

# Getting and Keeping the First Job

## Trainer's Manual





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**Trainer's Manual**

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## **Getting and Keeping the First Job**

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## Introduction for Trainer

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This curriculum was developed in response to a need expressed by parents and parent groups across the county. Designed with input from parents, it is intended to help parents plan how they want to prepare youth for employment. The movement from school to adulthood can be an uncertain time for youth with disabilities and their families. One critical component of this transition is the building of work skills that can lead to competitive employment.

**Intended Audience:** The intended audience for this training is parents of children with disabilities, who are from racial, ethnic, or cultural minority backgrounds, poor, geographically underserved or otherwise underserved or underrepresented.

**Purpose and Goal of Training:** Many families may wonder if their son or daughter can or will be employed. The goal of this session is to help families, caregivers, and professionals understand the realities of today's work world so they can help youth with disabilities earn competitive employment. Participants will learn the importance of disability self-awareness, how families can help youth with career planning, and strategies to navigate resumes, job interviews, and job accommodations. Particular attention is paid to the role of families in the career exploration and job hunting process. The message of the session is simple: families who understand the world of work, and who maintain high expectations of their youth, can play a pivotal role in the employment success of youth with disabilities.

### Workshop Objectives:

1. Participants will learn about the importance of employment for all people, and its particular impact on people with disabilities.
2. Participants will learn about the realities of today's labor market and the impact of those realities on youth with disabilities seeking employment.
3. Participants will learn the critical role of families in promoting disability self-awareness, engaging youth in career planning, and maintaining high expectations of youth.
4. Participants will learn how to navigate basic job search activities such as creating a resume, building needed work skills, and performing well in job interviews.
5. Participants will use the perspective of employers to understand what employers are looking for in candidates.
6. Participants will learn about strategies that help youth with disabilities keep the jobs they get.
7. Participants will be encouraged to consider other important factors such as self-employment, transportation, and postsecondary education.
8. Participants will receive additional resources related to topics addressed in session.

### Supplies Needed for This Training

1. Most sections contain "related resources" that can be provided to attendees in a packet.
2. Presenters will need a computer, LCD projector, and a screen.
3. "The Employer Perspective" section works best when an actual employer is asked to participate. This will require presenters to recruit an employer who hires young people, and to prep employer with suggested questions from curriculum.

**Evaluations:** Participant evaluations are important component of any training. Please distribute and collect evaluation forms from all workshop participants. They can be found in the appendix.

**References:** This curriculum is based on an extensive review of the literature, as well as existing training tools and educational material on employment issues for youth with and without disabilities.

## Tips for Trainers

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You are the key to making this training a success. Knowing your community and bringing your own experience and stories will make the curriculum engaging and relevant for families. This curriculum is based on extensive review of the literature, as well as existing training tools and education materials designed to provide core topical information based in research and best practice. National focus groups and pilots by Parent Centers have been conducted to ensure the content is useful to families of children with disabilities who are underserved or underrepresented.

### Tips

1. PowerPoint Slides—PowerPoint slides are left open for you to edit and revise as you feel necessary to engage your community. This includes eliminating or adding slides, and using different wording or images.
2. Preparing to Present—Information is provided on each slide as a way to prepare your own remarks and examples during the session. Presenters' notes are not meant to be a script for the session. Feel free to organize these notes in any way that is helpful including adding your own notes.
3. Activities, Stories and Examples—Use “Related Activities” as a way to structure your own activities for families. Activities, stories, and examples allow families to better relate information to their own lives and understand how they can apply what they are learning.
4. Information Packets—Use “Related Resources” and handouts found in the appendix of this curriculum as a starting point for creating information packets for families. Add your own handouts and information on local resources.
5. Translations—Spanish translations are provided of the PowerPoint, evaluation, and handouts for this curriculum. The PowerPoint is left open for you to edit and revise as you feel necessary to engage your community. This includes eliminating or adding slides, and using different wording or images. If you would like to make edits to any of the accompanying handouts, please contact the National Parent Center on Transition and Employment and we will send you the handout in a Word Document that can be edited.

### Specific to this Curriculum


This curriculum is intended to be delivered to parents of youth with all types of disabilities. Some of the information discussed may appear to be at “too high of a level” to be applicable for youth with significant intellectual disabilities. It needs to be noted that a core value of this curriculum is high expectations for all youth with disabilities. The strategies outlined in this curriculum are not exclusive to youth who may be higher functioning.

Trainers will need to encourage families to determine to what extent their youth can use the tips, and to what extent they themselves may need to offer support. For example, youth with significant intellectual disabilities may not be able to verbalize what their disability is and how it impacts them in work situations. However, parents can learn to do this, and in doing so can help the job search process immensely. Parents play a vital role in the job search process for youth with disabilities, and this curriculum is designed to provide them the information they need to be effective partners and advocates.

## Slide 1: Title Page

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Title slide.



# Getting and Keeping the First Job

National Parent Center on Transition and Employment  
[PACER.org/TransitionCenter](http://PACER.org/TransitionCenter)

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## Slide 2: Workshop Information

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Workshop presenters may wish to insert location, date, and name of presenters on this slide.

# Getting and Keeping the First Job

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## Slide 3: Session Agenda

### Session Agenda

1. Straight talk about employment
2. What you need to know about employment
3. Accommodations, disclosure, and interviewing
4. The employer's perspective
5. Self-employment
6. Closing thoughts, questions, and evaluations

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### PRESENTER NOTES

“Getting and Keeping the First Job” is a workshop designed to help families understand the realities of employment for all youth, with a special emphasis on strategies youth with disabilities can use to improve employment prospects.

This workshop begins with a discussion of the importance of work and what some youth with disabilities experience as they attempt to enter the job market. The session then highlights the crucial role self-awareness, career planning, and families play in the process. It continues with descriptions of the possible pitfalls in the employment process, as well as suggestions for increasing the likelihood

of being hired. Topics include: writing a resume, being interviewed, identifying job accommodations if necessary, and deciding whether or not to disclose a disability to an employer. This section is augmented by the insights of an actual employer who will discuss the hiring process and expectations of employees. The session ends with a discussion about self-employment as an option for youth with disabilities and some additional advice to consider.

Because some families may not have considered employment for their youth with disabilities in the way this session presents the topic, this information at times may seem overwhelming to families. To help families view employment for their youth in a new way, presenters should urge families to recall their own experiences with gaining employment, and consider that youth with disabilities should be expected to follow the same strategies. We all should have high expectations for the employment of youth with disabilities, and that begins by expecting all youth to build work skills and bring a good attitude to the job search.

Please be aware that this session will not elaborate on systems that traditionally provide employment supports for adults with disabilities. Facilitators may wish to couple this workshop with another that provides in-depth descriptions of adult service providers and other community supports.

