

Partnerships and Strategies to Boost Employment Outcomes for People with Disabilities

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Learning Objectives

- Overview of VAIL employment services
- Review how to create innovative employment programs
- Discuss strategies to help our consumers find and keep a job
- Learn about making and maintaining employment partnerships

Valley Association for Independent Living, Inc.

- VAIL delivers independent living services to individuals with disabilities in south Texas.
- VAIL was established in 1987 and not only serves individuals of racially diverse population, LGBTQ+ persons, rural, and low-income communities, but is also led by the aforementioned minority groups.
- VAIL's board of directors is composed of over 60% persons with disabilities and over 90% ethnic minorities.

Valley Association for Independent Living, Inc.

Employment Services

- In addition to the 5 core services, VAIL provides the following employment services to persons with disabilities:
 - **Employment Exploration**
 - **Employment Development**
 - **Employment Support**
 - **Vocational Adjustment Training**
 - **Texas Technology Access Program**

Employment Exploration Services



Employment Exploration

- Employment Exploration services are community-based services that introduce a person to competitive employment opportunities in their community and help them make an informed choice about whether they want to work.
- Employment Exploration is supporting an individual to see, hear, and engage in opportunities in the community, leading to employment themes or individual preferences, meeting people where they are, and guiding them on self-discovery.

Employment Exploration Services: Job Tours

- Job Tours
 - Coordinate job tours with consumers.
 - Helps them “see” first hand what the job site would be like.
 - Have an opportunity to rule out any sites that may not be a fit, or vice versa, add new job interests.



Employment Exploration Services: Transportation Training

- Transportation Training
 - Pedestrian & Road Safety
 - Trip Planning
 - Independent Travel Training for interviews/jobs
 - Rights to Equal Access: How to request transportation related accommodations in the workplace



Employment Exploration Services: Informational Interviews

- Informational Interviews
 - Teach consumers about phone etiquette and how to ask questions.
 - Set up mock practices.
 - Debrief to understand what important information the consumer received from the interview.



Employment Exploration Services: Visiting Continuing Education Options

- Visiting Continuing Education Options
 - How to enroll in courses
 - Teach them how to navigate campus
 - On campus vs online
 - Re-evaluate to see course progress and how it relates to employment goals



Employment Development Services



Employment Development

- Employment Development services are one-to-one, individualized services that support a person to find a job that pays a competitive wage in the community.
- Employment Development services assist people with finding paid employment, becoming self-employed, or establishing small businesses in their communities.

Employment Development Services: Individualized Job Search

- Individualized Job search
 - Gather as much pertinent information to identify jobs specific to the interests and skills of each consumer
 - Education/Work history
 - Current status
 - Current services
 - Preferences, strengths, goals
 - Example [Vocational Assessment](#)



Employment Support Services: Job Clubs

- Job Clubs- helps provide peer support related to employment services.
 - Disability Disclosure
 - Requesting accommodations
 - Resume building
 - Online job application training
 - Proper job attire
 - Interviewing experiences



Employment Support Services



Employment Support

- Employment Support services assist people with maintaining paid employment in community businesses.
- While Employment Exploration and Employment Development focus on helping people find jobs, ***Employment Support makes sure that they are able to keep them.***
- After assessing individual needs and goals, we'll work closely to provide the appropriate level of support and career progression.

Employment Support Services: Orientation Support

- Orientation Support
- On-the-job training
 - Assist the consumer during orientation phase by asking for material, assessments, study guides ahead of time to review before orientation starts which supports ***employment retention*** efforts.



Employment Development Services: Career Progression

- Career progression
 - Use information from initial vocational assessment to see what goals are and revisit them by reviewing how their work performance evaluations have scored.
 - Identify what progression means to the consumer.
 - Career advancement may be perceived differently by each person.
 - Support and development can be done simultaneously depending on goals.

