapy, and nursing programs," Kristen says. "Some of the Direct Care Workers we've employed are students who are really committed to our family and have some additional knowledge and expertise they can add to our son's care."

Kristen says these Direct Care Workers have opened her son's world to a great degree.

"It's been about five years now, and we've seen tremendous growth for him, and for our entire family," Kristen says.

These benefits also extend into the community as a whole. Not only are important social diversity gains made when all voices are respected and heard, but economic prosperity is increased when parents and families are better supported through robust Direct Care Worker services.

In Kristen's case, her son's time of exploration and freedom translated into some additional exploration and freedom of her own.

"I went back to school to get my master's in social work," she says. "Now I work for the Michigan Developmental

Disabilities Institute, earning for my family and helping vulnerable state residents."

Michigan needs continued state funding to support the Direct Care Workers who are helping families contribute personally and economically.

"Our son has experienced huge gains in adaptive skills at home, and a new way of being within the community. This would never have happened without the Direct Care Workers we've had."

-Kristen