## Slide 4: A Look at Employment

### A Look At Employment

- People with disabilities are 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed or underemployed than people without disabilities
- Work experience in school, postsecondary education, and families involved with their youth help youth be successful

*“Every youth has some skill that, if nurtured, will provide them the opportunity to make money for the rest of their life.”*

*Larry Korterling*

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### Unemployed or Underemployed

Is the employment of people with disabilities a critical issue? Statistics indicate that it is. According to every statistical measure on disability employment in America, including the monthly disability employment statistics published by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), adults with disabilities are 2.5 times more likely to experience unemployment or underemployment than their peers without disabilities.

“Underemployment” refers to people who are currently employed, but are working fewer hours than they wish, or who are working jobs that

don’t meet their level of education, skill, or experience.

### Work Experience in School, Postsecondary Education, and Family Involvement

There are strategies, however, to counteract those trends. Studies suggest that youth who have meaningful work experiences in school, have some type of postsecondary education or training, and who have families involved in their lives as teenagers, experience increased employment outcomes as adults. “Meaningful work experiences” refer to paid or unpaid exposure to the world of work that aligns closely to a youth’s skills and interests.

### PRESENTER NOTES

Many parents, especially those with youth who have significant disabilities, may question if their youth can become competitively employed. Use this quote from Larry Korterling from Appalachian State University to illustrate that all people have skills that can lead to employment. One goal of this workshop is to stress to families that employment is possible for all people. It is critical that families set high expectations for youth with disabilities and expect that they can work, be lifelong learners, and live independently.

### RELATED RESOURCES

Employment statistics supplied by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy: [www.dol.gov/odep](http://www.dol.gov/odep)

Family involvement studies include the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2: [www.nlts2.org](http://www.nlts2.org)

The 26th Institute on Rehabilitation Issues: The Family as a Critical Partner in the Achievement of a Successful Employment Outcome: <http://www.iriforum.org/books.aspx>

## Why Is Work Important?



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### Work provides:

- A feeling of worth by contributing to society
- Meaningful days
- A place to learn social skills and responsibility
- A way to combat isolation, loneliness, and depression
- A role in the adult world
- Others?

## Slide 5: Why Is Work Important?

Traditionally, employment has been the main method people use to achieve self-sufficiency and maintain connections to their community. It is an ethic and an expectation that is rarely questioned. Unfortunately, society doesn't always hold the high expectation that people with disabilities should be employed. Here are some points to emphasize as you discuss the value of employment to attendees.

### Work provides:

#### A feeling of worth by contributing to society

People often define their contribution to the world around them through the work they do. That contribution may be to work at a job that is seen as meaningful, or to be part of a team, or to simply provide for yourself and those you love.

### Meaningful days

What is your reason for waking up every morning? Often, the answer is to go to work. Without employment, people with disabilities may struggle to give structure to their days. Families need to consider what their youth will do as an adult to give meaning to life.

### A place to learn social skills and responsibility

The work place is often an opportunity for young people to learn how to be responsible and interact with others appropriately. Work direction is given by somebody other than a parent, and youth work as part of a team. Parents often see great personal growth in their youth after he or she is employed.

### A way to combat isolation and depression

Once youth with disabilities leave high school they often lose touch with peers and friends. Many adults with disabilities struggle with feeling isolated and depressed because they are not connected to a social network. Employment can help people with disabilities maintain important interpersonal connections and networks.

### A role in the adult world

In our society, it is expected that adults will work. To illustrate this, think of the last time you were in a social situation where you met new people. Chances are one of the first questions you would ask a new person you meet is "what do you do?" Too many people with disabilities don't have an answer to this question. We need to expect that all people can work if they wish to.

### RELATED ACTIVITY

Ask participants to recall their own employment experiences and share the positive ways employment impacts their lives. Then ask them to share what they hope their youth will gain from being employed.

## Youth with Disabilities and Employment: What We See Today

- Youth unable to find or keep jobs
- Jobs that don't meet strengths or interests
- Youth staying at home waiting for "services" to find them a job
- Youth not willing to disclose a disability



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## Slide 6: Youth with Disabilities and Employment: What We See Today

Families can help their youth prepare for and maintain employment by first understanding what the common barriers to employment are. This list is not meant to discourage youth and families. Rather, it is meant to empower youth and families with the knowledge needed to avoid common mistakes.

### Unable to Find or Keep Jobs

This workshop wouldn't be necessary if not for a widespread problem: youth with disabilities often find it difficult to find competitive employment or keep the jobs they have.

### Jobs That Don't Meet Strengths or Interests

- Often, youth with disabilities are "placed" into jobs or work experiences that don't match their strengths and interests. This placement may be done through a school work experience program or through an employment services provider. Many times the result of this poor job match is a disappointing employment experience or the loss of the job all together.
- We all seek to work in jobs that match what we like to do.
- Families should be encouraged to identify what their youth is interested in and help their youth find careers that meets those interests. Sometimes, specific disabilities might bring difficulties with certain types of jobs. For example, a person with autism might not enjoy working a cash register because of the unpredictable nature of the interpersonal interactions.
- Families can advocate for appropriate job settings based on their knowledge of their youth.

### Waiting for Services

- Once a young person leaves high school, they may qualify for adult employment services such as supported employment or Vocational Rehabilitation. When those services work perfectly, a young person is placed into a job and given some supports to be successful. Unfortunately, there are often long periods of time when a young person may be waiting for the service to find them a job.
- Families need to know that they can work with the service provider to cultivate job opportunities.
- Youth also need to be encouraged to continue filling out applications and exploring job fields even though they are a customer of an employment service. "They haven't found me a job yet" is no excuse for a young person to be inactive.

### Disclosing Disability

- Most disability employment programs are predicated on the customer openly disclosing that they have a disability.
- If youth are not knowledgeable about their disability or deny even having a disability, then these programs will have a tougher time being successful.
- It is necessary for youth to disclose their disability to an employer if they are seeking job accommodations.
- Families are encouraged to work with their youth so they can talk openly about their disability.
- It may not always be necessary to disclose a disability, but knowing how to talk about a disability is a good skill to have.

## Slide 7: Today's Labor Market

### Today's Labor Market

- Strong competition for entry-level jobs
- Concept of "entry-level" fading
- Employees expected to be cross-trained
- Summer months especially competitive
- Interpersonal skills highly valued
- WORKER SHORTAGE expected in the future

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#### Entry-level Jobs

Understanding the current work environment for youth can help families better prepare their youth to be competitive in the labor market. Traditionally, young people's first experience with employment has been through "entry-level" jobs, or jobs that do not require much experience. In years past, those jobs were relatively easy to find, depending on where you lived. Today, there is strong competition for jobs that were once seen as entry-level.

#### Entry-level Fading

In fact, the concept of an entry-level job might be fading. Today, most jobs require some advanced level of technical or computer expertise, customer

relations skills, and organization. In the past, a person could be hired at a large retailer to stock shelves. That would be their only duty.