Vocational Adjustment Training



Vocational Adjustment Training: Find and Maintain Employment

- Persons who acquire a new disability or their disability progresses learn about understanding and identifying their own work personalities, interests, values, and transferable skills based on their new needs.
- Courses are provided to increase the knowledge, techniques, and tools needed to find and maintain employment in the community.
- Combination of ***Disability Adjustment Training and Vocational Adjustment Training.***

Vocational Adjustment Training: Exploring the “You” in work

- Exploring the “You” in Work
 - There are four elements in exploring the “you” in work:
 - » Work Personality
 - » Work Interests
 - » Work Values
 - » Transferable Skills

Vocational Adjustment Training: Exploring the “You” in Work

Work Personality- *questions* to consider when identifying my personality:

Do I have a professional personality?

Am I too quiet or am I too active?

How does my personality effect me in my work environment?

Vocational Adjustment Training: Exploring the “You” in Work (Work Interests)

Work Interests- *questions* to consider when identifying my interests:

What do I like to do?

What are my hobbies?

What am I interested in working as?

Vocational Adjustment Training: Exploring the “You” in Work (Work Values)

Work Values- *questions* to consider when identifying my values:

What do I value the most?

Is meeting a deadline more important than delivering excellent work?

Vocational Adjustment Training: Exploring the “You” in Work (Workplace Values)

Your ***workplace values*** are the guiding principles that are most important to you about the way that you work.

You use these deeply held principles to choose between right and wrong ways of working, and they help you make important decisions and career choices.



Vocational Adjustment Training: Exploring the “You” in Work (Work Value Examples)

- Examples of work values:
 - » Being positive
 - » Meeting deadlines
 - » Helping others
 - » Being a great team member
 - » Delivering quality results

Vocational Adjustment Training: Exploring the “You” in Work (Transferable Skills)

Transferable Skills- *questions* to consider when identifying my transferable skills:

What talents and abilities do I have?

What skills can I use at work?

Vocational Adjustment Training: Exploring the “You” in Work (Transferable Skill Examples)

- Examples of transferable skills that you may have acquired at other jobs, education, hobbies and/or volunteer trainings.
 - » **Basic Skills-** *listening to understand oral instructions, learn new procedures, understand written instructions, communicate in writing*
 - » **People Skills-** *Provide constructive criticism , receive feedback, negotiate, motivate others, handle complaints, perform outreach, resolve conflicts*
 - » **Technical Skills-** *Use computer software related to job, use equipment related to job, install software on computers, use the Internet, including email and search engines*
 - » **Management Skills-** *Oversee budgets, recruit personnel, review resumes, interview job candidates, select new hires, supervise employees*

Vocational Adjustment Training: Exploring the “You” in Work: Activity

Transferable Skills Activity

You are being assigned the task of selecting candidates for job positions in a business. All candidates have the required educational qualifications for the job. However, there are too many applications for each position and you need to identify the most important ‘transferable skills’ for each role.

- In groups, choose a job role that best interests the group
- You will be given index cards that have specific transferable skills on them
- Each group will identify and choose at least 4 transferable skills that you think may be best for the specific job role and write them on the flip chart them under the job position that your group chose.
- Choose one group member to present to the instructor the specific skills that were chosen and why!

Texas Technology Access Program



TTAP

- This program provides VAIL with an Assistive Technology demonstration center to increase technology access for people with disabilities.
- AT helps consumers with more control over their immediate environments; an enhanced ability to function independently; potential access to education, and mainly, access to vocation and employment.

TTAP Continued

- Demonstrations include an explanation of the function of a device and instruction in its use.
- There are opportunities at each in-person demonstration event for participants to use or try a number of devices so that each individual will be better able to determine the most appropriate device to meet his/her specific needs.



TTAP Continued 2

- Upon completion of the demonstrations, participants are given information about further assessment if required, costs and funding, and possible assistive technology vendors in order for the participant to make an informed decision regarding accessing or acquiring appropriate assistive technology devices.
- Consumers may also choose to borrow assistive technology seen at a demonstration from the TTAP Loan Library.



Collaborating with Other Organizations

*Obtaining and Maintaining
Partnerships*



How to Obtain and Maintain Partnerships

- In addition, VAIL collaborates with Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation Services and our local Disability Chamber of Commerce to develop customized projects that improve the lives of persons with disabilities.
- Using ***cross-functional teams*** that are composed of people from different agencies or management levels that poses different skills required to achieve a common goal.

