

Business Connections of VCU



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Program Outcomes Report

July 1, 2011 --
June 30, 2012



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PROGRAM OUTCOMES REPORT

July 1, 2011 -- June 30, 2012

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fiscal year of July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012 we provided services to 129 individuals. Of the 129 served, 63 either are or were employed during this time frame (71 total placements). Over all we saw a slight decrease in traditional DRS referrals (down 27%). However, due to retention of previous referrals as well as increased involvement with special projects we served 9% more individuals over the last year. This increase is directly related to strategically using our resources to build strong business partnerships within our community and creating good working relationships with our customers. We remained committed to our performance indicators, as described in Appendix A, and have continued to incorporate best practices into our approach. These practices include (1) promoting individual choice and control over service delivery by offering individualized and flexible services, (2) serving individuals who are from underserved disability groups and/or have the most severe disabilities, as well as (3) keeping our jobseeker to employment specialist ratio low to ensure high quality individualized services.

Many people with disabilities have voiced their concerns that all too frequently decisions are made for them by professionals who feel that they know best and that self-assertion is often ignored, underestimated, or seen as a “challenging behavior.” The Business Connections staff listens carefully to the wishes and desires of the individuals we serve and supports them to achieve the career path of their choice. Individuals are supported in making decisions and are encouraged to be actively involved in all aspects of service delivery. Our dedication to providing individualized services to those with the most significant disabilities and/or those who are underserved is in direct alignment with the values associated with supported employment.

To ensure individualized and flexible services are available for all individuals that we serve, we employed 8 full-time and 3 part-time, skilled employment specialists throughout the year. We are committed to serve one person at a time throughout the levels of service delivery and whenever possible the same employment specialist works with the job seeker throughout the employment process from assessment to job search to on-the-job training. We feel that these two practices lead to greater choice and successful employment outcomes. Although we use a holistic approach, rather than a partitioned approach to service delivery, we find that working as a team helps us provide the most attentive services while keeping within the often limited hours provided for job development. Each employment specialist focuses on organizational marketing and building relationships with area businesses that would potentially have jobs for the customers on their case load. Often, the employer interaction will not yield an immediate position for their client; however, our staff members work together sharing job leads and entering receptive employers into our Business Database for future contact. This allows for increased collaboration and more opportunities to match job seekers to positions with supportive employers.

A. Program and Service Highlights

Below are some highlights of major program changes and services from this reporting year. More specific details on the customers served and employment received are offered in other sections of this report.

i. Service Highlights

All persons served have a significant disability as evidenced by referral documentation and/or receipt of social security benefits. Many of those served have secondary and tertiary labels as well. Similar to last year, the majority or 67% (86 individuals) of those served were male and 33% (43 individuals) were females. Three individuals served were Asian-American, 53% (68 individuals) were African American/black, while the majority of individuals served or 44% (43 individuals) were Caucasian/white.

Order of Selection was limited to serve only those with the most significant disabilities in March of 2011 therefore decreasing our referrals for the year by 27 percent from last year. Although only thirty individuals were referred for services during the year, our number of clients served continues to be strong for several reasons. We served a number of DRS clients through our involvement in special projects including the VCU Health Systems Project Search Program, St. Mary's Project Search Program. We added a project search site at St. Francis Medical Center during this year. However, because this site is in the first year, those clients are not included in our data for this report. Each of these projects is described in further detail in section C of the executive summary. Additionally, we continued cultivating our partnership with the Department for the Blind and Visually Impaired (8 individuals served from DBVI) as well as the Warsaw DRS office (11 individuals served from Warsaw area). Finally, we also feel that our efforts to maintain a highly qualified staff along with our proven results have drawn attention to our services. We intend to continue cultivating our relationship with each of the funding sources and share our successes together.

Sixty-three people are still or were employed during the year in a wide variety of occupations. There were 71 overall placements as 8 individual had two placements. Twenty of these placements were made during the fiscal year. All 71 placements were paid minimum wage or higher and the majority of individuals worked part-time (30 hours or less). At the close of the year, 59 individuals remained employed. About 22% (21 individuals) of the pool was discharged from the program during the year for a variety of reasons, including unable to contact, DRS would no longer support service delivery, and loss of job.

ii. CARF Accreditation

The Business Connections has been CARF Accredited since July of 2001. As of August of 2010 our Program was accredited for another 3 years in the following service categories: Job Development, Job Supports, Job-Site Training, and Employment Planning Services. It is essential that we maintain our accreditation as it is an indication of our ongoing dedication and commitment to improving the quality of the lives of persons with disabilities. We will be up for accreditation again in August of 2013.

B. Opportunities for Increased Collaboration

i. New Referrals

In March of 2011, VDRS closed all Order of Selections Categories. Both referrals and authorization of hours dropped-off significantly with this change. However we are pleased to say that referrals decreased only 27 percent going from 41 in the previous fiscal year to 30 this year. Despite the lack of referrals, we have continued to work diligently to provide excellent services to those individuals referred while cultivating partnerships with the State Department of Rehabilitative Services. We achieved this through increased communication, marketing, and presentations to introduce our services for counselors in the DRS Field Offices. We feel that because of our efforts, we are now seen as a top vendor for new referrals and as Order of Selection categories are opened, we anticipate a significant increase in referrals.

ii. Networking

It is a priority of our program that employment specialists are given opportunities to interact with DRS counselors and other professionals within the vocational rehabilitation field. All staff members are encouraged to take advantage of training and

networking opportunities. Employment specialists have participated in DRS network meetings as well as professional development activities to increase their skills and understanding of supported employment and the current job market.

Over the past few years, we have made significant strides in improving communication with rehabilitation counselors. We maintain a policy requiring employment specialists to contact vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors on an ongoing basis to provide a verbal update on current status. This policy goes hand-in-hand with our policy for requesting and obtaining authorization for hours discussed in further detail in the following section.

iii. Authorizations of Hours

Obtaining timely authorization of hours is an area of improvement that Business Connections has been working on this reporting period. Employment Specialists are required to contact VR Counselors by telephone, follow-up with an e-mail and complete a formal form used to request hours. If hours are not approved within a couple of days the program manager is to be notified and she follows-up. There has been improvement in this area by expanding the job description of a lead employment specialist (Rachael Rounds) to manage authorizations and billing. Many rehabilitation counselors have indicated this administrative change has been a positive improvement. Management will continue to monitor staff understanding of and adherence to this policy.

C. Special Projects

Our involvement in special projects generates meaningful and productive relationships with business partners as well as other organizations, increases our experience with specific customer populations, and allows us to research and implement best practices for providing progressive vocational rehabilitation services. Throughout this reporting period, we have been involved in a number of special projects and grants that are described below.

We currently provide job coaching services to three (3) projects replicating the Project Search program at Cincinnati Children's Hospital within Virginia Commonwealth University Health Systems, St. Mary's Hospital, and St. Francis Medical Center. The program is a one-year educational program for students with disabilities in their last year of high school. It is targeted for students whose main goal is competitive employment. The program takes place in a health-care or business setting where total immersion in the workplace facilitates the teaching and learning process through continuous feedback and application of new skills. Several members of the VCU Business Connections staff provide individualized job development and placement as well as support through on-the-job coaching and work site accommodations with the ultimate goal of independence. During the past year we provided services to 27 students at the St. Mary's site. Seven are currently enrolled in PS and 20 students from previous year's PS group are now competitively employed with St. Mary's and 12 employees are receiving follow-along services. The VCU Health Systems PS site currently serves 14 students. Four are currently enrolled in this year's Project Search class and ten individuals from previous year's group held competitive jobs during the year. Our newest PS site at St. Francis Medical Center is currently serving 6 students. (Please note only those competitively employed are included in our data for this report).

In addition, Business Connections Employment Program was awarded the opportunity to be an Employment Network (EN) in the Ticket to Work program in April of 2009. As with all of our customers, we want to see them reach the greatest level of independence possible. The Ticket to Work program, which focuses on assisting individuals to reach Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) and reduce the reliance on Social Security disability benefits, is a wonderful compliment to one of our core values. Due to the paperwork demands from the Social Security Administration we were forced to terminate our EN agreement. Business Connections has entered into a unique contract with DARS to serve as an EN for VCU clients with autism working following a Project Search internship

D. 2011-2012 Enhancements and Improvements

The previous 2010-2011 Program Outcomes Report made a number of recommendations to enhance & improve services. Our focus this year has been to maintain a high quality of service for all customers even with increasing numbers served through streamlined Job Development and improved data collection processes. Below is a brief summary of how these have been addressed to date.

Improvements were made to our process for evaluating the satisfaction of services from our key stakeholders (i.e., employer, funders, referral sources, and family members). During the year we reviewed the quality indicators, and data base to determine if any elements need to be added or deleted. However we are still working on a more effective procedure to administer and obtain useful responses on the updated satisfaction surveys.

We have seen considerable improvement in acquiring and recording authorizations, as well as with more accuracy of data entry into our Customer Database. The Customer Database tracks customer demographics and employment information. Personnel have completed training on how to enter data into the customer and a policy will be established outlining the requirements of this important task. This not only improves our data collection but also increases our ability to easily access key data in which to report and make decisions. More improvement is needed in this area especially with regard to recording "intervention hours" and development of reports that will reveal important indicators of VCU Business Connections services. It should be noted that this database was used to generate an article on titled: Supported Employment for Young Adults with Autism: Preliminary Data, that reported on the employment outcomes by analyzing intervention time. In the upcoming year, we will continue our efforts in this area through evaluating our options and/or developing an on-line referral, program documentation, and billing system.

II. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The Program Outcomes Report reviews our effectiveness (i.e., were those served involved in making decisions and job selection; were jobs developed representative of local labor market; were jobs carved to meet needs of employers and specific talents of those served, how many people went to work for minimum wage or better in community based jobs and how long were individuals successfully employed); efficiency or how quickly we initiated services and service satisfaction among those who received direct services.

An annual review allows us to share our success with our customers, stakeholders and employers. It also provides us with insight on areas in need of improvement and assists us in the development and implementation of an action plan which should help us progress in many ways.

III. BACKGROUND ABOUT ORGANIZATION AND SERVICE BEING EVALUATED

A. Organizational Description/History

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) is located on two downtown campuses in the heart of Richmond, Virginia. With a metropolitan population of more than 1.25 million people, Richmond is a growing community. The central location of the university enables smooth functioning of grant activities and facilitates collaboration. For example, the Virginia Spinal Cord Injury Council Association and the Virginia State Department of Rehabilitative Services offices are located within 2 miles.

VCU ranks among the top 100 universities in the country in sponsored research and enrolls nearly 30,000 students in 187 certificate, undergraduate, graduate, professional and doctoral programs in 15 schools and one liberal arts college. MCV hospitals, clinics and the health sciences schools of Virginia Commonwealth University constitute the VCU Medical Center, one of the leading academic medical centers in the country.

VCU is the third-largest research university in Virginia. Each year an increasing amount of external research funds have been awarded. In the past year, VCU received 206 million dollars in research awards.

The current Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) was established in 1998 and is led by Dr. Paul Wehman. Dr. Wehman was nominated to Who's Who in Medicine and Healthcare and serves as the Editor of the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation. With a clinical research emphasis, the center has examined and successfully developed a variety of methods to help persons with disabilities gain and maintain employment. Development of vocational rehabilitation methods has reflected a commitment to provide competitive employment in non-segregated environments. Emphasis has also been placed on person centered and person directed services, family involvement and networking with community rehabilitation agencies, like the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS).

Under the direction of Dr. Wehman, the VCU-RRTC has advanced the concept of supported employment for persons with all types of severe disabilities through its demonstration projects, vendor ship activities, research, personnel training activities, and

publications. Largely as a result of these efforts, supported employment is now a service option for vocational rehabilitation consumers nationwide; today nearly 110,000 individuals with severe disabilities have access to jobs. In the late eighties, the RRTC entered into a contract with DARS to become an Employment Service Organization (ESO). Today ESO, known as Business Connections operates out of the center's Employment Services division and serves the Richmond, Fredericksburg and surrounding counties area. While the program is open to anyone who meets the eligibility criteria we continue to serve individuals who might not otherwise receive employment assistance. In addition, we continue to expand our knowledge and share this with other professionals. Business Connections is staffed by a program director, program manager and four employment specialists. In 2001 and again in 2004, 2007, and 2010 the program received three year CARF accreditation.