#### Cross-Training

Today, employees at that same retailer might be "cross-trained" and expected to man the cash register, conduct computerized inventory, or set up displays. Employers are seeking employees who have the skills to do all the jobs that need to be done, not just specialized tasks.

#### Summer Months

- Traditionally, the summer months have been a time where young people have found jobs.
- Ask: How many people here had a summer job growing up?
- Unfortunately, the rates of summer employment for all youth in recent years have been at their lowest point since such statistics began being kept around World War II.
- Summer employment rates are especially bleak for minority youth.

#### Interpersonal Skills

Many employers say that they will "hire attitude" and teach the job skills later. This means that a young person with a neat appearance and a good attitude has a better chance of being hired than a young person who is dressed inappropriately and has a sour demeanor. It may sound basic, but employers want employees who will work well with their existing team and bring the skills needed to do all the necessary tasks. Families can help their youth develop the proper attitude and appearance.

#### Work Shortage

As the baby boomers age, it is expected that the U.S. will experience a labor shortage. When this occurs and there are not enough people to fill the open jobs, youth will have more opportunities if they have the right skills and attitude.

#### PRESENTER NOTES

The information on this slide is not meant to discourage parents, who likely know all too well the challenges of finding employment for youth with disabilities. Despite the potentially negative tone of this information, it is essential that parents understand the realities of today's world of work. Presenters need to stress that the goal of this session is to encourage families and youth with disabilities to engage the job search the same way everyone else is expected to. In short, if the goal is competitive employment, then all people need to know what is expected of them. Families who are knowledgeable about the realities of the world of work are better able to assist their youth, no matter what disability the youth may experience.

## What You Need to Know

- Self-awareness
- Career planning
- Role of families
- Building a resume
- Disclosure and job accommodations
- Interview tips
- Self-employment
- Other nuggets



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## Slide 8: What You Need to Know

Now that issues around employment for youth with disabilities have been described, let's talk about some strategies that can help young people become employed. Here is a list of topics to discuss.

## 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.

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## Slide 9: It All Begins with Self-awareness

### Youth Knowing What Their Disability Is

- A disability does not define who a person is, but it can have a great impact on a person's ability to learn, work, or interact socially. Although we have come a long way in recognizing the strengths and abilities of people with disabilities, many young people still fear the stigma of being labeled as having a disability. Some young people may deny they have a disability or might not be ready to openly discuss their disability with others.

- Families need to recognize that self-awareness of one's disability is the vital first step towards success in education, work, and independent living.

### Youth Knowing How Their Disability Affects Them

- Families should help their youth understand what their disability is and how it impacts them in different areas of their lives. Once youth know what their disability is, they should be encouraged to practice discussing their disability with others. This is not to say that youth need to have this discussion with everyone they meet. But in certain situations, such as IEP meetings or when discussing job accommodations, this skill is crucial.
- In some cases, youth may struggle in school or work without being aware of the cause. When empowered with knowledge about their disability, youth can begin advocate for the things they need. Often, the accommodations for a disability in education or in the workplace are simple, and can lead to success.

### RELATED ACTIVITY

Ask attendees if they have ever openly discussed their youth's disability with their youth. If some answer yes, then ask them to share how they did it and if it was a comfortable conversation. Encourage all attendees to have this conversation with their youth if they have not done so.

## Slide 10: Career Planning

### 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?”

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For the purposes of this discussion, “career planning” does not mean a complicated process full of tests and evaluations. In this context, career planning simply means a process by which a youth with a disability discusses the type of jobs they are interested in and how their disability might impact those interests. These days, youth need to explore careers they might be interested in and utilize school, service providers, and families to help plan for achieving employment in that area.

Families are asked to set aside some time with their youth to ask them some key questions. (Questions listed on slide)

#### RELATED ACTIVITY

Have participants look at the Employment Action Plan located in the appendix. This is a tool they can use at home to start exploring employment options for their youth.

#### RELATED RESOURCE

Tools for exploring career information: <http://www.bls.gov/k12/>

## Slide 11: Why Career Planning?

### 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

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#### Avoid Poor Job Matches

It may seem like a simple exercise, but having a career planning discussion with youth can be valuable for many reasons. It helps families learn how their youth are thinking about employment. What do they hope for and what kinds of jobs interest them? This information can be communicated to the school's work experience staff or employment service providers to ensure youth are placed in jobs that match their skills and needs.

#### Improve Transition or Employment

- For many youth with disabilities, the high

school years are a time to prepare for the adult world. During the school years, the road map for this preparation is a plan called the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Families can use knowledge gained from the career-planning discussion to identify academic coursework or work experiences that can be integrated into a youth's IEP.

- Many adult service providers also utilize a plan to guide a person's programming. Whether the plan is for high school or the adult service world, families need to ask if the person writing the plan knows enough about their son or daughter. Families need to use their own expertise to improve the planning process.

#### Youth Begin Thinking About Work

What if a family has a discussion about career planning with their youth only to learn that their child isn't interested in working or thinks he or she doesn't have to work? It's better to catch this earlier than later. If a youth displays an inappropriate view of the need to work or vocalizes career goals that seem unobtainable, families can take steps to steer youth in the right direction.

#### Youth See a Realistic, Step-by-Step Plan

Finally, career planning allows for goal setting and for the identification of steps to reach that goal.

For example, if a young person wants to work outside and in a job that involves caring for animals, families can take this knowledge to the IEP team so the youth can begin learning about jobs that meet that criteria. Classes can be put in place so the youth can build skills in biology. Families can also seek work experiences or volunteer opportunities so their youth can experience that work firsthand. If the young person follows these steps and still is interested in working outside caring for animals, postsecondary programs can be explored or job placements can be made based on these interests



## Slide 12: How Families Can Help

### 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**

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#### Family Involvement

Studies show that family involvement is a major predictor to employment and academic success for all youth. Still, families may be unsure of what their role can be in the employment success of their youth. The fact is, families can use their knowledge of their youth to help identify good job matches and to support youth on the job.

#### Identifying Strengths

Parents can help the career-planning process by sharing their knowledge of a youth's strengths and interests.

For example, parents might know that their youth

loves to work outdoors and that inside spaces may cause their youth to be anxious. This is information school staff and service providers can use to help build an employment plan.

#### Catch Early Signs of Problems

Parents may also be more in tune to a youth who is having problems on the job and can suggest causes of the issues and solutions.

#### Soft Skills

- Parents can also help build what are often referred to as "soft skills." These skills are rooted in interpersonal communication and personal responsibility rather than technical know-how.
- For example, many of us grew up with expectations that we help out around the house. Expecting youth to do chores at home is an excellent way to build soft skills in youth that can transfer to the workplace.
- Some other ways to build soft skills in the home include practicing doing a task at an assigned time each week, dressing appropriately for certain occasions, or having the youth help plan the family menu.