How to Obtain and Maintain Partnerships (RGV)

- RGV Partnership- cross-functional partners got to know each other, we dove into our work styles, discussed our biggest concerns, and what was most important to us. We could then design processes that we saw immediate benefit for our target populations.
 - Work Personality Tests
 - Discussing similarities of each organization’s mission statement.

Obtaining and Maintaining Partnerships

- The following are examples of the types of activities and projects that the CIL and the VR agency collaborate together on:
 - Job Clubs
 - Cross referrals
 - Deaf Summer Camps
 - Community Presentations for the RSD Programs
 - Provide Technical Assistance to direct service staff
 - Lifeline Collaborative (assisting individuals within the justice system obtain employment skills)
 - Vocational Skills training on site and at schools

Obtaining and Maintaining Partnerships: Job Types

- Food Handlers/Cooking Workshop (to assist individuals interested in food industry careers)
- CPR/First Aid Workshops (to assist individuals interested in healthcare careers)
- Drivers Education Study Workgroups and Simulation (to assist students with disabilities study for their driver's education online courses)
- Inclusive Job Fairs/reverse Job fair/accessibile outreach
 - » [Jump Start Career Expo](#)

Obtaining and Maintaining Partnerships: Examples

- The following are examples of the types of activities and projects that the CIL and the Disability Chamber of Commerce collaborate together on:
 - Support with ADA walk throughs for events
 - Assistive technology demonstrations
 - Promotion of mutual events on social media for same audience
 - Invitations to be guest speakers and co-present on disability specific topics
 - Community Liaison
 - Self Advocacy empowerment courses

Obtaining and Maintaining Partnerships: Universities and Research Organizations

- Partnering with universities or research organizations.
- A major part of providing long term successful employment services and expecting successful outcomes is contributing to research that can enhance the understanding and use of innovative employment service techniques.
- Journal Of Rehab VAIL 2023:
<https://aoddisabilityemploymentcenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/JOURNA1.pdf>

Obtaining and Maintaining Partnerships: Study

- This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of a modified brief cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) and motivational interviewing (MI) interventions in tandem in improving employment seeking of persons with Intellectual Disabilities.
- This study was innovative in that it used a modified brief CBT and MI in tandem approach while modifying these interventions to align with disability factors related to our target population.

Obtaining and Maintaining Partnerships: Successful Employment Matching

- For persons with ID addressing negative thoughts first was crucial given that reducing or eliminating career-dysfunctional thoughts put such persons in a position to make their own career choices effectively before motivating them to engage in obtaining employment.
- This way they are not engage in obtaining employment that would be a mismatch, which could lead to employment disappointment, and ultimately unsuccessful employment outcome (Diallo et al., 2021).
- **Results showed increases in motivation to obtain employment and more instances of applying for work.**

Tips for Successful Partnerships

- 1. Broader Representation-** Having representation not only at a local level but also state and national level (i.e., regional boards, state associations, national organizations).
- 2. Assigning Liaisons-** Ensure that there is a VR representative and a local CIL representative connected with each other for referrals and community events.
- 3. Cross Training-** Develop a local coalition that includes VR, CILs, Universities & Chambers (other agencies can include: local disability organizations, state protection agencies, city councils that focus on persons with disability, etc.) and meet regularly to cross train on new projects, services, and ideas for programs.
- 4. Nothing about us without us-** Ensure that there is always cross-disability representation throughout the partnership during planning, executing, and debriefing of collaborative activities and materials.

Resources

- [Personality Test](#)
- [Work Interest Test](#)
- [Transferable Skills Video](#)
- Adaptive curriculum for disability categories:
 - <https://snapcurriculum.org/>
 - <https://onramptraining.org/tnt/>
 - <http://myfulllife.com/>
 - <https://www.tsbvi.edu/statewide-resources/curriculum-publications>
 - <https://nationaldeafcenter.org/vr-toolkit/>

Questions?

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