



FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS – WORKPLACE SUCCESS

Exposure to internships (paid and unpaid), site visits, job shadowing, and paid employment all contribute to the employability of youth with disabilities.

Work-based experiences foster adult employment success for all youth, particularly for those with disabilities. Research shows that when youth with disabilities participate in work-based learning experiences, they are more likely to achieve positive school and post-school outcomes. Exposure to internships (paid and unpaid), site visits, job shadowing, and paid employment all contribute to the employability of youth with disabilities.

Because providing such experiences is dependent on the availability of interested employers, workforce professionals must be able to convince employers that it is in their best interest to bring youth into their workplace. Workforce professionals must keep in mind that in the business world, time is money. In consequence, it is important to do whatever is necessary to make it convenient for the employer to hire youth with disabilities, including, if necessary, providing ongoing support once youth are on the job site. In addition, workforce professionals must ensure that youth are adequately prepared and that they fully appreciate the value of their workplace experiences.

What's in it for youth?

Exposing youth with disabilities to work-based experiences helps them in identifying their career interests and in building self-confidence. In addition, it provides an opportunity for them to learn about workplace culture and expectations and to make what they are learning in school more meaningful through real-world applications. Work-based experiences also provide a forum for youth to learn about disability disclosure and to develop self-advocacy ability regarding their on-the-job support and accommodation needs. These experiences – which give youth the knowledge they need to exercise informed choice in their decision, while at the same time allowing room for development of new skills – are vital for long-term success.

What's in it for employers?

Employers derive considerable benefit from work-based experiences as well. Besides allowing employers to assist in developing the future workforce in areas of specialized need, such experiences allow employers to display good corporate citizenship and to expand their business outreach to under-represented communities. Hiring employees with disabilities also provides employers with an opportunity to engage in mentoring activities, which have been proven to increase employee loyalty, prepare and promote leadership development in all employees, and reduce learning times and costs associated with the hiring of new employees.

Tips to make it work:

In working with employers:

- Make it easy and convenient for employers to participate by minimizing red tape.
 - Get to know the company's operational and job requirements.
 - Identify and address job accommodation needs and accessibility issues.
 - Stay in contact with employers and keep lines of communication open; post-placement support is imperative.
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- In working with youth:
 - Carefully match youth to job tasks.
 - Make sure youth are prepared for their experience.
 - Educate youth on the job requirements as well as on general company expectations and operational issues.
 - Make sure youth can address their accommodation needs.
 - Provide post-placement support: communicate regularly with the youth, and assist in resolving any workplace issues.

Resources

Topical sites

Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs) <http://www.adata.org/dbtac.html>
 DBTACs offer information and assistance to employers and other entities with responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Disability Employment Guide

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/products/employmentguide>

The guide contains an employment-planning guide, "Disability Employment 101: Learn to Tap your Hire Potential," for employers to promote and provide resources for hiring people with disabilities.

Employer Assistance Referral Network (EARN)

<http://www.earnworks.com>

EARN is a referral and technical assistance service for employers to access job-ready individuals with disabilities. EARN is funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy, US Department of Labor.

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/>

JAN is a consulting service that provides information about job accommodation, ADA, and the employability of people with disabilities. JAN is funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy, US Department of Labor.

Program Manual for the High School/High Tech Program

http://ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/hsht_manual.html

The Manual contains information and tools on a variety of work-based learning experiences (Chapter 8).

Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Workplace Supports

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

RRTC provides information on return-to-work strategies, effective disability management programs, and financial tax credits to encourage the hiring, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities.

Miscellaneous sites

DisabilityInfo.gov

<http://www.disabilityinfo.gov/>

DisabilityInfo.gov is a collaborative effort across multiple federal agencies, contains information on a broad array of disability-related topics including information on tax credits to offset the cost of accommodations.

US Chamber of Commerce

<http://www.uschamber.com/cwp>

The Chamber of Commerce supplies resources and tools for local chambers and business on workforce preparation for both youth and adults.

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At the time of printing, every possible effort was made to compile accurate and up-to-date website information. Internet information changes frequently.

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