#### High Expectations

- Above all, the most valuable way families can support their youth is to have high expectations of what they can achieve.
- People with disabilities continue to be marginalized in our society. Often, we don't expect that youth with disabilities will be able to support themselves or follow their career dreams.
- If parents have low expectations of their youth, then it's difficult to expect anyone, including teachers or employers, to have a different view. People with all types of disabilities can be—and are—quite successful in the world of work.
- Families should create a vision for their youth that maximizes their potential and shouldn't settle for any situation where they aren't reaching that potential. If families don't have high expectations for their youth, then no one else will either.

#### RELATED RESOURCES

Top Secret Job Skills: Declassified  
This interactive CD-ROM helps youth understand what "soft skills" are and how important they are to finding and keeping a job.  
<http://www.pacer.org/publications/transition.asp>

Preparing for Employment: On the Home Front  
<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=2844>

High Expectations  
<http://www.pacer.org/publications/specedrights.asp>

## 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?

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## Slide 13: Using Personal Networks

### Job Opportunities

Many of us remember scanning the newspaper classifieds for job openings. That method of finding job openings is quickly becoming obsolete. In fact, many job openings are not listed publicly at all. Today, the vast majority of jobs are found through word of mouth from a person's "network."

### Everyone Has a Network

The word "network" may conjure up ideas about large formal groups of contacts people utilize for specific purposes. For our discussion, a network

is anybody you know, including family members, professional acquaintances, or people you know from places of worship, fraternal organizations, or informal clubs.

Every family member has a network of personal contacts they can utilize to identify potential work experiences, volunteer opportunities, and paid job openings for their youth. Remember, these networks also include places that people do a great deal of business with, such as grocery stores, greenhouses, dental offices, or auto dealerships.

### Use your Network

Families are often apprehensive about whether or not a work site will be a safe place for their youth. If a family uses a personal contact to find a job opportunity, chances are their youth will be working in an environment that is familiar. Families can also use personal networks to gain support from other families or learn about services or job opportunities. Parents who use their own networks to help with their youth's job search are being active participants in their youth's success.

### Tell Services Providers

Often, it falls on a school work experience coordinator, employment specialist, or Vocational Rehabilitation counselor to cultivate job opportunities for a person with a disability. These professionals work hard, but have a limited pool of businesses and resources to refer consumers to. Therefore, the jobs they may have available may not fit the skills and interests of the youth. Most of these employment professionals would welcome tips on potential work experience and job opportunities from families. It makes their job easier.

### RELATED ACTIVITIES

**First Jobs:** The vast majority of jobs are not found through classifieds, but through personal networks. Ask participants what their first job was as a youth. Then ask them if a family member or somebody in their personal network helped find that job. Chances are many of the participants had help from family, friends, or other acquaintances. Use this activity to reinforce the idea that families can play a crucial role in helping to identify job opportunities.

**Personal Network Map:** Provide participants with a pen and blank piece of paper. Ask them to take a minute and list all the people they interact with on a personal, social, and professional level. Encourage them to include places in their community where they do a lot of business. Once this is done, ask participants to choose one or two of the people they listed as sources of potential job leads or work experiences for their youth. For example, a person might have a brother who is a landscaper. If a youth is interested in working out of doors, this might be a good contact. Ask a few of the participants to share what they learned.

## Slide 14: The Resume

### The Resume



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- 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.

### Youth with Disabilities Following the Same Process as Others

The resume continues to be the standard tool employers use to begin screening candidates. In some businesses, the hiring process cannot even begin unless a resume is submitted. Unfortunately, we don't always expect youth with disabilities to have a resume. The assumption might be that a school work experience program or adult employment provider will find a job for the youth and that no resume is needed.

### Job Seeker Needs a Resume

The truth is that every job seeker needs a resume, including youth with disabilities. A professional-

looking resume shows a prospective employer that a youth is organized and understands the steps in the hiring process. Even if a job does not require one, a resume can improve the chances of an applicant getting an interview.

### Be Creative

- Many families may wonder if it is appropriate for their youth to have a resume if they haven't had paid employment. If so, how do you fill a resume without paid work experiences to highlight? A resume is appropriate for all job seekers.
- Employers know that youth are not likely to have many previous work opportunities. Employers want a youth's resume to show that they want to work and have taken steps to be a good employee.
- Youth can show many different types of work experience, including volunteer opportunities, job shadowing opportunities, informational interviews, and any relevant courses they may have taken in or out of school.

### RELATED ACTIVITY

Have participants look at the example resume located in the appendix and discuss.

### RELATED RESOURCE

University of Minnesota's Resume Guide

<http://cla.umn.edu/student-services-advising/career-internship-services/job-search-resources/resume-guide>

## 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

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## Slide 15: Volunteering

Studies show that youth who have quality work experiences during the high school years are more likely to experience positive employment outcomes as adults. The best work experience is actual paid employment. Unfortunately, youth are having a tougher time finding the entry-level jobs that traditionally have provided valuable work experience.

### Volunteering is Not a Long-Term Solution

- How can youth build work experience that can be listed on a resume without actually having a job? One strategy is volunteering.
- **It is important to note that volunteering is**

**not an acceptable long-term substitute for paid employment.**

- Volunteer opportunities should be time limited, and closely relate to career interests a youth may have.
- Be aware that some disability advocates discourage the volunteering option because they see it as a way to funnel youth into unpaid work.
- Stress to parents that volunteering should be viewed as a way to build work skills. It should not be the final option, but a mechanism to move youth into paid employment.

### Volunteering Shows Employers Youth Want to Work

- There are numerous opportunities for youth to volunteer in their communities, and the benefits are great. Volunteering can be used to build a resume for youth who do not have paid work experience.
- Volunteering is a great way to show an employer that even though a youth hasn't had a paid job, he or she wants to work. This is a point that should be highlighted during the interview process.

### Try Several Experiences

Finally, volunteering can allow youth to try many different types of jobs, making it easier to begin focusing on a specific career path they may want to follow. Keep in mind that volunteering is something that a parent or sibling can do with a youth, making it easier to provide any needed coaching or supports.

### PRESENTER NOTES

Many states and communities have Web sites that act as clearinghouses for local volunteer opportunities. Presenters should research Web sites that are available in their areas and provide information to attendees.

## Slide 16: Job Accommodations

### 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



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#### What is a Job Accommodation?

A job accommodation is an adjustment to work environment or job duties that allows a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of a job.

#### Essential Functions

A job’s “essential functions” are the duties a person must be able to perform, such as lifting 20 pounds or being on one’s feet for long periods of time.

The essential functions are usually found in the job description. A “qualified person” is a job

applicant who meets the education and experience requirements of a job description.

#### Usually Inexpensive and Easy to Put in Place

- Job accommodations open the doors for youth with disabilities to work in almost any field they want, as long as they are qualified for the job and the accommodation is reasonable.
- We all require accommodations to function on a daily basis. Overhead lighting allows people with sight to see what they are doing. Chairs allow people to sit comfortably while working. We generally don’t think of these as special accommodations.
- Most accommodations for people with disabilities are also basic and inexpensive. For example, screen-reading software can be used to help a person with a learning disability work on the computer. Modified work schedules can help a person whose medication causes morning drowsiness to work at their peak times.
- Families should strive to understand what job accommodations are and aren’t, and how to help their youth secure accommodations if needed.