Throughout the years the VCU RRTC has been heavily involved in the development and formulation of disability employment research. Over the last year the RRTC has been highly focused in the area of disability and employment issues concentrating in the areas of transition from school to work and postsecondary education, employment services to persons with autism and veterans, and long term supports promoting career advancement for all persons with disabilities. From July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012 Dr. Wehman and the staff at the RRTC published 15 journal articles and 28 commercially published books or book chapters. Live web casts and distance education courses continue to be critically important to the RRTC, ensuring that professionals, families, employers and people with disabilities have access to timely research, personnel training, professional certifications, and information materials. Over the past year, 48 web casts were aired. Attendance in these sessions totaled 5,115 participants. The RRTC continues to provide personnel training through our popular Supported Employment Web Based Certificate Program and the Supported Competitive Employment for Individuals with Mental Illness courses, as well as other such course as the Personal Assistance Services in the Workplace, and Disability Awareness HR Management Online Seminar, together these training opportunities have reached 2,868 professionals, employers and persons with disabilities this year.

Certificate Program and the Supported Competitive Employment for Individuals with Mental Illness courses, as well as other such course as the Personal Assistance Services in the Workplace, and Disability Awareness HR Management Online Seminar, together these training opportunities have reached 1,498 professionals, employers and persons with disabilities this year.

B. Program Description

i. Problem Statement

The number of people participating in supported employment in the U.S. has increased within a decade from less than 9,800 to over 140,000 (Wehman, Revell, Kregel, 1998). While we can deduce that these numbers have grown in subsequent years, there is no national tracking data for individuals in supported employment today. Customized employment strategies such as supported employment, supported entrepreneurship, coworker supports, job restructuring, workplace accommodations, and federal legislation facilitated the integrated employment outcomes for these individuals. In addition, policy shifts have enabled expanded opportunities for integrated employment.

In 2001, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) amended its regulations governing state vocational rehabilitation programs to redefine the term "employment outcome" to mean "an individual with a disability working in an integrated setting" (Federal Register, January 22, 2001). For decades, extended employment (formerly sheltered employment) was an acceptable outcome for individuals receiving VR services. The new definition removes this type of employment as an approved outcome, because extended/sheltered employment uses non-integrated work settings.

The purpose of the VR program as stated in The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, is to enable individuals with a disability to achieve employment in an integrated setting (Federal Register, January 22, 2001). In response to this priority, first highlighted in the 1992 Amendments, the 1990s was marked by a decline in sheltered workshop placements. Nationally in FY90, VR agencies closed 11,605 sheltered workshops. In FY98, the number of sheltered workshop closures dropped 34%. In contrast, the number of individuals closed in integrated work settings, rose steadily during the 1990s. VR closed approximately 9,528 individuals in supported employment in FY91, 13,950 individuals in FY94, and 23,056 individuals in FY98 (Gilmore and Butterworth, 2001). Unfortunately, Gilmore & Butterworth (2001) found in the same time period that the number of individuals entering non-integrated employment (including facility-based and non-work) also greatly expanded. Despite the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other federal initiatives, competitive employment still is not the first choice for the majority of individuals with disabilities (Wehman, Revell, & Brooke, 2002).

Competitive employment remains an elusive goal for the vast majority of people with disabilities despite evidence of increased earning and satisfaction from the work experience. “Negative stereotyping, unemployment, underemployment, and placement in segregated work and non-work settings are likely to continue until there are systemic changes undertaken. One such change is increasing provider capacity to provide individually determined, customized employment in non-stereotypic jobs for persons with disabilities” (Federal Register, August 5, 2002).

ii. Overall goals

Through our ongoing efforts and collaboration with individuals with significant disabilities, DRS and other stakeholders, the program continues to provide a valuable demonstration of how community based competitive employment can become a reality for all Americans who desire to work.

First, the program strives to support persons with disabilities with identifying their abilities, possible support needs; conducting a job search to locate real work for real pay, providing and facilitating workplace supports as needed, and ongoing long term follow along and job retention services both at or away from the work place.

Second, the program offers a valuable service to the business community. These services include: assisting employers with identifying hiring needs or new work structures, referring candidates for interviews, providing initial and ongoing on the jobsite support services to ensure the employer’s business requirements are being met by the new hire, and providing education and technical assistance on disability and employment related issues.

iii. Outcomes and performance measures

Program outcomes and performance measures are observable and measurable milestones toward an outcome target. Indicators include; days from referral to service initiation, severity of disability, customer involvement in service delivery and job selection, types of businesses where people work, type of occupations, amount of pay received, type of creative work structures, job retention or days employed, reasons for job separation, and reports of satisfaction with services.

iv. Program activities

The following section describes persons served, eligibility criteria, and scope of services offered by Business Connections.

a. Persons Served

Our *Supported Employment Services* are designed to meet the needs of individuals with severe disabilities. This includes people for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, individuals whose competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a severe disability, and those who, because of their disability, need ongoing support to maintain competitive employment.

The program also offers *Time Limited Job Coach Training Services* that are available for people with disabilities who require assistance with locating employment, transitioning into the workforce, and/or time limited on-the-job skills training and support services. The aforementioned ongoing or long-term support services are not provided in this service option.

Vocational Assessments are available within the context of implementing either Supported Employment or Time Limited Services or for general career exploration.

b. Admission Criteria

- Persons must have a severe disability. Time Limited/Job Coach Training Services are available for people who need or desire less intensive services. Situational vocational assessments are available to participants in both services for those who desire general career exploration.
- Persons served should be willing to work within the City of Richmond and the surrounding counties (i.e., Henrico, Chesterfield, Hanover), Fredericksburg and surrounding counties, or Warsaw. Persons who reside outside this radius are accepted for services if funding is made available. Whenever the person is referred from outside of the

general catchments area, the program strongly encourages the referring counselor to also become involved in job placement activities in order to reduce service cost.

- Usually individuals are not employed at the time of referral; however, there are exceptions. Examples of when someone who is already employed may be referred for services include: the person is experiencing difficulties at work and intervention may alleviate the problems and increase longevity on the job, the person is underemployed and desires new employment, or the person will be laid off from work.

c. Scope of Services Available

What follows is a general description of how services are delivered for the supported employment and time limited services. The primary services are *customer assessment, career search and job selection, on and off the job vocational supports, and long-term retention.*

c1. Customer Assessment

During Customer Assessment, the employment specialist formulates an understanding of what the customer wants from an employment opportunity, as well as what she/he feels they have to offer to the business community. Everyone has a variety of unique experiences and abilities that can translate into valuable services to the business community. The assessment process helps distinguish the business needs a person can meet given their current skills, abilities and total life experiences. Our employment specialists are required to meet new customers in their home or other place of their choosing, within 5 working days of receiving the referral to begin this process.

What someone wants to do can be a difficult question? The customer needs to know what she/he is good at, what she/he is not so good at, what she/he likes to do, and what is important to him or her. Without consideration to these factors, the job search will lack focus and the person may end up being “placed” into a job. We also believe the only way our employment specialists can initially represent their customers to employers is to believe in and know each person’s abilities and interests.

One of our first steps to get to know our customers involves conducting functional assessment activities. This may include interviews, observations, and other informational gathering activities aimed at capturing a picture of who the individual really is and what his or her interests, skills, and desires are. This component of supported employment focuses on using person centered planning to learn more about the individual, as well as give the jobseeker an opportunity to assess him or herself. This lays the foundation that guides the job search, on the jobsite training, and support and long term support.

Our two primary methods of functional assessment involve having the customer observe work in business settings and other community environments. In this way, an individual can indicate what he or she likes by visiting or participating in the actual environments where the events occur. This allows someone to express preferences that may not be communicated, exhibit abilities that may go undetected, and make choices from experiences that might not otherwise ever be known.

A community assessment provides an excellent opportunity to become familiar with the local area where the individual lives both to identify potential support resources and to determine job preferences. Additionally, it allows the employment specialist the chance to identify businesses to target for job development. For customers who have never worked or who have had limited experiences, making choices about a job or the features of a workplace often can be difficult. Using this approach, the employment specialist and customer spend time in a select community setting.

c1a. Vocational Assessment

A situational assessment provides a customer with the opportunity to perform job tasks in real work environments in the community. Usually, a situational assessment is conducted for a four hour period in two to three different types of jobs in the community which are representative of the local labor market. However, a general guideline for the length of an assessment is that it should reflect the customer’s future work day. If the individual wants to work full time, then he or she should participate in assessments that reflect a full day of work.

Any business can be a potential site; identified from any number of experiences, contacts, or resources that the employment specialist is aware of (e.g., past employment, personal contacts, job development, previous supported employment setting, newspaper, telephone book, and so forth). However, the sites selected for any specific customer depends on the choices of the individual.

If the customer is unable to identify specific ideas about a career path, then situational assessments can be even more valuable to the individual and the employment specialist. A variety of job types should be explored, and the customer's reaction to each recorded to compare which may be the most appropriate and most preferred job choice. It is important to note that it is not necessarily assumed that a customer will choose to work in one of the types of businesses where the situational assessments are conducted, but an opportunity is provided to assist the customer with determining the career goal, work environment, job characteristics, or business that he or she might like.

Situational assessments are useful in determining the type of employment services a customer can benefit from and the level and intensity of supports she or he will need. Observing an individual performing real work in multiple environments provides an indication of her or his work characteristics, interests, skills, abilities, learning style, and support needs. In addition, a situational assessment offers the individual an opportunity to witness different types of jobs and their requirements first-hand to assist him or her with making a job choice.

Persons who are returning to pre-disability employment may desire information related to their ability to perform the essential functions of the job with or without accommodation and whether this person can perform the job without posing a direct threat to the health or safety of the person or others is provided. The assessment activities are customized to the situation at hand and generally take place in the actual work setting.

Some customers may desire to have their existing skills and knowledge as they return to previous employment or education assessed (i.e., hair stylist, nurse, shoe repairman, etc.). In such cases, a vocational skills and knowledge assessment site is developed and a consultant (person with the experience required) is hired to report on current skill level functioning. The focus here is to examine acquired skills that can be used in new employment settings as well as identifies potential accommodations.

c1b. Customer Profile

One of the challenges of the assessment process is pulling together all of the information which has been obtained from a variety of sources. It is not uncommon for different information gathering techniques to yield differing information about the same thing. While this can be confusing, it is extremely helpful to be able to paint a larger picture of who the customer is.

Once all of the assessment activities have been completed, the employment specialist should have a general sense of who the customer is what kind of jobs he or she would like, and the types of supports that may be needed. The information is summarized and a customer profile is created.

A Business Analysis described later includes parallel items that focus on the business setting and job requirements. This can be used to assist customers with making choices about job selection, training, and support needs.

We believe that assessment should never be a lengthy process. Whenever the following are noted, we move on to assist the person with his or her job search.

- Customer assets (skills and interests),
- Customer personal experiences (in terms of work, education and other activities),
- Customer work values or rewards expected,
- Customer work setting she/he will consider,
- Customer and employment specialist associate how the above relate to career choice, and
- Customer's participation in job search

c2. Customer Career Search and Job Selection

Once the customer considers important aspects of employment and what he or she has to offer businesses are determined, strategies to present and sell his/her unique skills and talents to the business community are developed. Conducting a successful job search is not a simple process. Due to the continuously changing and competitive nature of the job market, there are no guarantees that any particular job search strategy will work. Therefore, a diverse approach is used. For example; we may brainstorm a list of prospective businesses where the customer wants to work, survey the customer's personal network, identify job leads and referral services, and contact former employers and businesses advertising employment opportunities.

