



# Getting and Keeping the First Job

A curriculum created by the  
National Family Advocacy Support and Training (FAST) Project, a  
project of PACER Center: [fastfamilysupport.org](http://fastfamilysupport.org)

# Session Agenda

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

# A Look At Employment

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

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

***Larry Korterling***

# Why Is Work Important?

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## Work provides:

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

# Youth with Disabilities and Employment: What We See Today

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



# Today's Labor Market

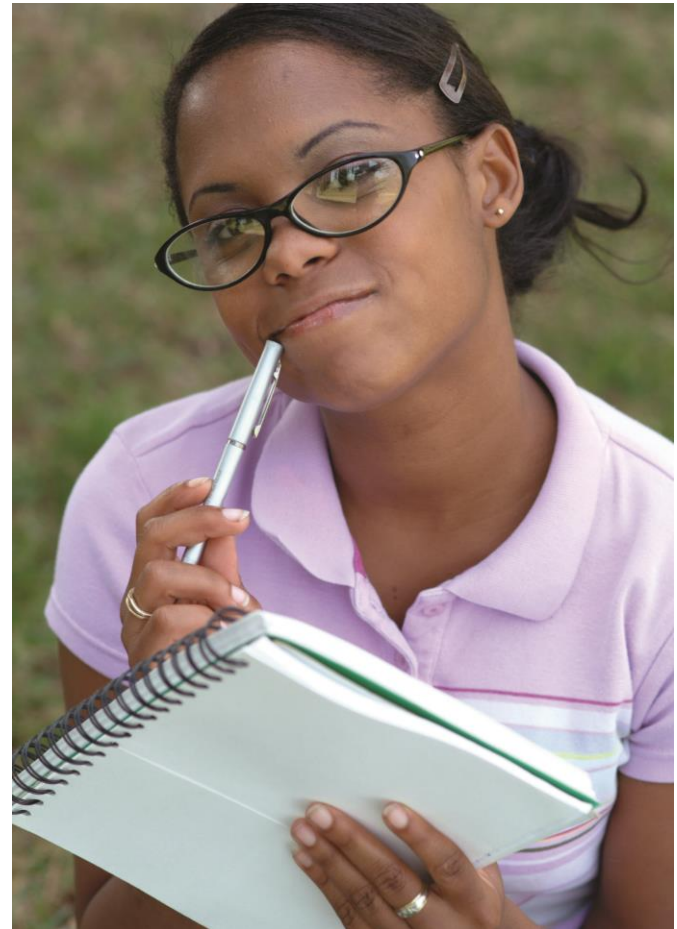
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- Strong competition for entry-level jobs
- Concept of “entry-level” fading
- Employees expected to be cross-trained
- Summer months especially competitive
- Interpersonal skills highly valued
- WORKER SHORTAGE expected in the future

# What You Need to Know

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





# It All Begins with Self-awareness

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- Many youth don't know what their disability is, or haven't practiced telling others about it.
- It is crucial that youth know how their disability affects them in school and on the job.



# Career Planning

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**Before youth begin looking for a job, ask:**

- “What is your dream job?”
- “What do you need to know to do that job?”
- “What classes in school can help you learn the skills you need?”
- “Do you like to work inside or outside?”
- “Do you have good times of the day and bad?”

# Why Career Planning?

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- Helps avoid poor job matches
- Helps improve transition or employment plans such as the Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Helps youth begin thinking about work in productive way
- Helps youth see a realistic, step-by-step plan to reach long-term career goals

# How Families Can Help

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**Positive family involvement with youth leads to employment and academic success.**

How to help:

- Identify strengths of youth
- Catch early signs of problems at work
- Work on “soft skills” at home
- **Maintain High Expectations of Youth**

# Using Personal Networks

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- Relationships, not want ads, provide the most job opportunities.
- Everyone has a network within the community they can use.
- Use your network to find opportunities.
- Tell service providers, such as Vocational Rehabilitation, about them.
- How did you find your first job?

# The Resume

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- Do we expect youth with disabilities to follow the same process as others to find employment?
- Every job seeker needs a resume.
- Be creative about what's listed. Paid employment is not the only example of work experience and skills.