#### Can Lead to a Positive Experience

Many youth may believe that there are certain jobs they can’t do, when in fact a job accommodation would allow them to be successful and have a positive job experience.

#### Identifying Potential Accommodations

- Identifying potential job accommodations can begin in middle school and can be a youth-driven activity. Accommodations are also used in postsecondary settings to help a student with a disability do all expected coursework. A family’s youth may already receive occupational therapy or speech therapy services in school. Families should ask if those services can help identify technologies that can act as accommodations on the job.
- Advances in technology mean that more and more accommodations are being identified all the time.

#### Can be Used to Demonstrate Initiative

A youth with knowledge of job accommodations shows employers that they are motivated to be successful. Consider this scenario:

*Slide 16 continued on the next page.*

Adam is a young person with Down syndrome. He loves instruments and wants to work in a music store. Adam's family wants to support his interests, but are worried because Adam often has trouble getting tasks done when multiple directions are given. Adam's mother finds a digital voice recorder in a store and helps Adam understand how to use it. During a job interview at World of Music, Adam tells the interviewer about his love of music and how he will do everything that is asked of him, as long as work directions are dictated into the voice recorder. Adam described the process where a supervisor would tell him his job duties for the day and it would be recorded. Adam would then listen to each direction one at a time and do his duties. If he forgets a direction, he can simply listen to the directions again. The employer was so impressed with Adam's initiative that he gave him the job.

### RELATED ACTIVITY

Ask participants if they are familiar with the idea of job accommodations. Then ask if they would be willing to share what potential accommodations they think their son or daughter might benefit from.

**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](http://www.askjan.org)

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## Slide 17: Job Accommodation Network

Now that we have discussed the important role job accommodations play in the success of people with disabilities in the work place, let's spend a minute talking about a wonderful accommodation resource: The Job Accommodation Network (JAN).

JAN is a free resource funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Policy. The intent of JAN is to provide workplace productivity enhancements and reasonable accommodation solutions. JAN's Web site contains hundreds of fact sheets on specific disabilities and how to accommodate for them on

the job. The site also provides valuable information for employers who are seeking resources on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Families and youth can use JAN's information and fact sheets in a variety of ways. The fact sheets are a valuable educational tool, giving concise information on disabilities that can be used by families to teach their youth or by teachers. The fact sheets can also be used to inform employers about a specific disability. For example, if parents have a youth with cognitive disabilities, the JAN fact sheets can be given to an employer to help ease the fear of hiring that person and to begin the conversation about needed accommodations.

Facilitators may wish to assign homework to participants, instructing them to visit JAN's Web site on their own time to look up information on their child's disability.

### RELATED ACTIVITY

If time and technology allow, demonstrate the Job Accommodation Network Web site. Show attendees some accommodation examples by disability type and the ADA information for employers. Session facilitators will want to familiarize themselves with the site beforehand.

## Slide 18: Disability Disclosure

### 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/411-on-disability-disclosure-for-adults>

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### Disclosing a Disability

There may be times when a person must tell an employer about his or her disability. This is called disability disclosure. People may need to disclose a disability because their disability impacts the kind of work they can do. Perhaps a person has a visible disability and wishes to have an open discussion during an interview. Whatever the case, disclosure is something families need to discuss with their youth.

### Disclosure if an Accommodation is Needed

Disclosing a disability is necessary if a person needs accommodations to perform the essential

functions of a job, or if they seek protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act of a state's human rights law.

### Disclosure is a Personal Choice

“Should a person disclose a disability to an employer?” This is a question disability advocates hear often, and unfortunately, there is no correct answer. Some feel that a person should never disclose a disability to an employer unless absolutely necessary. They argue that discrimination based on having a disability is rampant and people shouldn't give an employer an excuse to discriminate. Others argue that disclosure is necessary if you have a disability that impacts the kind of work you can do, or if you want to maintain an open relationship with your employer.

What we do know is that disclosure is a personal choice and there is no law that says people have to disclose their disability.

### Practice Answering Interview Questions

Families should help youth learn how to discuss disclosure during an interview so a youth's strengths and skills are still the focal point. This takes practice. Families can ensure that their youth better understand their disability and have practice talking about it by including these goals on the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Parents can request that the IEP contain opportunities during the school day for their youth to practice disclosing their disability and answering interview questions, including ones that may be inappropriate or illegal.

### PRESENTER NOTES

Presenters should encourage attendees to look at “411 On Disability Disclosure” from the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. This free work book is a wonderful resource to help youth understand why, when, and how to disclose a disability in various settings.

### RELATED RESOURCES

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth's “The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities”

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/topic/disability-disclosure>

Disclosure Decisions: To Get the Job Fact Sheet

<http://www.worksupport.com/research/viewContent.cfm/585>

## Slide 19: The Interview

### 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



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The decision to hire an applicant is often based as much on the impression given during the interview as technical skills displayed. For example, an applicant may have exceptional computer expertise that would fit a computer programmer position, but if that applicant fails to make a good interpersonal impression, chances are he or she won't get the job. Families can help youth with disabilities understand the importance of the job interview and prepare them to make the best impression.

#### Practice

First, families should practice the basics of a job interview, including dressing appropriately, arriving at the interview on time, shaking hands

or using another acceptable greeting, making eye contact while speaking, and expressing knowledge about the position and the business. It is also the expectation of most employers that a thank you letter be sent after the interview. These are expectations of all job applicants, including youth with disabilities.

#### Never Stress the Disability, Only Strengths

Although it may be necessary to address the issue of disability in an interview, it should not be the main topic of conversation. Applicants should always stress the strengths they bring to the position and why they want to work for a particular business. Families can help their youth think “strengths first” and practice responses to common interview questions. Remember, disclosing a disability is a personal decision. If a youth has a visible disability or chooses to disclose, he or she may wish to make statements like “I have the skills to do a good job for you. I want to work for your business and my disability won't keep me from being a good employee.”

#### Avoid Giving Too Much Information

A good rule of thumb in a job interview is this: don't offer much more information than the interviewer asks for. Youth with disabilities should avoid offering too much information about their disability. The interviewer does not need to know about what medications a person takes or about prior hospitalizations. Again, the conversation should focus on the position and why the youth would be a good fit.

#### Coaching

Families also need to be aware of what an employer can and can't ask in an interview. For example, an interviewer cannot ask a person if they have a disability. Youth should be coached to respond to potential inappropriate questions with responses such as: “I don't think it's appropriate to ask that. I would rather focus on why I will be a good employee for you.”