Personal business networks are also developed. In this procedure, the customer lists names of individuals to contact about employment opportunities. The network may include family, friends, family members of friends, church members, support group members, people they do business with, etc. For each person reached an inquiry about the names of new contacts if requested. This leads to the development of a network referral chain.

Job lead and referral services are also used to identify jobs. These services include job banks, telephone job information lines and professional networks. If the customer worked in the past, whether paid or volunteer, we may contact former supervisors and coworkers to inquire about leads too.

We sometimes use current employment leads. Sources of information include newspapers, government listings (federal, state, city, and county), help wanted signs or announcements posted on public bulletin boards, etc. We also focus heavily on the "hidden job market" or jobs that do not currently exist or are not being advertised. Studies have shown that only a small percentage of jobs available are advertised and employers are more likely to hire someone they know. Therefore, a major thrust of job development efforts is to become known or acquainted with an employer. Thus, our initial contact focuses on offering services and building rapport with the employer without immediately wanting something in return. During our initial interview with a prospective employer we seek to obtain key pieces of information about the company and, if applicable, specific job openings. This information is documented on a Business Analysis.

After we receive information concerning an employer's hiring needs, if possible, we observe someone performing various jobs. We make observations on the various tasks performed, essential job functions, critical skills needed related to each job duty, and approximate time spent engaged in each job task, etc.

This process, gives us a better understanding of the employer's expectations. This information is also recorded on the Business Analysis. The analysis along with additional notes, employer job descriptions, etc., provides a permanent record of both specific job requirements and general work characteristics of the worksite. Later, this data is used to guide our customers with making a decision on whether or not to interview for a particular job.

Some of our customers are not qualified or cannot perform essential functions of existing jobs. Thus, we sometimes negotiate or restructure a job with a willing employer. Job restructuring involves redistribution of job tasks that cannot be performed by the jobseeker. These tasks are given to a co-worker in exchange for a task that the job seeker can do. In other instances a new job may be created or carved.

Job restructuring or carving are excellent strategies to use with a job seeker who may not be necessarily "qualified" or able to perform all aspects of a current job opening. Job restructuring ideas may not be obvious. The employment specialist must spend time working with the business to determine the potential or undiscovered need. Some of the best ideas for job restructuring have resulted from our informal observations and conversations with decision makers about their needs and how they do business.

c2a. Directing the Job-Hunt

Our customers may choose to lead, direct, actively participate, or simply stay informed during the job development or job search process. The key to providing a customer-driven approach is to work with our customers to assist them in determining their role, duties, and responsibilities. Job seekers are encouraged and supported to be actively involved in this process. There are a variety of different ways for our customers to participate in the job development process like: creating a resume, telephoning the employment specialist with job leads, cold calling employers, and networking with family and friends. Regardless of how the customer shapes his or her role, the

employment specialist continues to actively contact employers on the person's behalf.

c2b. Application Process and Interviewing

If a job opportunity is available, we contact the customer. If interested, he or she completes the business' employment application. The employment specialist provides support as needed.

Some job seekers may desire preparation for an interview to help alleviate anxiety. If so, the customer and the employment specialist meet before the interview to discuss:

- The purpose of the interview;
- How they will get to and from the interview;
- What the employer will want to know;
- How to present the customer's experience and qualifications;
- What the applicant will want to ask; and
- How to present a business-like image.

In some situations, the applicant and/or the employer may prefer that the interview be attended by the applicant only. In other situations, the applicant and/or the employer may allow the employment specialist to participate.

c2c. Review Offer

Prior to the interview and again after, employment is offered, the pros and cons of the particular employment situation are reviewed with the customer. This information is based upon a comparison of the "Customer Profile" information and data collected during the "Business/Job Analysis." This helps determine whether or not the employment offer fulfills the customer's desires, capitalizes on vocational strengths, and what types of workplace support and accommodations may be necessary.

At the point in time when an employer makes an offer of employment to a customer, he or she must make a decision on whether or not to accept it. The employment specialist assists the customer with this process. The decision is based on an analysis of facts, knowledge, and data collected regarding the business and the specific job/career and/or occupational preferences and abilities of the customer. In essence, the task once more is to identify the pros and cons related to accepting or rejecting the position. The customer, with the support of the employment specialist, makes the decision about whether or not to accept or reject an employer's offer.

c2d. Before the First Day of Work

There are several activities that may need to be coordinated by the employment specialist prior to a customer's first day of work. It is imperative that the employment specialist notify the vocational rehabilitation counselor and significant others (if applicable), make sure arrangements are made for transportation or transportation training, and, if appropriate, tax credit is completed and signed by the employer. Examples of other activities that may need to be completed include: referral to Social Security for reporting procedures, and assistance with the purchase of uniforms or other work related items, etc.

c3. On and Off the Job Vocational Supports

Once employed, the employment specialist provides support on and sometimes off the jobsite. Supports are provided to assist the new hire with learning how to do the job effectively and safely, communicating with jobsite personnel, handling issues outside of work, such as accessing transportation systems, depositing paychecks, etc.

The employment specialist is prepared to take on the role as a facilitator of independent, self-directed learning and/or a job skills training specialist. Also, depending upon the job, while the customer is getting up to speed, the employment specialist may actually perform some of the work. This insurance to complete the work keeps the employer satisfied and gives the customer additional time necessary to learn the job. Examples of supports follow.

Systematic instruction is one method of teaching job duties and job related tasks in a consistent manner. The use of systematic instruction also provides a method of data collection regarding the person's performance level. Using this information to monitor progress during training will provide structure and minimize confusion for the

trainee, as well as the employment specialist. Production training involves determining production standards for the job duty, and the individual's current rate of performance. A comparison reveals if there is a need to increase productivity.

The implementation of compensatory strategies, adaptations, in addition to restructuring the work environment, can be extremely useful in enhancing the new employee's learning and promoting his or her ability to perform the job. Adjustments can be cognitively-oriented, providing the individual with effective ways to remember what to do and how to do it. For example:

- A worksheet outlining the steps needed to balance a cash drawer
- A map that outlines a route to follow when cleaning apartment grounds
- Written detailed instructions to follow when cleaning plants

Other implementations may be used to compensate for physical deficits. For example:

- Providing a lap board for individuals involved in data entry to reduce ataxia
- Use of a stand to reduce unsteadiness in upright positions while sorting mail

Development and implementation of strategies usually occurs when an individual encounters difficulty in learning a new task, shows great variability in task performance, or is unable to meet the required production standard. A review of probe data reveals where difficulties arise. It is crucial that the user perceive the usefulness of an accommodation. Therefore, the new employee is always involved in the planning and implementation process.

Some new hires require less assistance with learning how to do the job, but more support related to interpersonal relations, specifically, communicating and working effectively with jobsite personnel. The employment specialist is available to help in this area too.

Sometimes, going to work and learning a new task can be very challenging. The inability to see immediate success can lead to frustration. Frustration appears in many ways, such as verbal outbursts, throwing things, or even threats to quit a job. If this arises, the employment specialist is there to assist by teaching techniques to keep the outward signs of frustration at a minimum and manage these feelings. Other customers may exhibit unusual behaviors. Whenever present, the employment specialist may educate jobsite personnel and in some instances, implement a behavioral program under the supervision of the Program Director.

Understandably, an employer will only tolerate unusual or rude behaviors for a limited amount of time. Therefore, we feel it is important to immediately identify such issues and begin to try to reduce occurrences.

c3a. Obtain Performance Feedback

In addition to the new hires supervisor, the employment specialist also provides feedback to the customer on how he or she is progressing toward reaching the employer's desired performance standards. Generally, data is collected on what has been learned and productivity. These findings help to determine the effectiveness of our training. The customer is also encouraged to solicit performance feedback from the employer. All of the aforementioned is useful when determining a fading schedule.

Eventually, the employee is performing the job to the employer's standard and the employment specialist begins to fade from the jobsite. This is a gradual process whereby the employment specialist spends less and less time on the jobsite, until eventually he or she is no longer present on the job.

c4. Customized Job Retention Services

Supported Employment, offers ongoing support for as long as the individual is employed. As a matter of fact, this feature distinguishes it from other service options. It's important for the customer to learn to perform the job well. It's also crucial to keep it. A multitude of factors can influence the reliability of ongoing supports, such as a change in management or the way a job function is performed, the customer's transportation or residential situation. Therefore, it is critical to keep abreast of how things are going both at and away from work. In Supported Employment, follow-up services are available throughout the duration of employment. During this phase, the employment

specialist is no longer at the worksite on a daily basis, but continues to have ongoing customer and employer contact and is available to provide additional support services, as needed.

To ensure that employment is stable, the employment specialist gathers information on how the customer is performing at work. This may relate to:

- current job performance,
- the employer's perceptions of performance,
- effectiveness of accommodations,
- relations with jobsite personnel,
- job satisfaction, and
- factors outside of work that may affect job performance.

Data is collected by making observations and communicating with knowledgeable work site personnel. Additional assistance is provided as indicated by the employer or customer.

c4a. Time Limited Services

This service is like Supported Employment, except on the jobsite training and long term support services are time limited. Once the employment specialist fades, follow up is limited. Persons who participate in this service are not in need of ongoing long-term follow along support services.

v. Staffing

It is an important performance indicator that our employment services division is staffed with qualified personnel that not only maintain the appropriate credentials, but also embody the principles of supported employment. During the year, the program was staffed by 8 employment specialists and 3 part-time employment specialist. Although we had very little turn-over this year, all new staff members completed our new orientation process which involves in house training, enrollment in the Supported Employment Web Course, select readings, and on the job skills training. All staff members have undergraduate degrees, two staff member earned a MS and CRC and one individuals is in VCU's Ph.D program.. One employment specialist has more than seven years experience and four have more than four years of experience in supported employment. All of our staff members are ACRE-certified through the supported employment web-based certificate series. The Director of Business Connections, Valerie Brooke, has her Master's in Education, with a concentration in employment, and has been a faculty member at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and working in the field of employment for people with significant disabilities for thirty years. Ms. Brooke is also the Director of Training at VCU-RRTC and serves as the Principal Investigator/Project Director for several personnel training grants promoting employment for people with disabilities. She oversees the overall program operations including marketing activities, staff training and supervision.

The customer to staff ratio for job search services did not exceed one to four. During jobsite training, the ratio is one to one. The ratio for follow-along fluctuates depending on the number of customers working during a particular time period and number of staff.

IV. OVERALL EVALUATION GOALS

The questions answered by the evaluation are as follows:

1. Are we serving individuals with the most severe disabilities?
2. Do we serve a diverse group of people reflective of the community at large?
3. Do individuals have home/first visit scheduled within five days of initial referral from DRS?
4. Do our customers receive at least minimum wage or better for work performed?
5. Do our customers work part-time or more hours if preferred?
6. Do our customers perform "real work" in community based businesses?
7. Are our customers involved in their job searches and job selection?
8. Does our staff attempt to partner and educate businesses by offering educational materials and technical assistance; rather than only "asking for something?"
9. Does our staff work with businesses to restructure job opportunities to meet the needs of both the jobseeker and business?
10. Do our customers receive individualized on and off the job vocational support?

11. Why do our customers leave employment?
12. Are the individuals that are served, satisfied with services?
13. Are customer complaints handled within a timely manner?

V. METHODOLOGY

Program outcomes reports were compiled by and reviewed by the program director. This information is entered in to a data base and updated on a regular basis. It includes basic demographics and customer status, for example if employed, date of hire, employer and occupation, if separated from work, length of employment and reason for separation. It also includes reason for leaving or being discharged from the program. In addition, to using the database a random sample of customer files were reviewed. This included an examination of the following types of information to gain insight into customer involvement, individualization of service delivery, and use of workplace supports.

