Getting and Keeping the First Job

A curriculum created by the National Family Advocacy Support and Training (FAST) Project, a project of PACER Center: fastfamilysupport.org

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What You Need to Know

• Self-awareness
• Career planning
• Role of families
• Building a resume
• Disclosure and job accommodations
• Interview tips
• How agencies can help
• Other nuggets

It All Begins with Self-awareness

• Many youth don’t know what their disability is, or haven’t practiced telling others about it.
• It is crucial that youth know how their disability affects them in school and on the job.
Career Planning
Before youth begin looking for a job, ask:
• “What is your dream job?”
• “What do you need to know to do that job?”
• “What classes in school can help you learn the skills you need?”
• “Do you like to work inside or outside?”
• “Do you have good times of the day and bad?”

Why Career Planning?
• Helps avoid poor job matches
• Helps improve transition or employment plans such as the Individualized Education Program (IEP)
• Helps youth begin thinking about work in productive way
• Helps youth see a realistic, step-by-step plan to reach long-term career goals

How Families Can Help
Positive family involvement with youth leads to employment and academic success.
How to help:
• Identify strengths of youth
• Catch early signs of problems at work
• Work on “soft skills” at home
• Maintain High Expectations of Youth
Using Personal Networks

• Relationships, not want ads, provide the most job opportunities.
• Everyone has a network within the community they can use.
• Use your network to find opportunities.
• Tell service providers, such as Vocational Rehabilitation, about them.
• How did you find your first job?

DVR Support

• State agency that helps people with disabilities remove barriers and find work
• Voluntary program with no age restrictions once in
• DVR works with schools to support youth
• DVR 101 video: https://tinyurl.com/yakytp92
• Youth in Transition: https://tinyurl.com/y8mxu7gd

Pre-Employment Transition Services

• DVR works with schools to provide:
• Job Exploration Counseling
• Work Based Learning
• Information on transition or postsecondary education programs
• Workplace Readiness Training
• Self-Advocacy Instruction, including peer mentoring
• 15% must be spent on these services
The Resume

- Do we expect youth with disabilities to follow the same process as others to find employment?
- Every job seeker needs a resume.
- Be creative about what’s listed. Paid employment is not the only example of work experience and skills.

Volunteering

Use volunteer experiences to build work skills and improve a resume.
- Volunteering is not a long-term solution to paid employment
- Volunteering shows employers that youth want to work despite lack of paid employment
- Try several experiences so youth can explore different types of jobs

Job Accommodations

- Allow person to perform "essential functions" of a given job
- Are usually inexpensive and simple to put in place
- Can lead to a positive experience for youth
- Identifying potential accommodations
- Can be used to demonstrate initiative to employers when youth know what they need
Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

- Use fact sheets and accommodation examples from JAN during interview process.
- JAN includes helpful information for employers about complying with a law called the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

www.askjan.org

Disability Disclosure

- It may be necessary for a youth to disclose a disability during the interview process
- It’s only necessary if accommodation is needed
- Disclosure is a personal choice
- Youth should practice answering interview questions, including questions that are illegal to ask
- Resources include: 411 On Disability Disclosure (NCWD-Youth)
  http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/411.html

The Interview

- Practice the basics
- Never stress the disability, only strengths
- Avoid giving too much information
- Coach young person on responses to disability-related questions
- Know that although they may be allowed to participate, parents or service providers have no legal right to take part in the interview
The Employer’s Perspective

Employers are looking for:
- A good attitude about working
- Honesty
- Punctuality
- Good communication skills
- Reliability
- Appropriate behavior
- Willingness to learn new things

Keeping the Job

Teach youth to:
- Show up
- Take direction and work well with others
- Be flexible

Families Can:
- Build support system at work
- Communicate regularly with employer and service staff
- Know that sometimes it just doesn’t work and that’s OK

Additional Advice

- Practice filling out job applications
- Plan for transportation
- Consider disability management
- Encourage postsecondary education

Remember, the first job should not be the last job. Never stop expecting great things!
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