#### No Legal Right to Take Part in the Interview

Finally, many parents would feel more comfortable if they could be in a job interview with their youth. This can happen if the employer allows it, but parents of youth with disabilities have no legal right to participate in the youth's job interviews. Instead of focusing on being included in the interview, however, parents should realize that it's more important for them to work with their youth on interpersonal and self-advocacy skills prior to the interview. Securing a job is a rite of passage, and parents should allow youth to handle the interview without them.

#### RELATED RESOURCES

Job Interview Tips for Youth: [http://www.laworks.net/Youth\\_Portal/YP\\_Forms/YP\\_JobInterviewTips.pdf](http://www.laworks.net/Youth_Portal/YP_Forms/YP_JobInterviewTips.pdf)



## 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

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## Slide 20: The Employer's Perspective (Optional)

Successful job candidates know what employers need out of an employee.

Employers are looking for:

- A good attitude about working
- Honesty
- Punctuality
- Good communication skills
- Reliability
- Appropriate behavior
- Willingness to learn new things

### RELATED RESOURCE

“What do employers really want? Top skills and values employers seek from job-seekers.”

[http://www.quintcareers.com/job\\_skills\\_values.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/job_skills_values.html)

### RELATED ACTIVITY

#### Invite a Local Employer

Presenters are strongly encouraged to invite a local employer to attend this workshop to discuss his or her perspective and experiences concerning hiring. Focus should not be on hiring youth with disabilities. Rather, the employer should discuss processes businesses use to hire employees and what skills and traits are sought in all employees they hire.

Modify this slide based on what the employer would like to discuss at the workshop.

#### Ask the Employer

At the session, ask the employer to briefly describe his or her business.

Then ask the employer this series of questions to fuel discussion:

*What are the traits or skills you look for in an employee?*

*Does a person need a resume to be hired at your business?*

*If no resume is needed, what is your hiring process?*

*What are some common mistakes that applicants make that keep them from being hired?*

*What do employers look for during the interview process?*

*If a person does not have any work experience, what can they do to improve the chances of being hired?*

*How important is it that an employee gets along with co-workers and supervisors?*

*What other interpersonal and personal responsibility skills do you think are important for an employee to have?*

*What words of wisdom would you share with the people here about finding a job?*

#### Participants Asking Questions

Let participants ask questions if time allows and the employer is willing. Keep in mind that the employer won't have all the answers, and that questions specific to disability may not be something they are knowledgeable about. Monitor the discussion closely.

*Slide 20 continued on the next page.*

## Concluding

At the end of this segment, thank the employer for his or her time and reinforce that people with disabilities need to demonstrate the same qualities as other successful job hunters. They need to demonstrate that they will be an asset to the business, have the necessary skills, and will bring a good attitude to work.

## PRESENTER NOTES

Employing people with disabilities is often viewed as something employers should consider because “it’s the right thing to do.” Granted, there are many employers who are interested in hiring people with disabilities for a variety of reasons, but the reality is that employers are more interested in hiring quality employees who can help them run and build their business. Families should avoid leaving the employment of their son or daughter with a disability to somebody’s good graces, and instead focus on preparing their youth for the real expectations of the workplace.

A great way to help families begin this process is to invite a local employer to participate in the workshop. The employer should be somebody who hires a broad range of employees, including youth. Consider finding an employer who offers entry-level jobs that are available to the youth in your community. The focus should not be on “disability,” but on informing youth and families about what employers look for in an employee. Prior to the session, ask the employer to consider some advice they might have for youth who are just entering the world of work.

**Self-employment**

**Many people with disabilities choose to start their own small business. A small business:**

- Allows people to use their true talent or passion
- Allows friends and family to help
- Is an excellent option for rural areas
- Can be planned with help from programs through Vocational Rehabilitation and Social Security (PASS Plans)
- Requires a viable business plan

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## Slide 21: Self-Employment

Working for somebody else is not the only employment option for youth. Many people in this country choose to work for themselves by starting a small business. This is an overlooked, yet appealing option for youth with disabilities.

### Use True Talent

Self-employment allows a person to work doing something they are talented in or truly love. The size of the business can be very small and there are programs available, such as Social Security PASS (Plan for Achieving Self Support) Plans or Vocational Rehabilitation that can help people get started.

For example, many youth with autism are skilled working with computers. These youth often have advanced training in computers, but have difficulty landing paid employment because they can’t get through a job interview. Youth in this position may consider opening a computer repair business or a computer assistance business for people who need help setting up computers in their home. Such businesses would fill a need in most communities, and family members could assist with transportation or bookkeeping duties.

### Allows friends and family to help

Small businesses are often family affairs. They likely are run out of a person’s home, allowing friends or family to provide support in terms of helping with the actual work, or assisting a youth with various tasks. Families may enjoy the ability to participate in the business as a family activity.

*Slide 21 continued on the next page.*

## **Option for Rural Areas**

Self-employment is an especially appealing option for people living in rural or isolated areas. These areas tend to have limited opportunities for employment. These areas may also have economies that thrive on small business. Families in rural areas may wish to explore the Internet as a marketplace for products their youth produce. Self-employment can eliminate many of the barriers that traditional employment poses for people with disabilities, but it should be noted that support could be needed in the areas of creating a business plan and securing start-up funding.

### **Can be planned with help from programs through Vocational Rehabilitation and Social Security (PASS Plans)**

In recent years, self-employment has been recognized as a viable employment option for people receiving supports through various funding streams like Vocational Rehabilitation and Social Security. In fact, these systems each offer ways for people with disabilities to either access money to start a business or ways for a person to save money for purposes of starting a business. Parents need to know about these options, as they can offer financial support and business planning expertise.

### **Requires a viable business plan**

It needs to be noted that if people want to start a business through supports from Vocational Rehabilitation or Social Security, they will have to construct a business plan that justifies the expenses. Adult services do not just give funding to any person with a disability who says they want to start a business. They want to know that their investment will be a wise one. They want to know that the person (and their support network) has thought the business idea through, and has provided evidence that there is a need for the type of business they are proposing in their community.

Parents do not need to be experts on starting or running a business to help their youth. They just need to know what service systems will support self-employment and how to access supports and expertise along the way.

## **RELATED RESOURCES**

Information on Social Security PASS Plans

<http://www.passplan.org/>

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth's "Road to Self-Sufficiency: A Guide to Entrepreneurship for Youth with Disabilities."

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/road-to-self-sufficiency>

## Slide 22: Keeping the Job

### Keeping the Job

#### Teach youth to:

- Show up
- Take direction and work well with others
- Be flexible



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#### 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

Much of the attention of this session has focused on providing strategies that help youth with disabilities find employment. Once a youth finds a job, the challenge moves to keeping it. Here are some ideas families can use to help their youth stay successful on the job.