Customer Assessment activities are documented by case notes. These include a description of the activities provided and the outcome of each, for instance, home visit, intake interview, resume development, and a customer profile. This includes, but is not limited to the documenting individuals' interests and abilities, work preferences, and the type and level of on and off the job site support needs. Daily service time is also documented for this and all other activities. *Job Search and Selection activities* are documented using the employer contact logs and case notes. The log includes the name and type of business approached, strategy used for making the connection, and the outcomes of the employer contacts is documented. *On and off the job vocational support activities* are documented using training data and case notes. Information generally includes: identification of tasks being trained, description of adaptations to the worksite, current strengths and/or concerns, and degree of worker independence. *Job Retention Services* are also documented using case notes. Ongoing supports include on and off the job site visits or contacts to document the employee's status and/or provide additional skills training or arrange supports as needed.

In the past, we randomly surveyed individuals who received our services to measure their level of satisfaction. The database manager contacted individuals by telephone, mail, and email. Due to poor response rates we are measuring satisfaction in other ways which will be further explained in the following section.

VI. INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

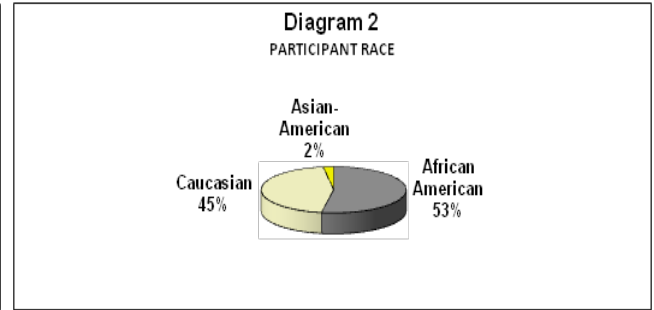
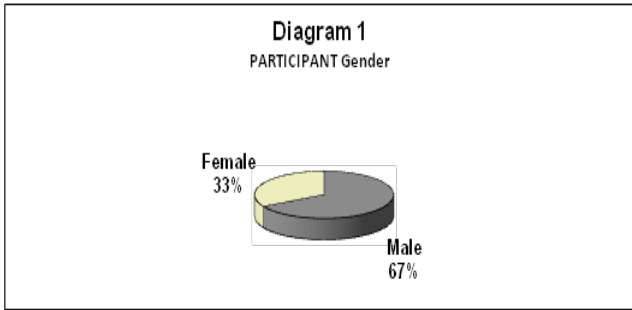
Goal 1: Are we serving individuals with the most severe disabilities?

Business Connections served a total of 129 individuals this year. A few people were referred for situational assessment only; however, the majority of individuals referred received Supported Employment Services. All persons served have a severe disability as evidenced by referral documentation and/or receipt of social security benefits. Approximately 42 percent of those served had a primary disability label of Autism, followed by those with Intellectual Disabilities (26%), Cerebral Palsy (6%), Visually Impaired (5%), Learning Disability (5%), and Mental Illness (5%). Table 1 provides a complete break out of individuals served according to primary disability label. Many of those served have secondary and tertiary labels as well. These data reflect the fact that Business Connections is dedicated to serving those individuals with the most significant disabilities as well as underserved populations.

Table 1:		Disability Label	Frequency
Individuals Served According to Primary Disability Label (N = 129)		Autism	54
		Intellectual Disability	33
		Cerebral Palsy	8
		Learning Disability	7
		Visually Impaired	7
		Mental Illness	6
		Traumatic Brain Injury	3
		Hearing Impaired	3
		Epilepsy/Seizure Disorder	1
		Multiple Sclerosis	1
		Immune System Disorder	1
		Stroke/Physical Mobility	1
		ODD/ADHD	1
		Speech Impediment	1
		Phonological Disorder	1
	Multiple Pterygium Syndrome	1	
		TOTAL	129

Goal 2: Do we serve a diverse group of people reflective of the community at large?

The majority or 67% of those served were male, and 33% were female. The disparity of males vs. females receiving services can be explained by the high number of persons with autism receiving services (autism affects more males than females with an approximate a ratio of 4:1). Fifty-three percent (53%) of individuals served were African American/Black, 45% were Caucasian/White, and three individuals served were Asian-American. Diagram 1 and 2 below illustrate the basic demographics of the persons served throughout the year.



- Goals 3-6:** *Do individuals have home/first visit scheduled within five days of initial referral from DRS?*
Do our customers receive at least minimum wage or better for work performed?
Do our customers work part-time or more hours if preferred?
Do our customers perform “real work” in community based businesses?

Over the course of the year, 30 additional individuals were referred for services. Customer visits were held with all newly referred candidates. During the year 63 individuals worked in paid employment with a total of 71 job placements. Eight individuals had two placements during the year. Ten individuals were separated from employment. Five of the eight that separated from employment were placed in another position and were still working at the end of the year. Fifty-nine total individuals remained employed at the end of the year. The majority worked part-time or less than 30 hours a week. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the type of industries where individuals were employed throughout the year. The data indicates that Business Connections is dedicated to work with an array of employers in the local business community.

Industry	Frequency
Retail	13
Food -- restaurant--6; cafeteria--3; fast food--3	10
Academic	5
Recreational / Fitness / Childcare	4
Hospitality / Entertainment	6
Healthcare	31
Other - security -- 1; not-for-profit -- 1	2
TOTAL	71

Goal 7: Are our customers involved in their job searches and job selection?

Those individuals who went to work and/or continued employment during the year worked in a wide variety of occupations as shown in Table 3. This along with case file information illustrates the fact that the abilities and interests of those served are reflected in their job selection.

Retail	-- sales associates, cashier, fitting room attendant, replenisher, customer service associate
Food	-- kitchen staff member, delivery person, dishwasher, busser, line worker
Academic	-- data entry specialist, office assistant, marketing assistant, secretary, file clerk
Recreational/Fitness	-- counselor, sports assistant, camp counselor
Hospitality/Entertainment	-- waitress, attendant
Healthcare	-- environmental services, nutrition services, teacher’s assistant, infection control, utility aid, dishwasher, medical records clerk, file room assistant, pharmacy assistant, surgical care technician
Government	-- office support assistant, data entry clerk
Other	-- greenhouse worker, trash porter, custodian

Goal 8: Does our staff attempt to partner and educate businesses by offering educational materials and technical assistance; rather than only “asking for something?”

Our staff used a variety of approaches to make contacts with employers. Their initial approach includes offering services rather than simply asking about job opportunities. Job development activities focused on creating relationships and developing rapport with potential employers. We have also developed a packet of marketing materials that we provide to interested employers. This packet include information about hiring and working with individuals with various disabilities, the role of a job coach, and information about research training and services provided by VCU-RRTC. Appendix B provides examples of materials offered to businesses. Additionally, we have implemented the Business Contacts database which will assist us in keeping in touch with potential employers over a period of time to develop stronger relationships.

Goal 9: Does the staff work with businesses to restructure job opportunities to meet the needs of both the job seeker and business?

Among the individuals who worked this year, eleven are working in positions that were significantly restructured or carved out to meet the needs of an employer and specific talents of a particular jobseeker. Table 4 provides a listing of job titles and primary functions of the customized employment.

Table 4: Examples of Jobs Carved	
Medical Records Clerk (healthcare)	- Scan important healthcare documents into softcopy forms
Back Room Associate (retail)	- Unpackages new clothing items after removal from truck - Lays clothing out in piles according to department - Sorts items and hangs clothing
Infection Control (healthcare)	- Stocks all isolation carts (with gloves, gowns, and masks) throughout the hospital - Cleans and replaces hand sanitizer in free standing machines throughout the hospital
Teacher's Assistant (Hospital's Family Center)	- Assigned to different classrooms to provide assistance working with the children, playing games, preparing art projects - One day a week works in the kitchen to prepare lunch for the students
Data Entry Clerk (academic)	- Data entry with a primary focus on maintaining mailing list
Nutrition Services (healthcare)	- Removes trash and boxes from kitchen and brings to the dumpster - Scraps patient trays & operates dishwashing machine - Wipes down tables & chairs in cafeteria & sweeps floors cleans bathrooms
Intensive Care Unit (healthcare)	- Stocks bedside carts, syringes & needles - Removes soiled linen from the room - Transports deliveries to lab as needed
Environmental Services Team Member (healthcare)	- Stock supply closets throughout hospital - Remove boxes from each floor in hospital & bring to the trash compactor
Office Support Assistant (academic)	- Basic administrative functions including data entry, copying, ording office supplies
Custodial Services Team Member (retail)	- Janitorial duties in body shop including, cleans bathrooms, sweeps floor, and assists with washing and detailing cars
Office Support Assistant (government)	- Process Commission Appeals mail and other office support duties as assigned

Goal 10: Do our customers receive individualized on and off the job vocational supports?"

A review of files revealed a variety of vocational supports were used to assist individuals with learning how to perform the job and maintain employment. This included the use of one to one skills training, design and implementation of assistive technology, and compensatory strategies and facilitation of natural supports to name a few. The case study offered in Appendix C further illustrates the use of proactive workplace supports for one of our current placements. Clifton was initially hired to build cabinets, but unfortunately after training neither he nor the employer was entirely satisfied with his placement in this position. After a meeting between Clifton, his job coach, and the owner, the employee expressed his preference to move around and be more creative. The owner suggested that Clifton try another position making dove-tailed drawers instead of cabinets. Building dove-tailed drawers is a true craft, and Clifton has excelled in this position. Now, both Clifton and his employer are completely satisfied and are pleased with his work performance and work ethic. Because it was identified early on that the initial job placement was not a good fit, the employer relationship and job placement were not only salvaged but were strengthened. In providing on-the-job supports we always work closely with employers, listen to their needs, and provide services in a way that compliments rather than supplants their existing practices.

Goal 11: Why do our customers separate from employment

During the year, 10 individuals separated from employment. Five of the eight that separated from employment were placed in another position and were still working at the end of the year. Table 5 indicates the primary reason for voluntary and involuntary separations.

Table 5:	Separation Reason	Frequency
Primary Cause of Separation from Employment (N = 10)	Job ended	2
	Retired/moved/no longer wanted SE	2
	Inability to meet employer's expectations	3
	Career advancement	2
	Resigned	1

Two people were separated from employment because the position was temporary for a year while 2 others were laid-off. Three people left work due to an inability to meet the employer's standards. Two individuals located alternate employment for a career advancement. Only one person resigned. We are looking to identify a new position for this individual that will better meet his needs.

Goal 12: Are the individuals that are served, satisfied with services?

Twenty-one individuals exited the program. The primary reason associated with each person leaving the program is provided in Table 6.

In the past we have attempted to contact all stakeholders (individuals with disabilities, employers and vocational rehabilitation counselors) about satisfaction with services using surveys by phone, email, and mail. Due to an ongoing poor response rate over the years we have decided to find other ways to get at this most important information. We refined each survey to make them shorter and more user-friendly. In the upcoming reporting cycle, we plan to put these online so they can be sent and completed online and the responses will be anonymously captured in a database. For those individuals that do not prefer to complete the survey online, Business Connections Staff member will provide a paper copy which will later be entered online. We hope to see an increased response rate with this survey method. Additionally we will be able to query and more easily analyze survey results.

Table 6:	Reason	Frequency
Primary Cause of Separation from Employment (N = 21)	DRS would no longer support service delivery, felt person not employable, taking too long to find job, etc.	7
	Temporary Position Ended	3
	Unable to contact / No longer desired to work	2
	No longer needed / wanted supported employment	2
	Loss of Job	2
	School	2
	Retired / Relocated	2
	Unresolved Medical Problem	1
	TOTAL	21

We also review employment retention rates and reasons for separation and discharge from the program to help us understand satisfaction with services among the individuals with disabilities we have served. We found that proactive long-term follow along was an important factor in salvaging jobs before separation from employment occurred. Typically, employees required only short-term additional training or off site support in order to regain stabilization in a job.

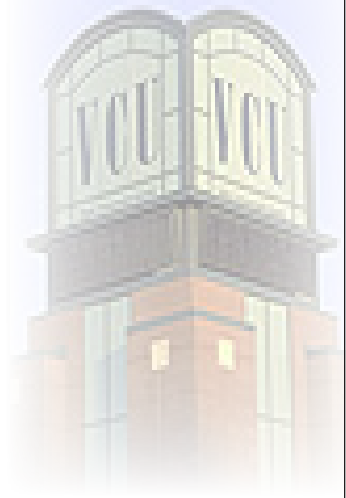
Goal 13: Are customer complaints handled within a timely manner?