# Volunteering

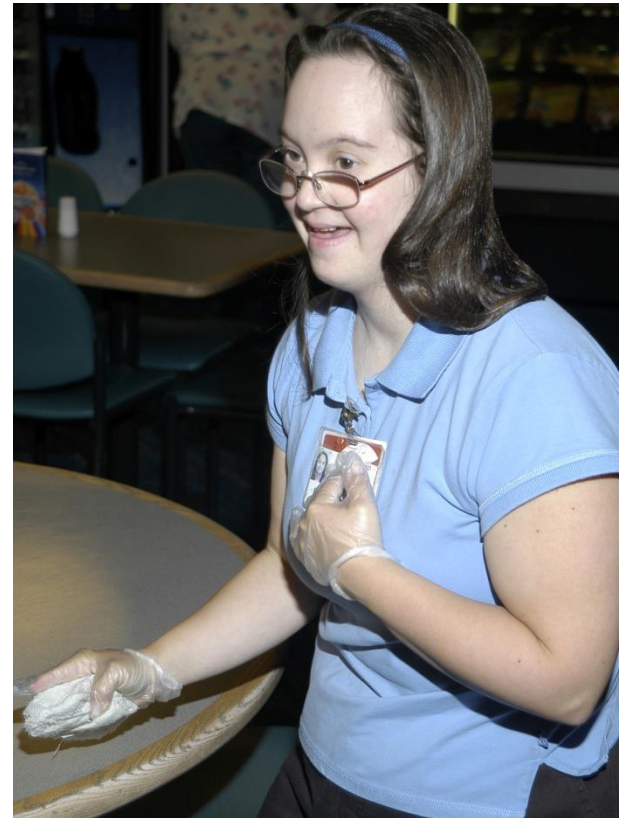
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## **Use volunteer experiences to build work skills and improve a resume.**

- Volunteering is not a long-term solution to paid employment
- Volunteering shows employers that youth want to work despite lack of paid employment
- Try several experiences so youth can explore different types of jobs

# Job Accommodations

- Allow person to perform “essential functions” of a given job
- Are usually inexpensive and simple to put in place
- Can lead to a positive experience for youth
- Identifying potential accommodations
- Can be used to demonstrate initiative to employers when youth know what they need





# Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

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- Use fact sheets and accommodation examples from JAN during interview process.
- JAN includes helpful information for employers about complying with a law called the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

[www.jan.wvu.edu](http://www.jan.wvu.edu)

# Disability Disclosure

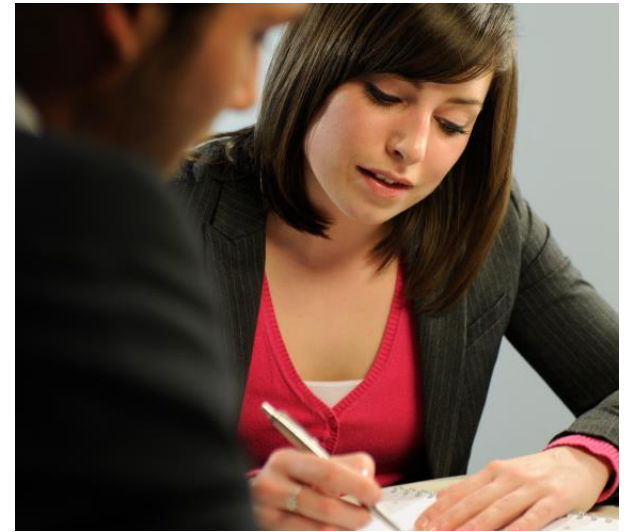
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- It may be necessary for a youth to disclose a disability during the interview process
- It's only necessary if accommodation is needed
- Disclosure is a personal choice
- Youth should practice answering interview questions, including questions that are illegal to ask
- Resources include: 411 On Disability Disclosure (NCWD-Youth)

[http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources\\_&\\_Publications/411.html](http://www.ncwd-youth.info/resources_&_Publications/411.html)

# The Interview

- Practice the basics
- Never stress the disability, only strengths
- Avoid giving too much information
- Coach young person on responses to disability-related questions
- Know that although they may be allowed to participate, parents or service providers have no legal right to take part in the interview



# The Employer's Perspective

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## **Employers are looking for :**

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

# Self-employment

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

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

# Keeping the Job

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## Teach youth to:

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



## Families Can:

- Build support system at work
- Communicate regularly with employer and service staff
- Know that sometimes it just doesn't work and that's OK

# Additional Advice

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- Practice filling out job applications
- Plan for transportation
- Consider disability management
- Encourage postsecondary education

**Remember, the first job should not be the last job. Never stop expecting great things!**



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Training (*FAST*) Project**

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