#### Teach Youth To:

**Show Up:** What is the number one reason people lose jobs? Regardless of age or disability, the number one reason people lose jobs is that they don't show up for work. Employers expect employees to arrive and leave at their assigned times. If an employee cannot make their assigned

shift, it is expected that employee will call to inform the employer. Many youth feel they do not have to do this and won't bother to call if they will be absent. This gives an employer every reason to fire the youth. Parents need to teach their youth the importance of being responsible for their work and that their work attendance and work ethic matter.

**Take Direction and Work With Others:** Another reason youth struggle on the job is that they are not used to taking work direction and don't feel they need to interact appropriately with fellow employees. Youth need to understand that the nature of being employed is that they will be told what to do. If they react negatively to work direction, there will be problems. Youth also need to know that work is not a place to socialize. Families need to stress that socializing (including talking on the phone or texting) is better left for off-duty hours. Finally, under no circumstances is it acceptable to act rudely or inappropriately to co-workers or customers. Even if a disability is disclosed, this type of behavior will be grounds for dismissal. Employers expect their employees to have appropriate interactions with fellow employees and customers.

**Be Flexible:** In addition to these basic challenges, many youth with disabilities have difficulties with transitions or change. Unfortunately, very few jobs stay the same day after day or year after year. Work hours may change, job duties may be adjusted, and supervisors may come and go. Families need to work with employers or service providers to anticipate those changes and help prepare youth to deal with them.

#### Families Can:

**Build a Support System at Work:** Many work environments function as mini families. Co-workers look after and help each other. Youth with disabilities can benefit from this environment by building a support system within the work place.

**Communicate Regularly:** Families should get to know their youth's co-workers and supervisors and encourage open communication so workplace problems can be avoided. This is often referred to as "natural supports." Many youth lose jobs without their families ever knowing there was a problem. Building relationships with employers and job coaches can keep this from happening.

**Know that Sometimes it Doesn't Work Out:** Unfortunately, despite everyone's best efforts, not every job is going to be a good match. Losing a job can seem devastating to youth and their families, but it's not the end of the world. We have all had jobs that did not last. They serve as learning experiences that help us be more successful on our next job. Youth still need the latitude to be able to explore jobs and to learn from less than ideal situations. Taking risks and failing is part of growing up. If a youth loses a job, families should use that time to discuss why it did not work and strategize what will be done differently the next time.

## Slide 23: Additional Advice

### 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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Consider these additional ways families can help their youth with disabilities as they begin the job search:

#### **Practice filling out job applications**

Filling out a job application can be difficult for youth with disabilities. A messy or incomplete application can almost guarantee that a youth will not get the job they are applying for. Families are encouraged to take their youth to a business, such as a grocery store or large retailer, and ask for an application. The purpose is not to have the youth work there, but to use the application form for practice. Once the application is filled out

accurately and completely, families should laminate it. This now becomes a tool the youth can use to make sure he or she fills out all subsequent applications correctly.

#### **Plan for transportation**

Once youth find a job, how will they get to it? Is the job within walking distance or accessible via public transportation? In many cases, planning for how your youth will be transported to the job is just as important as getting the job. Families are encouraged to work with service providers, school staff, or within the family to plan for a youth's transportation needs. There are resources, such as your local Center for Independent Living, that can provide transportation training. Transportation tends to be a bigger problem in rural areas, so always make this a part of employment planning for youth with disabilities.

#### **RELATED RESOURCE**

Easter Seals' Project Action Web site  
[www.projectaction.org](http://www.projectaction.org)

#### **Consider disability management**

Many disabilities require a person to take medications or have daily treatments or cares. These are needed to "manage" the disability on a day-to-day basis. Families are encouraged to recognize the impact of daily disability management on employment situations. Do medications cause your son or daughter to be sleepy at a certain time of the day? Will he or she require a separate restroom for personal cares? Has the employer been notified of important medical issues and been instructed on how to deal with an emergency? These are questions families should consider in the job planning process.

#### **RELATED RESOURCES**

"What does Health Have to Do with Transition: Everything"  
<http://www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=2967>

Got Transition  
[www.gottransition.org/resources](http://www.gottransition.org/resources)

*Slide 23 Presenter Notes continued on next page*

## Encourage postsecondary education:

For many youth with disabilities, formal education ends after high school. Our society has made housing and employment accessible to people with disabilities, and we are just beginning to do the same for postsecondary education. Are families of youth with disabilities encouraging their youth to explore postsecondary education? They should. Studies suggest that the vast majority of new jobs being created require some type of postsecondary education. Yet youth with disabilities enter and complete postsecondary education at a much lower rate than their peers without disabilities. Any type of postsecondary training, whether it's a trade school, two-year college, or traditional university, considerably increases the likelihood of job success.

### RELATED RESOURCE

Think College Web site  
<http://www.thinkcollege.net/>

## Slide 24: Contact Information

Presenters may wish to add their organization's contact information as well.



**Contact Information**

**National Parent Center on Transition and Employment**  
PACER.org/TransitionCenter  
888.248.0822  
(toll-free nationwide)

**PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment**



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## Getting and Keeping the First Job

# Appendix

*Building a Resume: Tips for Youth with Disabilities*

*Example Resume*

*My Action Plan*



## *INSPIRING POSSIBILITIES*

# **Building a Resume: Tips for Youth with Disabilities:**

## **Tips for youth with disabilities and their families on effective strategies for building the first resume**

The resume continues to be the main tool employers use to review the qualifications of prospective employees, and what they use when deciding who to interview or hire. All people who are looking for a job should have an up-to-date resume that shows employment, education, and volunteer history. Many youth with disabilities do not have an updated resume, or a resume at all. This is often because they feel they have nothing to put on a resume. The misconception is that only prior paid competitive employment positions can be listed. This is far from the truth.

Employers understand that youth may not have a wide variety of prior job experiences to list on a resume. What they are looking for instead is proof that the young person wants to work, and has taken steps to build work skills on his or her own. So, what can a youth list on a resume that shows a strong desire to work?

**Volunteer Experiences:** Volunteering is an excellent way to show employers that you are actively seeking

skills that will be useful to you on the job. It also proves that you are an active member of your community and are willing to lend your time to people, an organization, or a cause that needs it. Many people assume that volunteer experiences can't be listed on a resume, or that the volunteering needs to be for a long period of time. The fact is that employers like to see any type of volunteer experience, especially if it is during a time you are not currently working. Another great benefit of volunteering is that families can do it together. For example, a young person with a disability can volunteer with his or her family to serve meals at a local senior center, pick up trash in community parks, or help at the local animal shelter. Remember that volunteering is not a substitute for a paying job, and should never be the end result of the job search.