We did not have any complaints during the June 2011-July 2012 Reporting Period. However, our policy is to address all complaints from customers, referral sources and employers within 24 hours or sooner of notification. It may take differing amounts of time to resolve the complaint depending upon the issue on hand. We did have several individuals lose their jobs during the reporting period (10) and we worked with the customer and funding source to address this and have their cases reopened quickly in order to locate new employment. Five of the individuals were placed into a new placement within the reporting year. Five individuals were discharged from the program because they were either no longer interested in employment or DRS felt supported employment was no longer needed.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

We continue to look for ways to improve upon our process for evaluating the satisfaction of services from our key stakeholders (i.e., employer, funders, referral sources, and family members). We will review the quality indicators, and data base to determine if any elements need to be added or deleted. Updated satisfaction surveys have been developed for employers, referral agencies, DRS counselors and consumers and will be used during the upcoming fiscal year.

While many important steps have been taken to improve our data collection and ability to easily access this data, more work is needed in this area. In the 2011-2012 fiscal years, several improvements were made to the Customer Data base to assist us with tracking important quality indicators. One of the primary additions we have implemented is capturing the employment specialists "service hours" within our database. While we are still working out the kinks of this new feature, we plan to ultimately use this information to evaluate the number of hours we are using to accomplish employment goals. In the upcoming year, we will continue our efforts in this area through developing an on-line referral, program documentation, and billing system.



APPENDIX A:

Performance Indicators for Business Connections Employment Program

Performance Indicators for Business Connections Employment Program

No.	Performance Indicator	Possible Measure(s)	Concerns	Domain	Data Source
1.	Convenience of the location of service sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of positive customer responses to a survey question about ongoing and timely service delivery. *Meetings are held in locations that are chosen by me. Comparison of relevant items on the CVA and BJA to identify whether or not these are in alignment with the customer's desires/preferences and if not, a review of case notes will be performed to determine if it was the customer's decision to accept job at a specific place of business. Case notes indicating community based service delivery. 	Access to services	Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Survey Item B.1 Comparison of Items B.1G, H, I on Customer Vocational Assessment (CVA) and Business/Job Analysis (BJA) Case Notes
2.	Satisfaction with timeliness of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of customer/referral source responses to a survey question about ongoing and timely service delivery. *I receive services in an ongoing and timely manner. Case notes documenting ongoing service delivery and concerns with timeliness. 	Access to services	Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Survey Item B.3 Referral Source Survey Item 7 Case notes
3.	Ease of Referral Process and Denial Rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of those surveyed who report that no one referred was denied services. *All individuals who have been referred were accepted for services. *Services are delivered in a responsive matter. Variety of ways that referrals are made to the program. Documentation on procedures for making referrals. 	Access to services	Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral Source Survey Item 1 and 2 Ongoing communications with primary or secondary referral sources Program Description
4.	Time from referral to initiation of services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percent of customers who had services initiated within five days of referral; calculation of length of time from date of referral to first contact. Case notes indicate community based and home visits. 	Access to services	Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral Form Case notes
5.	Convenience of appointment times for customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of positive customer responses to a survey question about ongoing and timely service delivery. *Meetings are held at times that are convenient to me. Case notes document meeting on "off hours" upon customer's request. 	Waiting time for service	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Survey Item B.2 Case notes
6.	Degree of consumer and referral source involvement in planning, design, delivery, and evaluation of employment services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of positive customer responses to a survey question. *I participate in service planning, and delivery. Customer Vocational Assessment Items and Business Analysis Items document plan for involvement in job development activities and on the job support. Documentation that ISP's are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Case notes and billing reports document participation and ongoing involvement in service planning. Staff report examples of customer involvement. 	Program responsiveness to consumer needs	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual service plans Customer Survey Items B.5 Referral Survey Item 6 Customer Vocational Assessment Items and Business Analysis Billing Report Case notes Employer Survey Items 3, 5, and 6 Staff Interview

No.	Performance Indicator	Possible Measure(s)	Concerns	Domain	Data Source
7.	Degree of active customer participation in decisions concerning their employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of positive customer responses to a survey question. *I decided on my vocational goal to chose my job. Case notes documenting decisions to reject or accept employment offers. Interviews with staff on decisions related to service delivery and job selection. 	Customer-driven services and support	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Survey Items B.6 and B. 7 Case notes Staff interview
8.	Degree to which customers believe they were respected by the staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of positive customer responses to a survey question. *I feel accepted, understood, and respected by staff who worked with me. Number and type of grievances reported. Number of individuals who opt to drop out of the program for this reason. Staff use people first language and follow standards of conduct. 	Personal dignity	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Survey Item B.4 Incidents Reported Employer Survey Item 1 Observation of staff
9.	Satisfaction with communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of positive customer response to questions related to communication. Case notes documenting ongoing communications with all parties. 	Ongoing and effective communication	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Survey Item B.5 Referral Survey Items 3, 4, and 6 Employer Survey Item 2 Case notes
10.	Rate of satisfaction with process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of customers who say they are satisfied with services. *I am satisfied with the overall quality of services. Case notes documenting satisfaction with services. Number of people who remain in the program. 	Satisfaction with services	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Survey Items B3, B8, and B9 Referral Survey Items 3, 4, 5, and 6 Case notes Administrative data base
11.	Appropriateness of services to individual employment needs and personal learning styles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of on the job training date and case notes that report individualizing services and teaching style. Case notes/training data document variety of approaches used to assist customer with meeting employers' performance standards. Staff are knowledgeable of various support strategies and have access to resources. Number of individuals who stabilize in employment/job retention rates. 	Individualized and Customer Driven Services and Support	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Vocational Assessment and Business Job Analysis Items Job Site Training Data Case notes Referral Survey Item 5 Staff interview Administrative data base
12.	Number of service staff and customers injured during direct service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of frequency of persons injured. Case notes documenting incident. 	Health and Safety	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers Compensation Reports Case notes Monthly Billing Reports Incident Report
13.	Number of customers who are injured outside the workplace that leads to suspension of ongoing activity or a leave of absence from work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of persons who request leave of absence from work or no longer receive services due to injury. Case notes reporting incident that lead to termination of work. 	Health and Safety	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative database Case notes Monthly Billing Reports Incident Report

No.	Performance Indicator	Possible Measure(s)	Concerns	Domain	Data Source
14.	Degree to which people who are identified with a health problem (decomposition related to mental illness, substance abuse, other health concerns) and referred to appropriate services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of persons with health problems reported and percent referred to appropriate services. Number of people who separate from employment due to health problems. Case notes documenting referral to resources. Staff report procedure to follow. 	Health and Safety	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative database Job Separation and/or Discharge Reports Case notes Staff interview
15.	Program serves people with the most severe disabilities.	Percentage of person served by disability severity level.	Serve people with severe disabilities	Outcome	Administrative database
16.	Degree to which those employed retained full or part-time employment for one year or longer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average length of employment and range of months employed among those working during the year. Number of and reasons people separate from employment. Number of and reasons people leave program. Case notes documenting incidents leading up to separation (process vs. event). 	Maintaining Real Work for Real Pay in the Community	Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative database Job Separation and/or Discharge Reports Case notes
17.	Employed customers are paid wages similar to that of others engaged in similar work activities in the workplace. When a job is "created or carved" the employee is paid at least minimum wage or more.	Percentage of those employed during the year who are earning minimum wage or more.	Maintaining Real Work for Real Pay in the Community	Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative database Customer Survey Section, see Employment Data
18.	People go to work in various industries.	Number of customers who work in different industries.	Real work for Real Pay	Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative database Case notes
19.	Job opportunities are located that match the needs of job seeker and employer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency occupational titles of restructured jobs. Staff have knowledge about ways to negotiate jobs and new work structures. 	Services are customized to capitalize on customer's abilities and meet the businesses needs	Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative database Case notes Customer Vocational Assessment and Business/Job Analysis Staff interview
20.	The person is a more active participant in community activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of persons reporting an increase or decrease in level of community participation. Staff report changes in community participation. 	Community Inclusion	Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Survey Items A.9 and A.10 Case notes Staff interview
21.	The person reports being in control of their own resources.	Percentage of persons reporting an increase or decrease in control over finances and resources.	Independence and Self-Sufficiency	Outcome	Customer Survey Item A.11
22.	The person receives information on how to reduce reliance on disability specific funding sources and plans services using this information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of persons who receive referral to SSA Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach Specialist. Staff have basic knowledge of SSA benefits and report procedure for referral of person to BPAO and other resources. 	Independence and Self-Sufficiency	Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative database Case notes Staff interview
23.	Degree to which person indicates a feeling of improved self-worth.	Percentage of persons reporting an increase or decrease in self esteem and worth.	Esteem and Self-Worth	Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Survey Items A.12, A.13, A.14, and A.15 Case notes

No.	Performance Indicator	Possible Measure(s)	Concerns	Domain	Data Source
24.	Degree to which the person reports feeling in charge of making decisions at work, at home, and in the community.	Percentage of persons reporting an increase or decrease in level of self-determination and advocacy skills.	Self-determination and advocacy	Outcome	Customer Survey Items A.2, A.3, A.4, A.5, A.6, A.7, and A.8
25.	Degree to which customers are satisfied with the overall services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of positive customer resources to a survey question about overall satisfaction. Percent of individuals who remain in the program and do not change service providers. 	Overall satisfaction	Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Service Items B.8 and B.9 Referral Source Items 8 and 9 Employer Survey Items 7 and 8 Administrative database
26.	Degree to which consumers feel they can manage their day-to-day lives.	Percentage of persons reporting an increase or decrease in managing daily life activities.	Self-efficacy	Outcome	Customer Service Items B.8 and B.9
27.	Overall satisfaction with employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of positive responses to survey item. Percentage of people who do not leave the program due to dissatisfaction with service delivery. 	Satisfaction with work	Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Service Items B.8 and B.9 Case notes Administrative database
28.	Number served by: disability -- sex -- race -- age distribution -- and other demographics	Percentages of persons served.	Track record, organization's capacity to provide services	Outcome	Administrative database
29.	Staff credentials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of staff with college degree. Staff participation in new employee training and ongoing education activities. 	Trace record, organization's capacity to provide services	Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human resource records Staff interviews
30.	Cost of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average cost of services. How hourly rate compares to other area vendors of same service. 	Cost of services	Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative database Billing Data
31.	Accreditation status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Length of time accredited Organizational history 	Track record, organization's capacity to provide services	Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accrediting body/certificate Annual Report



APPENDIX B: EMPLOYER MARKETING MATERIALS

Business Connections of VCU: Customer Brochure

Business Connections of VCU: Employer Brochure

Fast Facts On...Disability Etiquette

Job Coaching Services and Benefits to Business and People with Disabilities

Fast Facts On...Business Tax Credits & Deductions for Employment of People with Disabilities

Fast Facts On...When the Job Candidate has a Disability

VCU Business Connections E-Newsletter: October 2010

VCU Business Connections E-Newsletter: January 2011

VCU Business Connections E-Newsletter: May 2011



**Tameka Perkins
Success Story**

In October 2008, VCU-RRTC began working with Tameka Perkins, a concessionist at Regal Short Pump. The Job Coach built a strong relationship with Tameka and worked with her to improve her work speed, as well as her interpersonal skills, and customer service skills. The Job Coach worked closely with management and Tameka to ensure satisfaction for the employer and the consumer, and to identify other areas where improvement or support was needed. From the first day that VCU-RRTC began working with Tameka she expressed her desire to work in the box office. The Job Coach worked closely with Tameka to make strides in her existing position so that she could prove to management that she was responsible and ready to take on more challenging job tasks. In February 2009, Tameka achieved her goal and was given the opportunity to train in the box office, where she has excelled ever since. The Job Coach witnessed a transformation as Tameka grew more confident and well rounded. Now, she is a very versatile employee able to work as a concessionaire, usher, door attendant, or box office attendant. In May 2009, just 7 months after VCU-RRTC intervened, Tameka was proud to share that she was named Star Performer of the Month.

