

**Keys to Success for Supporting VR
 Clients with Autism**
 Strategies to Increase Meaningful
 Collaboration and Maximize
 Employment Outcomes
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Today we will..

- Discuss transition and employment trends
- Describe our:
 - Employment-focused, person-centered approach
 - Assessment strategies for uncovering consumers' unique characteristics, skills, learning styles, strengths, interests, and values
 - Comprehensive and team-based approach to implementing consistent, holistic, and individualized supports
- Share a success story

**Challenges for Transition Age
 Youth with Autism**

- The transition of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) from school to adulthood is an increasing dilemma (Wehman, Smith and Schall, 2009).

What the research says...

- 10-year study of youth who received SPED services (NLTS2)
 - Approx 50% of the in-school youth with autism were participating in school-based work experiences
 - Most were receiving assessment (32%) and job readiness training (50%) services
 - Few received placement (7%) or internships (1%)
 - Only 14.5% had held a paid after-school or summer job at any time during the previous year

NLTS-2 (cont.)
 Employment outcomes up to 8 years post HS:

- 63 % employed at some point
- 37% employed at time of the survey
- Averaged 24.1 hours per week
- Earned an average of \$9.20 per hour
- 52.8% reported receiving any benefits (e.g., paid vacation or sick leave, health insurance, retirement benefits).

Newman et al. (2011) A Report From the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) (NCSE 2011-3005)

Challenges we are seeing

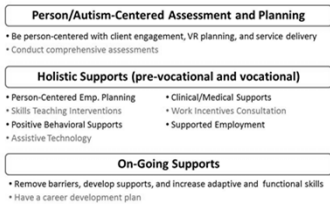
- Limited access to real world work experiences while students are in secondary education
- Obstacles to paid VR services for in-school youth
- Poor coordination and generalization of interventions across environments

Building a better mouse trap

- Putting research into practice
 - New model emphasizing evidence based practices
 - Promoting early engagement with VR supports
- Meaningful collaboration
 - Emphasizing a team based approach
 - Providing structure for effective coordination
- Individualized, strength-based career building
 - Uses a person-centered approach
 - Holistic service array customized to the individual
 - Works within natural community environments
 - Links employment with career aspirations

Comprehensive Service Model

Comprehensive Service Model



“Seek first to understand...” (Covey)

- Good client engagement starts with **mutual understanding** and ensuring an accessible, predictable, and safe VR experience

“Seek first to understand...” (Covey)

- Consider the following
 - Does client know what to expect or have existing expectations?
 - Does team understand client’s values and career and IL goals?
 - Does consumer have fears or concerns with choice and control?
 - Does team know consumer’s passions, strengths, gifts, and abilities?
 - Do team members understand each others’ roles, rights, and responsibilities?

Proactive Strategies

- Promote visual structure, predictable routines, & clear expectations
- Support preferences for clear and direct communication
- Assess and address environmental triggers
- Develop proactive strategies to support new learning, social demands, and changes

Meet Deb

- Was a student with an IEP who applied for DARS two years prior to exiting high school
- Prefers being around animals
- Is a visual learner
- Loves video games
- Independent in the kitchen
- Goal was to obtain paid employment

Challenges Deb Presented With

- Easily got lost in her own thoughts and would lose track of time and not complete tasks
- Limited stamina
- Limited “real world” work experiences
- Displayed work-avoidant behaviors

Deb’s Assessment Process

- Assessments were conducted to identify autism related characteristics, functional challenges, strengths, and effective proactive strategies
 - Pre-assessment interview and planning session
 - Home visit and observation
 - Skill and task observation across environments
 - Vocational experiences
 - Community discovery activity
 - Hand-held technology evaluation

Information Learned through Deb’s Assessments

- Good attention to detail in work environments
- Needs support with interviewing and social skills
- Needs travel training/support
- Able to follow multi-step instructions when provided visual supports
- Works best doing independent tasks in an environment that includes other people

Deb's

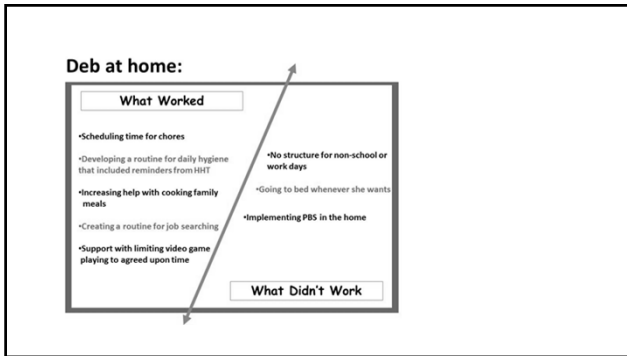
Vision and Goals

- Finish high school
- Obtain employment that utilizes organizational skills
- Be independent with transportation
- Expand coping skills
- Establish and maintain relationships with peers and co-workers
- Learn how to save money in order to buy a cat and provide for it

Name: DEB



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|---|--|
| <p><u>My Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating a computer • Taking care of family's pets • Cooking • Operating HHT • Playing video games <p><u>My Preferences</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons that involve hands on activities • Activities that include pictures and videos • More breaks when I need to focus • Scheduled time for fun stuff (e.g. bowling, video games, going out to eat with family) | <p><u>My Interests</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animals, especially her dog • Building things • Cooking • Video games • Bowling <p><u>My Needs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People to slow down when talking with me • Quiet time and space to process stressful events • Positive feedback and soft friendly voices |
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Developing Deb's Work Readiness

- Unpaid work experience developed to help Deb
 - Gain real world work experience
 - Build her stamina
 - Increase her professionalism
 - Decrease her work avoidant behaviors through implementing PBS

Developing Deb's Work Readiness

- Community Support Services to help Deb
 - Explore transportation options
 - Create a daily hygiene routine
 - Increase her coping skills
 - Learn how to budget
- Work Incentives Counseling
 - Learn the effects of earnings on SSI benefits
 - Learn about impairment-related work expenses

Deb's HHT Supports at Work

- Notes on iPod regarding
 - Routine for when she first gets to work
 - Who to ask for help
 - How to move from task to task
- Video on iPod demonstrating appropriate customer interaction
- Timer to remind Deb when to return from breaks

On the Job Support Strategies for Deb

- With Deb's permission, Job Coach educated supervisors and co-workers on preferred strategies
 - Be concrete
 - Allow Deb time to finish a task without a lot of interruptions
 - Structure her work day so that she stays busy most of the time

- Where is Deb Today**
1. Working part-time at local TJ Maxx
 2. Receiving LTESS from Job Coach
 3. Taking Metro Access to/from work (and deducting the cost as an impairment-related work expense)
 4. Living independently in basement apartment of her family's house
 5. Using tools to de-escalate when frustrated
 6. Taking care of her own cat
 7. On a bowling team

What Contributed Deb's Successes?

- Coordinate VR services while in school
- Individualized and comprehensive assessments
- Addressing soft skills
- Expanding Deb's work skills and experience
- Educating her employer
- Ensuring environmental supports
- Providing job coaching supports
- Planning for and coordinating long term supports
- Work incentives counseling