**School Work Experiences:** Many youth with disabilities are involved in some type of school transition or work experience program. These programs may offer

**Beware of resume red flags!** Employers are very good at reading resumes, and recognizing when something is missing or may not be accurate. Remember that the first rule is to never lie or misrepresent yourself on the resume. If an employer finds an inaccuracy on the resume, you may be removed from consideration for that

job. A second red flag for employers are "gaps" in the resume. Gaps are long periods of time where a person does not have a position or activity listed. For example, an employer may see that you have no work-related activities for a full year, and wonder what you were doing during that time. Employers tend to be cautious about people

with big gaps in their work history. A good rule of thumb is to try and have a volunteer experience, job shadow, or information interview listed for every three months you are not working. This shows the employer that despite not having a paid position, you are still making an effort to build work experience.

work experiences in the school, such as filing or janitorial work, or in the community, such as working at a local library. Another component of these programs is often academic curriculum in work readiness or interpersonal communication. Young people should list these experiences on a resume because they are building work readiness skills.

**Job Shadowing:** It is sometimes difficult for youth to identify what types of jobs they may be interested in as a future career. There are countless kinds of jobs in the world, and job shadowing is an excellent way for youth to explore if a particular type of job suits them. It also is an excellent way to show employers that you have taken the extra step to find out if you are truly interested in the type of work they do. A job shadow experience needs to be nothing more than a young person spending half a day following a person who is doing the kind of work they think they may like to do, and asking questions. For example, a young person may be interested in working with computers, and seek the opportunity to job shadow a computer programmer to see if the job truly fits his or her interests. This experience then is then listed on the resume.

**Informational Interviews:** Like job shadowing, an informational interview is a great way to learn more about a job you might be interested in. Informational interviews take less time than a job shadow, but with the right set of questions, can yield the same information. An informational interview is simply an opportunity to ask questions of a person who is doing the type of job you are thinking of pursuing. It can be done over lunch or even through e-mail messages. Families can help arrange interviews by accessing people in their person networks who work in those fields. Again, this activity is then listed on the resume.

**Attending of Career Fairs:** Many school transition programs, colleges, and business groups will hold career fairs to help students access information about certain jobs. These events are a wonderful opportunity to learn what education and skills are needed to be in the world of work. There is no reason why this experience can't be included on a resume. One example of how attending a career fair could be portrayed on a resume could be: "Attended Mill City Transition Fair and spoke to an advocacy organization about job accommodations and to a representative from a local bank about what is needed to become a teller."

The resume is still an essential part of the hiring process. Youth with disabilities should have an updated, complete resume just like all other job seekers. Even if a person is receiving supports on the job or help finding employment (through Vocational Rehabilitation or a community rehabilitation provider), they need a resume. A good resume can help all youth become competitively employed.

# EXAMPLE RESUME

## Scott Hampton

**Address:** 4700 Melrose Ave, St. Paul MN 52909

**Phone:** 555-938-8234

**Email:** Scotthampton@not-real.com

### Career Objective

I am a good worker and always on time. I like people and work well with others. I take pride in my work and like learning new things.

### Skills and Achievements

- Student Manager of high school basketball team
- Often complimented on ability to work well with others and follow directions
- Good in computer use.
- Able to use public transit for transportation
- Five Boy Scout Merit Badges

### Education

2009 – Present South West High School

- Basic computer
- Communications
- Introduction to work skills
- Money management
- English

### Work Skills and Volunteer History

Summer 2011 – Member of Boy Scout Troop #3 Clean Up the Highway Project

Summer 2013 – Visited St. Paul Fire Station and interviewed the Chief

March 2014 – Assisted in raising money for the St. Paul homeless

Summer 2014 – Sold items at the concession stand at the Metrodome, Minneapolis

Fall 2014 – Successfully completed two job placements by Transition Plus at Target and Abbott Hospital

### Hobbies and Interests

- Reading
- Listening to music
- Basketball
- Drawing
- Computer
- Traveling

### References

Ken Tallenger

Target, St. Paul

555-938-0938

Carrie Oswald

Transition Plus Work Experience Coordinator

555-938-2249

Tyrell Thomas

Boy Scout Troop #3 Leader

555-938-5722

(Written references available upon request)

# My Action Plan

Have a discussion with your youth about what types of jobs they would like to do.

<b>List 2-3 job types they identify:</b>
1.
2.
3.

What skills are necessary to do the jobs that your youth identified? Please list 3 skills that your youth either has or will need to acquire to do the jobs he or she is interested in. (Skills might include computer use, interpersonal communication, knowledge of carpentry, or math/reading.)

<b>Job #1</b>
Skill:
Skill:
Skill:

<b>Job #2</b>
Skill:
Skill:
Skill:

<b>Job #3</b>
Skill:
Skill:
Skill:

**Tip!**

It may be helpful to begin this conversation by describing a job you have had and what was required of you. Talk with them about what they are already doing that will help when he or she has a job. For example, he or she gets to school on time, is well groomed, likes people, has good manners, follows directions, is pleasant to be around, willing to help others, has access and knows how to use transportation.

How is your youth going to acquire needed work skills? Be intentional about action steps you will take to help your youth.

<b>Please check at least 3 boxes.</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make sure work readiness or work experience is incorporated into IEP
<input type="checkbox"/>	Explore opportunities for volunteering in the community
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make chores at home an expectation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Look into job shadowing experience
<input type="checkbox"/>	Look for people your child can interview about their jobs
<input type="checkbox"/>	Practice interpersonal skills in the community
<input type="checkbox"/>	Write down expectations of appropriate attire and hygiene and teach if necessary
<input type="checkbox"/>	Give opportunities to display leadership and self-direction
<input type="checkbox"/>	Be clear when tasks need to be done in a timely manner and practice if necessary
<input type="checkbox"/>	Practice taking verbal directions at home
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enforce expectations of personal responsibility at home (waking up on time, homework, etc.) by creating a plan
<input type="checkbox"/>	Practice phone skills by having youth call for information about a community business
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have your youth keep a calendar of his/her activities; medical appointments, school work due, youth spiritual activities, fun happenings, athletic events etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

### Job Search Checklist

Here are some components of the job search to consider for your youth. Use this checklist as a reminder of strategies you can use to help your youth become employed:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Have discussion with your youth about career interests
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help your youth explore various jobs within chosen career area
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange for an informational interview with a job manager from your community and write a brief note of thanks
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with IEP team to incorporate career interests into IEP
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with IEP team to build work readiness, reading, math, and computer skills
<input type="checkbox"/>	Begin discussion about what agencies can provide work supports (adults)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help your youth create a resume
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help your youth fill resume with paid work, volunteering, job shadowing, and personal interests
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider people in your personal network to help identify job opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gather job applications
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create sample application for your youth to use as an example
<input type="checkbox"/>	Practice basic interview questions with your youth
<input type="checkbox"/>	If youth has an apparent disability, practice what he or she will say about his or her disability
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make sure your youth has appropriate clothing and knows what to wear for a job interview
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help your youth write follow-up thank you note to person who interviewed him or her
<input type="checkbox"/>	Practice working on automated job applications using the computer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider what job accommodations your youth may need on the job
<input type="checkbox"/>	If transitioning out of school, begin interviewing potential job support providers and talk with Vocational Rehabilitation Services
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintain high expectations that your youth will become employed!