For more information contact:

**Valerie Brooke
Program Director
(804) 828-1873
vbrooke@vcu.edu**

Se hablamos español



Virginia Commonwealth University, Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports and Job Retention's Employment Services Division has achieved national accreditation by the Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Education and Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution providing access to education and employment without regard to age, race, color, national origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, veteran's status, political affiliation, or disability. If special accommodations are needed, please contact Howard Green at (804) 828-1851 VOICE or (804) 828-2494 TTY.

Business



**Get Connected
to a Career
Today!!**



**Connections
for You**

Virginia Commonwealth University
Rehabilitation Research and Training
Center on Workplace Supports
and Job Retention

1314 W. Main Street
Richmond, VA 23284
www.worksupport.com

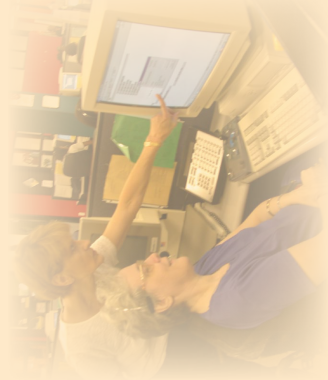
Do you want to enjoy the rewards of working?

Make money?

Meet new friends?

Be part of your community?

If you answered YES, then we want to meet with you and show you how we can put you on the road to success TODAY!



Business Connections of VCU can help you conduct a job search, negotiate employment, and get the support you need to retain employment.

We work in partnership with the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services, and other referral sources, to help you find the resources you need to become self-sufficient.



We design services to fit you:

- ◆ Vocational assessment
- ◆ Career search strategies
- ◆ Job placement
- ◆ Transitional employment
- ◆ Supported employment
- ◆ Post-employment support
- ◆ School to work transition
- ◆ Work incentives counseling



Why work with us?

- ◆ **Expertise...**
We have over 30 years of experience!
- ◆ **Choice & Control...**
YOU choose what jobs you like and tell us what you need to succeed at work.
- ◆ **Services to Fit You...**
We adjust what we do to best suit you.
- ◆ **Association...**
We work with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and community business associations.
- ◆ **Access to Information...**
We have information, such as our Customer Handbook, Customer Grievance Form, and Annual Outcomes Report, that you can take advantage of.



Welcoming Workers with Disabilities into the Workforce

What they bring to your company:

- Skills and knowledge
- Average and above average performance and attendance ratings
- Low turnover
- Motivation
- Active involvement in lifetime learning
- The ability to help your company build brand loyalty among a diverse community

Business Tax Credits and Incentives for Employment of People with Disabilities

Business Connections can help your business benefit from the Work Opportunities Tax Credit and various other business incentives who hire targeted individuals to include:

- veterans,
- persons with disabilities,
- students, and others.

Credits of 35% of the first \$6,000 (up to \$2,100) in first year wages to qualified employees.

For more information contact:

- Valerie Brooke, Program Director (804) 828-1873 -- vbrokeo@vcu.edu
- Jaclyn Allen, Employment Specialist (804) 827-0749 -- allenj14@vcu.edu
- Holly Collins, Employment Specialist (804) 827-0752 -- tatehe@vcu.edu
- Whitney Ham, Employment Specialist (804) 828-0830 -- hamwa@vcu.edu
- La-Toya Jenkins, Employment Specialist (804) 828-0754 -- grayltg@vuc.edu
- Ebony Kalafatis, Employment Specialist (804) 828-2326 -- ehedkakatat@vcu.edu
- Stephanie Lau -- Employment Specialist (804) 827-0753 -- slau@vcu.edu
- Alissa Molinelli, Employment Specialist (804) 827-0751 -- admolinelli@vcu.edu
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Se hablamos espanol



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Business Connections of VCU



What we offer to meet your staffing needs....

- Recruitment
- Staffing
- Jobsite Training
- Retention



Who We Are....

Business Connections, a division of VCU's School of Education, is a Richmond based program dedicated to the hiring, advancement, and economic self-sufficiency of people with disabilities. For over 20 years, we have specialized in recruitment and retention strategies that are customized to meet business workforce needs. Employers can benefit from partnering with us to expand their pool of qualified applicants, enhance productivity, and reduce the costly problems associated with turnover.

We accomplish these goals through expert training, quality education, and consistent support services all designed to build a strong and diverse workforce.

Our goal is to support the business community to locate qualified candidates to meet unique workforce needs. We will provide:

- Creative solutions to address specific staffing needs
- Ongoing support to ensure employer satisfaction, and
- A ready pool of qualified job candidates

"Working with VCU Business Connections has been an excellent experience. The job coaching services were outstanding and they provided us with an extremely valuable employee."

Steve York, Cary Street Market and Deli Sous Chef (kitchen manager)

Benefits to Business

Employers are able to focus on growing their business by letting Business Connections take care of the time consuming tasks associated with building a diverse and productive workforce.

Recruitment

We can reduce the time it takes locating dependable workers by giving employers access to our pre-screened job applicants. Our service can help you match candidates to the job.

Job Training

Our professional staff will ensure that support services cater to the personalized needs of the business. Customized services are provided to ensure the employee is meeting the company expectations and production standards. Also, job training is provided if needed. A coach can help identify effective accommodations, including individualized job skills training.

Retention

We realize it is not enough to simply find qualified job candidates. Keeping talented employees on the job is a primary goal of our program.

Why Work with Us?

We Get to Know Your Company

Business Connections has a broad understanding of many businesses in the Richmond area. We make it our mission to spend time in your company and determine your needs in order to match qualified candidates to job openings in your business.

Qualified Job Candidates

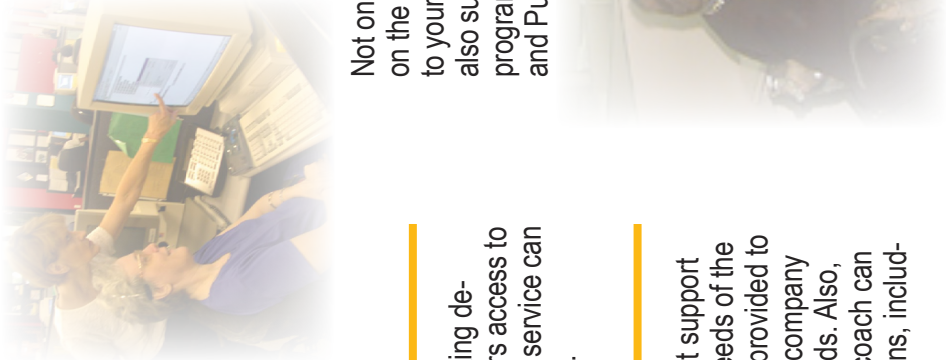
Through strong public-private partnership, we have assessed the skills, interests, and abilities of our talent pool that are prepared to enter your company.

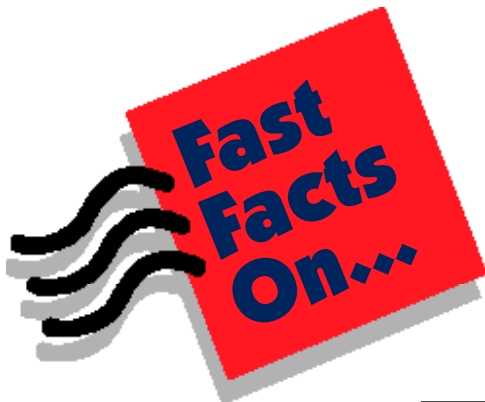
Training and Support

Not only is our professional staff prepared to go on the job to provide individualized job training to your clients, but Business Connections will also support the delivery of employee training programs such as ADA, Business Tax Credits, and Public/Private Partnerships.

"The VCU staff was instrumental in the success of the employee through their availability to the training needs. The support that their services gave our business was great!"

Melissa, General Manager Home Team Grill





DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

Smart businesspeople continually strive to improve customer service and employee relations. When the customer or employee has a disability, simple etiquette can pave the way for a successful relationship.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Nearly one-third of American families have a member with a disability.
- The word “handicapped” is derived from the phrase “cap in hand,” signifying a beggar. It is derogatory and should not be used.
- People first language should always be used. Say “uses a wheelchair” instead of “wheelchair-bound.”
- People with disabilities go to school, get married, have families, pay taxes, take vacations, and dream like everyone else.
- It’s appropriate to assume that people with disabilities can perform tasks for themselves.

VISUAL DISABILITY

Customers and employees with visual disabilities may have limited sight, distorted sight, or may not be able to see at all. Some of these individuals will need written information in large print, audio tapes, or a disk formatted for braille.

- As you approach the person, clearly state your identity.
- Ask the person if you may be of assistance.
- If you need to move to another area, offer to serve as a guide by offering your arm.
- Allow the person to hold your arm, and lead by walking slightly in front.
- When offering a seat, place the person’s hand on the chair back or arm.
- A dog in a harness is a working animal; do not do anything that would distract the dog from the job.

AUDITORY/HEARING DISABILITY

Customers and employees with an auditory disability may not be able to hear at all, while others may be able to hear a small amount. Many will use hearing aids, read lips, and/or use sign language. Others may need assistance from technology or live interpreters.

- Gain the person’s attention before you begin to talk by gently waving your hand or lightly touching the individual on the shoulder.
- Always use a normal volume of voice; don’t shout
- If the customer reads lips, speak slowly and clearly, keeping your face clearly visible at all times.
- If the person requires the assistance of an interpreter, always respond to the person, not the interpreter.



MOBILITY DISABILITY

A variety of disabilities may make it difficult for an employee or a customer to stand for prolonged periods or move around. The person may use an assistive aide such as a cane, walker, scooter, or wheelchair.

- Consider the wheelchair as an extension of a person's space.
- Never lean on the wheelchair.
- Put yourself at eye level when talking to the person.
- Offer to open heavy doors.
- Try to keep a wide, clear, and clutter-free route through the place of business.

VERBAL EXPRESSION DISABILITY

Some customers or employees may have difficulty speaking. It may be related to the physical production of sounds or a cognitive impairment that leads to difficulty in finding the right words.

- Concentrate on what the person is trying to say.
- Indicate when you understand and when you don't understand.
- Give the customer time to repeat what he or she is saying.
- Avoid completing the person's thoughts or sentences.
- Avoid showing frustration or impatience.

THINKING/LEARNING DISABILITY

A customer or an employee having difficulty with memory, attention, concentration, or word retrieval may have a disability associated with intellect, mental cognition, brain injury, or a mental health illness, such as bipolar disorder.

- If the person does not understand what you are saying, repeat the information or rephrase it in another way.
- Ask the person to repeat back to you what you've said.
- Give the person adequate time to respond to your statement.
- Draw a picture, use a symbol, or put a word in writing to help in communicating.

RESOURCES

- Job Accommodation Network (JAN)
800-526-7234 – www.jan.wvu.edu
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) – 800-283-shrm – www.shrm.org
- Disability & Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTAC) – 800-949-4232
www.adata.org
- Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association
718-803-3782 – www.epva.org
- U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) – 202-693-7880
www.dol.gov/dol/odep

Editors: Valerie Brooke, VCU-RRTC on Workplace Supports and Beth B. Buehlmann, Center for Workforce Preparation, U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

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YOUR GATEWAY TO EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



VCU-RRTC on Workplace Supports
1314 W. Main St., Richmond, VA 23284-2011
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804-828-2193 FAX www.worksupport.org

Job Coaching Services and Benefits to Businesses and People with Disabilities

December 2007

Virginia Board for
People
with Disabilities

INTRODUCTION

Many individuals with significant disabilities who have been unable to secure employment or to maintain employment have achieved employment success by securing services from a Job Coach. Job Coaching services have been so successful in working with people with significant disabilities many community programs such as welfare to work, Veterans, older workers, transition, and others have begun to utilize the talents and skills of job coaches.

