

IEP Components Series

Employment Connections

Students who are moving from school to post school life need to have transition services in their IEPs. For many students, they will be leaving school and entering the job market. For many youth with disabilities looking ahead to life after high school, employment will be an immediate and serious consideration. And the time to consider it well and thoroughly is during the high school years, during transition planning, and through transition services that are carefully matched to the goal of employment. The focus of this issue of NASET's IEP Component series was written by the National Dissemination Center for Students with Disabilities (NICHCY). The article will connect you with resources in the employment world. Exploring what these organizations and centers have to offer can be extremely helpful when involved in planning a student's future in this area.

Getting Started

First, is employment a goal the student has for himself or herself? In what area or domain might he or she be interested? There are so many possibilities when you think about having a job, it's important for students to identify what types of jobs are suited to their interests, needs, and preferences. This alone can involve quite an inquiry, but it's a very important beginning link in the chain of planning.

Here are several resources that can help you and yours get started.

Looking for a job? First, look inside yourself.

Starting with Me: A Guide to Person-Centered Planning for Job Seekers is a career development guide to help you make satisfying job choices. Finding satisfying work doesn't usually just happen by applying for a job in the newspaper. The process involves several phases– and it all begins with you.

http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=54&type=topic&id=11

How to get the most important person to the table: The young person!

This brief summarizes research on the participation of young people in person-centered planning and gives specific recommendations to help facilitators in maximize student participation.

http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=30&type=topic&id=7

Career planning begins with assessment.

http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&Publications/assessment.html

The best decisions and choices made by transitioning youth are based on sound information including appropriate assessments that focus on the talents, knowledge, skills, interests, values, and aptitudes of each individual. Find out about assessment tools to do just that.

Visit youthhood.org's Job Center.

<http://www.youthhood.org/jobcenter/index.asp>

You will be very glad you did. The site's designed for young adults with disabilities, and this section of the site targets the journey toward employment.

Visit Connect-Ability for Youth.

<http://www.connect-ability.com>

At the link above, select "Youth" from the top menu bar. You'll go to the section designed to help youth with disabilities explore important aspects of going to work. The tabs to pick from include: Why work? What do I want to do? What can I do? Getting experience. How do I get the job? Can I get help? and Getting to work.

Understanding the Network That's Out There to Help

There's nothing like knowing the players in the field. They are excellent sources of help, info, tools, and connections. So...visit these centers and agencies first, and explore what they offer, with an eye for what's relevant to the transition planning you're involved in.

ODEP | Office of Disability Employment Policy.

(866) 487-2365 (Department of Labor, toll-free)

(877) 889-5627 (Department of Labor, TTY)

<http://www.dol.gov/odep>

ODEP is a fine place to gain an understanding of the network that exists with respect to the employment of individuals with disabilities. ODEP provides information, training, and technical assistance to America's business leaders, organized labor, rehabilitation and other service providers, advocacy organizations, families, and individuals with disabilities. (Keep ODEP in mind, too, as the youth's journey to employment unfolds, because many of its publications will come in handy further down the road.)

NCWD/Youth | Navigating the Road to Work.

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>

The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) helps state and local workforce development systems better serve youth with disabilities. Its online information is phenomenal, directly pointed at the target, and rich with info for families, youth, service providers, administrators, all of us, really. Lots of Spanish materials available, too!

Career One-Stops | Your pathway to career success.

<http://careeronestop.org/>

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, this website organizes a great deal of info under one roof. Explore different careers, take self-assessments, find out about the education and training you need, and use the Service Locator to find workforce development services in your area.

Disability.gov | On jobs & self-employment.

<http://www.disability.gov/employment>

A rich portal into the network and supports made possible by the federal government.

Reasonable Accommodations in the Workplace

Many individuals with disabilities need accommodations and support in the workplace. Here are two premier resources that can help you learn what's considered "reasonable," what types of accommodations can be made, and where employers can tap into specialized free guidance about accommodations.

JAN | The Job Accommodation Network.

<http://askjan.org/>

JAN represents the most comprehensive resource for job accommodations available. Personalized technical assistance is available to employers and individuals with disabilities alike. And it's free, courtesy of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). How great is that?

Regional ADA centers | A gateway to info on the ADA.

<http://adata.org/>

There are 10 Regional ADA National Network Centers, each serving a specific region of the country. Together, they help businesses voluntarily implement the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which includes the federal mandate for reasonable accommodations in the workplace. Via the link above, you can find the center that serves your region and a wealth of info about employment for people with disabilities, what the ADA requires, and connections into this nationwide network of assistance.

What About a Job Coach?

Job coaches play an important role in the workplace for many people with disabilities, especially those whose disabilities are severe. These professionals help the new employee learn the job and how to navigate the world of work. Support may be for a limited period of time or provided on an ongoing basis, depending on the needs of the individual. Connect-Ability (mentioned above) gives the following suggestions to parents: “Here’s how you can help determine whether a job coach may be appropriate for your son or daughter:

- As you work with your son or daughter’s IEP Team to develop work opportunities and career exploration opportunities, be sure to ask if job coaching is appropriate and how your school can provide it.
- When your son or daughter starts volunteering (or working after school, or in the summer), look for natural supports (someone already working at the site, or willing to provide some of the activities listed for a job coach).
- If your son or daughter has trouble keeping a job or being successful on-the-job, consider whether a job coach might be helpful, and talk with your son or daughter about exploring this option.” (Connect-Ability, 2009, “Job Coaches”)

To learn more about job coaches and the role they can play in helping people with disabilities learn and keep a job, try these resources:

What a job coach may do.

http://www.village-isa.org/Services/job_coach.htm

The roles of a job coach.

http://www.worksupport.com/documents/factsheet_jobcoach.doc

Job coach.

<http://www.uiowa.edu/hr/fsds/ada/jobcoach.html>

Job coach training resource page.

<http://jobcoachtraining.net/ONLINE%20CAMPUS/Learning%20Styles/Job%20Coach%20Resource%20Page.htm>

Includes a video!

Supported Employment

You may hear the term “supported employment” used to describe a range of supports that an individual with disabilities may receive at work, but the term actually is most closely associated with its use in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. In that context, supported employment is an approach to addressing the employment needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, those—

- for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred; or
- for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability; and
- who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need intensive supported employment services in order to perform designated work.

For many youth, especially those with significant disabilities, supported employment may be important to consider and pursue. Such services are typically available through vocational rehabilitation programs, but VR is not the only place you’ll find supported employment in operation. SE is considered a “place and train” model: the individual receives job-specific training after placement, rather than prevocational training before placement.

Find out more about supported employment through these resources:

APSE | The Network on Employment

<http://www.apse.org>

Formerly the Association for Persons in Supported Employment, APSE works to improve integrated employment opportunities, services and outcomes for individuals with disabilities. It provides technical assistance to employees, families, and employers.

Rehabilitation RTC on Workplace Support and Job Retention

<http://www.worksupport.com/>

The RTC studies those supports that are most effective for assisting individuals with disabilities maintain employment and advance their careers. And they write about it! Lots of good materials to be found under the “Resources” section of the website.