



WORK BEGETS WORK

Ramping up Work Experiences

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Simonsen, M. (2013). TransGen, Inc.



The Vision

- Social connections with family and friends
- Living as independently as possible
- Connected to adult support systems
- Increased independence & responsibility
- Access to postsecondary education or adult learning

And, ultimately...

Paid employment in an integrated community setting with appropriate supports



WHY DOES ANYONE GO TO
COLLEGE?

TO GET *better* A
JOB!



INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION AS A PATHWAY TO EMPLOYMENT



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POST-SCHOOL OUTCOMES

Research tells us...

- Underemployment for youth with disabilities
- Segregated outcomes for adults with DD
- Limited information about transition-age youth with DD
- Inconsistent terminology/lack of clarification about integrated employment outcomes



DOCUMENTING POST-SCHOOL OUTCOMES

	No.	%
Unpaid/sheltered/non-work	193	57.1%
Competitive Integrated Employment	48	14.2%
Other Integrated Employment	97	27.8%

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CHARACTERISTICS ABOUT JOB

○ Setting:

- Facility? Community? Non-disabled peers?

○ Support:

- Full-time job coach? Natural supports?

○ Wage:

- Paid by employer? Minimum wage? Subsidized?



CHARACTERISTICS ABOUT JOB

○ Hours:

- Full-time or part time?

○ Job tasks:

- Typical vs. customized





STUDY #1

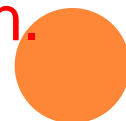
What skills and experiences do CRP staff members perceive as the most critical in order to transition to integrated employment?

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

“Each agency provides better in some areas than others, so if we know preferences, we can make a better match- we need to know preferences to make a good employment match!”

It is important that CRPs receive authentic information on transitioning youth: resumes, work-related assessments, behavior information.

Typically, they do not receive this information.



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

“We try to put them where they belong, many will start in a workshop and then train for supported employment.”

“...only clients with paid work history start in community-based sites.”

Although paid work experience is not required for acceptance to an agency, work history (including paid employment) impacts initial placement.



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

“...it seems we have to ‘retrain’ because paid employment is not authentic.”

“Stipend positions set kids up for failure because it paints a rosey picture with unrealistic expectations.”

CRPs do not value subsidized work (i.e. school-paid stipend positions)



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

“We would need to figure out transportation. Families should provide.”

Transportation was identified as a barrier to obtaining and maintaining employment in the community.



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

“Some [families] do not want ‘sheltered’ settings but their students don’t have any independent experiences.”

“[Schools should] help communicate expectations, help families use terminology and the process, and help families access [services].”

- Students and families need to understand the changing roles and the scope and limitation of the CRPs services.
- Schools need to educate and empower families to make informed decisions throughout the transition process.

RECAP OF STUDY #1

- CRP staff members- What did they identify as the most critical skills/experiences for youth to transition to integrated employment?
 - Self-management, community mobility, self-determination
 - AUTHENTIC WORK EXPERIENCE!
 - Documentation of work history
 - Family support





STUDY #2

What skills and experiences best predict integrated employment outcomes?

MOST SALIENT PREDICTORS

- Family member expressed preference for integrated employment
- Paid work experience during school
- Community mobility skills
- Self-management skills



IN FACT...

- Youth whose families expressed preference for integrated employment were **6.48 times** more likely to achieve integrated competitive employment
- Youth with previous work experience were **4.53 times** more likely to be engaged in integrated competitive employment
- School setting was not a significant factor-variability in programs!!!



IMPORTANT TAKE-AWAYS

- Family “buy-in” and support may be the most critical component of transition planning
- If integrated employment is the post-school goal, we must move beyond “work experiences” and ensure that students with DD have at least one paid work experience while in secondary school
- Comprehensive transition planning includes a focus on self-management and community mobility skills
- Enrollment in PSE is not enough! It is critical to focus on work!



WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT WORK?

Paid Work Experience is the #1 Predictor of Post-School Employment for Youth with Disabilities!!!



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY QUALITY WORK EXPERIENCES?

- Individualized, based on student's strengths, interests, and support needs
- Continuous discovery process (age-appropriate transition assessment)
- Realistic Expectations & Real Responsibilities
- Increased independence & paid employment prior to exiting school
- Provide opportunities to develop soft skills, community mobility, self-management, and self-determination skills



OK, OK, ITS IMPORTANT! HOW DO WE DO IT?

- Paid employment is a PROGRAM GOAL
 - Students know
 - Families know
- Dedicated Job Development Staff
 - Flex time
 - Trained
- College Coursework tied into CAREER PLAN
 - Classes based on job interests
- Scheduling and Transportation
 - Job supports
 - Getting to and from work!
- ISSUES: insurance, tax incentives, work study...



WHY PSE PROGRAMS ARE IDEAL FOR EMPLOYMENT

- A college campus is its own World of Work – opportunities exist in many fields
- Every student's focus is CAREER
- Career resources all over campus
- Training opportunities
- Students can take coursework in their fields of interest
 - Career exploration
 - Skill development that opens doors



THE IMPACT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION ON EMPLOYMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH ID

- Data from the national vocational rehabilitation database (RSA 911) show that youth with ID who participated in postsecondary education were 26% more likely to leave vocational rehabilitation services with a paid job and earn a 73% higher weekly income.

PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

- Lack of Qualifications or Skills: “Most jobs are too difficult for people with ID.”
- The economy – “No one is hiring.”
- Fear – “Employers don’t want to/won’t hire people with ID.”
- Logistics – “We don’t have transportation (or enough staff or enough money...”



ACTUAL BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

- Low expectations by key stakeholders – family, staff
- Lack of trained job development professionals
- Limited knowledge of the market – too much reliance on ‘typical’ jobs for people with ID
- Uneducated employers
- Some logistics (transportation, child care, etc.)



ADDRESSING ACTUAL BARRIERS

- Raise expectations of student outcomes
- Hire and train job development professionals
- Spend more time educating employers about the benefits of hiring these young college students
- Customize the job search, acquisition, and maintenance to each student
- Planning with all stakeholders



EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS

- Paid work is the goal from day one.
- Hire dedicated, trained staff person for job development. Include in job description specific duties and flex time.
- Practice customized employment strategies where appropriate.
- Ensure that students understand and can communicate their support needs.



PARTING WORDS...

“I learned the value of hard work by
working hard.”

- Margaret Meade





**QUESTIONS?
CONCERNS?
SUGGESTIONS?**

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