One unique arena for job coaching services has been the Americans with Disabilities Act. Employers are asked to examine possible accommodations to assist their efforts to recruit and hire people with disabilities and a potential accommodation available to them often is job coaching services. Some businesses have started offering co-worker job coaching as well as reaching out to community programs in an effort to advance the employment of people with disabilities on the worksite.

KEY POINTS

What is a Job Coach?

A Job Coach is known by several professional titles such as employment specialist, job trainer, job consultant, and staffing specialist. He or she may come from a variety of backgrounds to include teaching, rehabilitation, or business and be responsible for assisting an individual with a disability in obtaining a job by creating a positive job match; maintaining a job through on-site assistance and other workplace supports; and advancing careers with career development. In many cases the job coach will spend time at the workplace to learn the job duties and industry standard and then assist the new employee to build proficiency over time. In addition the job coach will provide many valuable services off of the job site such as counseling and review of job duties. If the consumer is uncomfortable with the job coach at the job site the supports will be provided off-site.

What are Job Coach Services?

Job coaches do a variety of duties in the course of assisting someone both on and off the job site. Below is a list of duties for a typical job coach.

- ◆ Gathers assessment data and assists the person with a disability to develop a list of interests and potential skills.
- ◆ Gathers employment information by doing job analyses at business sites in order to match a person with a position.
- ◆ Provides one to one training on a job site.
- ◆ Provides job retention services to the employer and person with disability.
- ◆ Maintains evaluation data for performance reporting.
- ◆ Provides services off-site.

Who do Job Coaches Support?

Job Coaches support both the individual with a disability as well as the employer. These are the primary customers for a job

coach. However, they will interact and provide consultation services to parents, community funding agencies, other community support programs.

What supports do Job Coaches provide?

Supports will vary from person to person and it is the role of a job coach to provide some or all of the following supports for an individual.

- ◆ advocacy
- ◆ identification of interests and skills
- ◆ identification of possible accommodations
- ◆ job development and marketing services to businesses
- ◆ one to one on site job coaching to model behaviors and provide actual job training
- ◆ provide on-going job follow-up and retention services
- ◆ off-site supports

Who pays for Job Coach Services?

Funding sources of supported employment services are varied. Many programs who employ job coaches have been approved to be a vendor of services for the state Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. In addition, Mental Health & Mental Retardation state and local programs will provide funding for Supported Employment services to community rehabilitation providers. Programs such as Medicaid Waivers, Social Security Work Incentives and foundation funds are also available for use in funding job coaches.

What questions do Businesses have regarding Job Coaches?

Businesses have many questions for job coaches. Some of the typical questions a job coach can expect to be asked by a representative from a business are:

- ◆ Who pays for the time and services of a job coach?
- ◆ Who is liable if a job coach gets hurt at the work site?
- ◆ How long will the job coach be on-site?
- ◆ Can the agency provide a background check on the job coach?
- ◆ What is the person's disability?
- ◆ How will I train a person with a disability?
- ◆ How can I accommodate a person with a disability and is it expensive?
- ◆ Who can help me with the cost of an accommodation?

- ◆ What happens if the person is not successful here at the job?

Job Coaches can expect to hear these as well as other questions from employers and should be prepared with answers.

What are the benefits to Businesses who utilize Job Coaches?

Businesses want to know if they invest in a program which offers training from a job coach, will it help to increase their bottom line and productivity. Hiring people with disabilities is an investment for an employer as it is with their recruitment and hiring of all personnel. Therefore it is important to share the benefits with the employer. Here are some!

- ◆ Job Coaches reduce the time it takes businesses to locate workers by giving the business access to a pool of pre-screened candidates.
- ◆ The up-front work of a Job Coach will complement the screening and hiring process of the business.
- ◆ Training and staff support from the Job Coach will dovetail with the style of the company. The job coach will ensure this continues until the new employee is completely up to speed.
- ◆ Job Coaches can assist with the identification of other accommodations for the company and be a resource for their diversity efforts.
- ◆ Job Coaches can assist the employer with possible tax credits such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and the Disabled Access Tax Credit for small businesses.
- ◆ Job Coaches will be at the business to provide on-going supports and job retention services.

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

- ◆ http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/cbvh/vocrehab_manual/08-38_Job%20Coaching.htm
- ◆ <http://www.fcps.edu/ss/careertransition/crtnjobc.htm#job>
- ◆ <http://www.uiowa.edu/hr/fsds/ada/jobcoach.html>
- ◆ <http://www.worksupport.com>
- ◆ <http://www.worksupport.com/training/archivedWebcasts.cfm>
- ◆ Brooke, V., Inge, K.J., Armstrong, A.J., & Wehman, P. (1997). Supported employment handbook: A customer-driven approach for persons with significant disabilities. Richmond. Virginia Commonwealth University, Rehabilitation Research & Training Center.
- ◆ Wehman, P., Inge, K.J., Revell, Jr., W.G., Brooke, V.A. (2007). Real Work for Real Play -- Inclusive Employment for People with Disabilities. Brookes Publishing Company.

Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Education and Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution providing access to education and employment without regard to age, race, color, national origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, veteran's status, political affiliation, or disability. If special accommodations are needed, please contact Howard Green at (804) 828-1851 VOICE or (804) 828-2494 TTY. This activity is funded through a grant (# 07EM01A) with the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities.



BUSINESS TAX CREDITS & DEDUCTIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

There are three tax incentives available to help employers cover accommodation costs employees and/or customers with disabilities to make their business environment accessible for these individuals.

ARCHITECTURAL/TRANSPORTATION TAX DEDUCTION:

IR CODE SECTION 190, BARRIER REMOVAL

What is it? Businesses may take an annual deduction for expenses incurred to remove physical, structural, and transportation barriers for persons with disabilities.

Who is eligible? All businesses are eligible.

What expenses are covered? The architectural/transportation deduction is available each year to businesses with qualified expenses. It can be used for a variety of costs to make a facility or public transportation vehicle, owned or leased for use in the business, more accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities. Examples of deductions include:

- providing accessible parking spaces, ramps, and curb cuts;
- providing telephones, water fountains, and restrooms that are accessible to persons using wheelchairs;
- making walkways at least 48 inches wide; and/or
- providing accessible entrances to buildings, including stairs and floors.

What expenses are NOT covered? The deduction may not be used for expenses incurred for new construction, completion of renovation being done to a facility or public transportation vehicle, or for normal replacement of depreciable property.

What is the amount of tax deduction? The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) allows a deduction of up to \$15,000 per year for qualified architectural and transportation barrier removal expenses.

How can this expenditure be deducted? Businesses seeking to take a deduction for expenditures made for architectural and transportation modifications should follow the instructions found in IRS Publication 907 and in IRS Publication 535, entitled: Business Expenses. It is important to note that businesses may not take a deduction and a tax credit on the same expenditure.

SMALL BUSINESS TAX CREDIT:

IR CODE SECTION 44, DISABLED ACCESS CREDIT

What is it? Small businesses may take an annual tax credit for making their businesses accessible to persons with disabilities. The total disabled access tax credits taken in 1996 on corporate income tax returns by all industries totaled \$11,865,000 (IRS 1996 Statistics of Income Report, 1999).

Who is eligible? Small businesses that in the previous year earned \$1 million or less in gross receipts or had 30 or fewer full-time employees are eligible for the Small Business Tax Credit.

What expenses are covered? The tax credit is available every year and can be used for a variety of costs such as:

- sign language interpreters for employees/customers who have hearing impairments;
- readers for employees/customers with visual impairments;
- the purchase of adaptive equipment or the modification of equipment;
- printed materials in alternate formats (e.g., braille, audio tape, large print);
- the removal of architectural barriers in buildings or vehicles; and
- other similar services (i.e., use of a job coach or a co-worker to provide support to an employee with a disability).

What expenses are NOT covered? The tax credit does not apply to the costs of new construction, and a building being modified must have been placed in service before November 6, 1990.

What is the amount of the tax credit? The credit is 50% of expenditures over \$250, but not to exceed \$10,250, for a maximum benefit of \$5,000.

How can this credit be claimed? Businesses can claim the Disabled Access Credit on IRS Form 8826.

EXAMPLE OF A SMALL BUSINESS DISABLED ACCESS TAX CREDIT USING CO-WORKER SUPPORT AS A SIMILAR SERVICE COST.

Company X hired an individual with a disability; a co-worker was assigned to support the new employee as a workplace accommodation. The co-worker spent a total of one hour each day providing support. The number of co-worker hours spent with the employee totaled 200 hours during the calendar year. The co-worker's hourly wage was \$10.00 per hour. Therefore, the cost of providing the reasonable accommodation for the new employee with a disability was \$2,000. The amount by which \$2,000 exceeds \$250 is \$1,750. Fifty percent of \$1,750 is \$875. Company X may take a tax credit of \$875 on its next income tax return.

WORK OPPORTUNITY TAX CREDIT: (WOTC)

Is there new legislation? In 2007 the WOTC was extended through August 31, 2011.

What is the WOTC? The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), replaced the Targeted Jobs Tax Credit (TJTC) pro-gram, provides a tax credit for employers hiring individuals from certain targeted groups including: low-income, vocational rehabilitation referrals, former AFDC recipients, veterans, ex-felons, food stamp recipients, summer youth employees, SSI recipients, and TANF. The total amount of WOTC taken by all industries in 1996 on corporate income tax returns totaled \$6,896,000 (IRS 1996 Statistics of Income Report, published, 1999).

How does it apply to persons with disabilities? An employer who hires an employee receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or who is a certified vocational rehabilitation (VR) participant may claim the WOTC after certification is received from the State Employment Security Agency (SESA).

What is the amount? An employer may take a tax credit of up to 40 percent of the first \$6,000 (or \$12,000 for veterans) in first year wages per qualifying employee. The maximum per employee credit is \$2,400 in a given tax year. This credit applies only to employees who work at least 400 hours during the tax year. With respect to qualified summer youth employees, the maximum credit for each is \$1,200 (40 percent of the first \$3,000 of first year wages.)

What are the minimum employment requirements? A partial credit of 25% for certified employees who worked at least 120 hours, but less than 400 hours, may be claimed by the employer during a one year period. No credit is available for employees who work less than 120 hours.

How do I claim the credit? Complete and submit IRS Form 8850, Pre-Screening Notice and Certification Request for the Work Opportunity and Welfare-to-Work Credits, to your local SESA. Do not submit this form to the IRS.

How does it work? The following steps should be followed.

- The employer determines likely eligibility by including the WOTC Pre-Screening Notice as part of the application process.
- On or before the day employment is offered, the Pre-Screening Notice must be signed by the employer and employee and mailed to the SESA within 21 days after the employee begins work.
- The employer documents eligibility (based on information received from the employee) and submits documentation to the SESA.
- SESA certifies which individuals are eligible for WOTC, and notifies the employer in writing for purposes of filing the tax credit.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT YOUR ACCOUNTANT

RESOURCES:

1. Office of Associate Council, IRS, Passthrough & Special Industries, 1111 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20224, (202) 622-3110.
2. IRS web site for information: <http://www.irs.gov/prod/help/newmail/user.html>
3. For statistical information: (202) 874-0410 or write, Director, Statistics of Income division, CP:R:S, IRS, P.O. Box 2608, Washington, D.C. 20213- 2608
4. WOTC web site address is: www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/ or call (202) 219-9092



GIVE VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY, REHABILITATION RESEARCH & TRAINING CENTER ON WORKPLACE SUPPORTS A CALL:
(804) 828-1851 VOICE; (804) 828-2494 TTY; OR (804) 828-2193 FAX



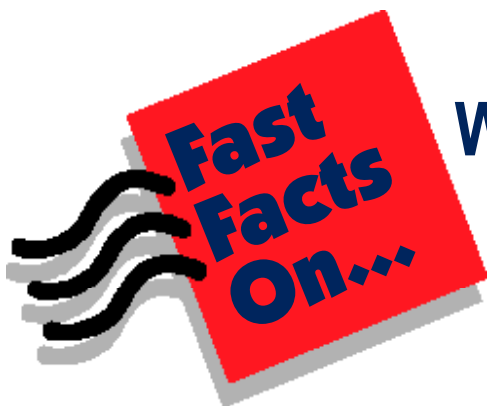
<http://www.worksupport.com>

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WHEN THE JOB CANDIDATE HAS A DISABILITY

Even the most seasoned interviewer may feel less confident when interviewing an applicant with a disability. For those with even less experience, the task can be overwhelming.

DID YOU KNOW?

- One in nearly five Americans is affected by a disability.
- Almost 500,000 students with disabilities attend two or four year colleges and universities.
- Seventy-two percent of adults with disabilities want to work.
- Studies indicate that workers with disabilities rate average or above average in performance, attendance, and work safety.
- According to research, workers with disabilities are more inclined to stay in jobs longer, reducing high turnover costs.

INTERVIEWING TIPS

- Conduct the meeting as you would any other interview.
- Emphasize the individual's abilities and achievements.
- Refer to the individual's strengths as they are reflected on the resumé or application.
- If it appears the person's disability could interfere with job performance, ask the person how he or she would perform the job.
- Just as it is not always necessary to mention an individual's gender or ethnic origin, it is also not necessary to mention that a person has a disability.
- It is acceptable to use everyday phrases that may relate to the individual's disability. It's perfectly acceptable to say to a person who uses a wheelchair, "Let's walk over here." Or to someone who is blind, "It was nice to see you."

HIRING DO'S AND DON'TS –PRE-JOB OFFER

Basic rule: The ADA does not allow questions about a candidate's disability or to give a medical examination until after a conditional job offer is made.

Examples of what you can ask:

- Whether the applicant has appropriate education, training, and skills necessary to perform the essential functions of the job.
- Whether the applicant can satisfy the job's requirements or essential functions (describe these job functions to the applicant).*
- How much time off the applicant took in previous jobs (but not why), the reason he or she left, and any past discipline received.



Examples of what can't be asked:

- Questions about an applicant's physical or mental disability or how he or she became disabled (e.g., questions about why the applicant uses a wheelchair).
- Questions about an applicant's use of medication.
- Questions about an applicant's prior workers' compensation history.

*If it appears an applicant has a disability requiring a reasonable accommodation(s), the interviewer may ask if she or he will need one. This is an exception to the rule that questions regarding disability and reasonable accommodations should come after making a conditional job offer.

Example: "As you can see from the job description, this position requires some lifting and moving. Do you foresee any difficulty in performing the required tasks? If so, do you have any suggestions how these tasks can be performed?"

HIRING DO'S AND DON'TS—POST-JOB OFFER

Basic rule: After making a job offer, the interviewer may ask any disability-related questions and conduct a medical examination as long as this is done for everybody in the same job category.

Examples of what you can do:

- If you want to give a medical examination to someone who has been offered a job that involves heavy labor, you must give the same exam to everyone who is offered the same kind of job.
- You can withdraw an offer from an applicant with a disability only if it is clear that she or he cannot do the essential job functions or would pose a direct threat (i.e., a significant risk of substantial harm) to the health or safety of himself or herself or other employees. Be sure to consider whether any reasonable accommodation(s) would enable the individual to perform the job's essential functions or would reduce any safety risk the individual might pose.
- You may withdraw an offer of a manufacturing job involving the use of dangerous machinery if you learn during a post-offer medical exam that the applicant has frequent and unpredictable seizures.

Examples of what you can't do

- You can't withdraw an offer to an HIV-positive applicant because you are concerned about customer and client reactions or because you assume that they will be unable to work long and stressful hours.-

RESOURCES

- Job Accommodation Network (JAN)
<http://www.jan.wvu.edu>
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC),
www.eeoc.gov – 800-669-4000, (TTY 800-559-6820)
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)
800-283-shrm – www.shrm.org
- Disability & Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTAC) – 800-949-4232 – www.adata.org

Disclaimer: This fact sheet does not constitute legal advice. Legal advice must be tailored to the specific circumstances of each case. Because laws and regulations are constantly changing, nothing contained in this fact sheet should be used as a substitute for advice from legal counsel.

Source: *The Americans with Disabilities Act: A Primer for Small Business*. The U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission
www.eeoc.gov/ada/adahandbook.html



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YOUR GATEWAY TO EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



VCU-RRTC on Workplace Supports
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Quick Links

▶ [Meet the VCU Business Connections Staff](#)

▶ [Link to the worksupport.com website](#)

▶ [Link to our online Referral Form](#)

BUSINESS Connections

E-Newsletter | Issue 7 | December 2011

Developing Business Relationships



Unemployment rates, although lower than at the beginning of 2010 in most large metropolitan areas, remains very high. This meant employment specialists needed to engage in organizational marketing and career search. This duplicate function is known as developing corporate relationships and business linkages for building strong future business partnerships. If relationships are carefully built, then partnerships will be developed with the business community. This approach can make the difference between success and failure in the career search process. Generally, the mistake that many employment specialists make during this process is to focus exclusively on contacting employers for the sole purpose of obtaining a job. Although the ultimate goal is to assist persons with significant disabilities in obtaining employment and building careers, solely pursuing jobs is shortsighted.

Employment specialists who are successful and enjoy the career search process have built solid and trusting relationships with the business community. Employment specialists, as well as individuals with significant disabilities who spend time conducting informational interviews will be rewarded with a rich pool of businesses who are interested in the services offered by the community rehabilitation organization. These companies will know that the employment support organization understands their business and is interested in establishing a mutually satisfying relationship.

We have an example of this philosophy in action with our business partner Sears Outlet, a discount appliance superstore, on Tomlynn Road. VCU RRTC first began working with Sears Outlet in September of 2010 when a client was hired for a warehouse position. During the initial job site training, the employment specialist cultivated a relationship with management and gathered information about the business in general. Based on a previous successful placement and strong working relationship, the employment specialist stressed that the RRTC would be happy and willing to help fill any other employment needs that developed. This communication paid off when in August of 2011 management approached RRTC about a warehouse technician position and Sears hired another client. You can read this Success Story in the [January 2011 Newsletter](#). It came as no surprise when Sears called again in September with employment needs. It is not often an employer seeks out an employment services organization with open positions, but because of the strong foundation our Employment Specialist has built Sears contacted us for two open positions within two months. It should also be stressed that the job leads were shared with all employment specialists at RRTC, and the most appropriate candidate referred for employment. Building a successful relationship starts with a successful job match. Read more about our most recent placement with Sears featured as the [Success Story](#) on page two of the newsletter.

VCU Business Connections Team

We would like to welcome our two newest Employment Specialists:

Erica



Schwartz

Employment Specialist
804.828.1873
schwartzep2@vcu.edu

Erica has been an employment specialist with VCU since August 2011. After receiving a B.S. in sociology from Virginia Tech, Erica went on to graduate with an M.S. from VCU's Department of Rehabilitation Counseling. In addition to working with DBVI clients, Erica is currently working with individuals with ASD with Project SEARCH at St Francis Medical Center. Erica is completing the supported employment web-based certificate series in order to obtain an ACRE-certification.

Jonathon



Tolbert

Employment Specialist
804.827.0749
tolbertjd@vcu.edu

Jonathon joined the team in July of 2011 to continue our work serving individuals with Autism as well as other DRS customers. Originally from Roanoke, VA, Jonathon relocated to Richmond in 2001 to obtain a BA in English from VCU in 2005. After graduating, Jonathon was an elementary school instructional assistant and went on to teach special education in Henrico County Public Schools for 5 years and worked with the County's Inclusion and Therapeutic Recreation programs.

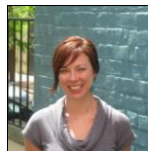
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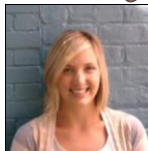
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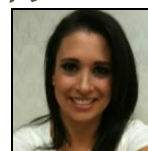
Alissa



Molinelli

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Rachael



Rounds

Employment Specialist
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"We are committed to helping you achieve your placement goals through providing person centered and customer directed supported employment services to individuals with all types of disabilities with a focus on job retention."

Vicki Brooke

SUCCESS Story

After previously hiring two VCU-RRTC Business Connections clients, it came as no surprise when Sears Outlet on Tomlynn Road called again with employment needs. This time the discount appliance super store had an opening for a warehouse associate to unload incoming products. The employment specialists put their heads together and one clear choice emerged,

Ben.



Ben completed the Project Search program at MCV in 2010, but was unable to secure employment when his internship rotations concluded. His experience in Central Supply at MCV as well as his physical strength made him a prime candidate for the warehouse position at Sears.

Ben began impressing immediately when, during the working interview, the store manager remarked, "Ben, if you keep coming in dressed so well, the other employees are going to have to buy whole new wardrobes." Ben continues to impress with his work ethic while unloading refrigerators, washers, and mattresses from incoming trucks, stripping off packaging and staging them for delivery.

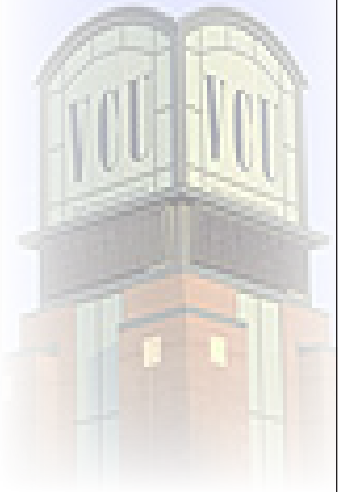
Supervisors remark he has the uncommon ability to maintain a consistent work rate throughout a shift without tiring. Because of his intrinsic motivation and ability to self monitor, Ben works unsupervised in the afternoon prepping items for delivery and resetting the warehouse floor for the next business day. The chemistry that develops among employees during a placement is another telling sign of a successful job placement. Here again Ben shines.

VCU Business Connections

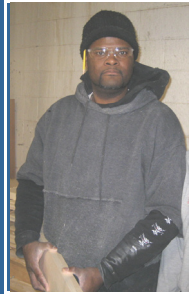
1314 West Main Street
Richmond, VA 23284

APPENDIX C:

Success Stories



SUCCESS *Story*



Clifton R. has a strong skill set in woodworking that spans over 18 years. Clifton's DRS Counselor and VCU employment specialist partnered with

Clifton to locate employment that would use his experience as well as his remarkable creativity. In September 2009, Clifton began working with Old River Cabinets (ORC), as a Cabinet Maker.

Although Clifton was initially hired to build cabinets, but unfortunately after training neither he nor the employer was entirely satisfied with his placement in this position. Clifton expressed his preference to move around and be more creative. Victor Morrisette, owner of ORC, gave him an opportunity to make dove-tailed drawers instead. "Building dove-tailed drawers is a true craft" stated Mr. Morrisette, and Clifton has excelled in this position.

"I wish all my employees worked as hard."

– Victor Morrisette

Mr. Morrisette noted increased concentration and focus as two of Clifton's strengths. He went on to explain that although hearing loss may be considered a disability, individuals who are deaf have an extreme edge working with loud equipment.

SUCCESS *Story*



When the prospect of VCU Health Systems hosting Project SEARCH was first brought to the table, ARAMARK Healthcare was present. ARAMARK Healthcare provides clinical support services in the areas of food, facility, and clinical technology services for VCU Health Systems.

Greg Talley, the Human Resources Manager for ARAMARK Healthcare - VCU Health System, has been a leading force and a constant source of knowledge and support throughout the three year stint at the hospital. Many relationships, internships, as well as jobs, have grown through his dedication and effort.

The interns have gained invaluable skills in integrated work settings. They learned vocational skills in conjunction with functional life skills throughout the various departments run by ARAMARK Healthcare. Mr. Talley's belief in the important role that Project SEARCH serves for our interns and to VCU-HS has greatly contributed to the success of the program on many levels.

