Career Advancement: Barriers and Strategies for Young Adults with TBI and Other Disabilities

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In this Webinar:

• Look at the research on young adults with TBI & other disabilities during the early career years (18-26 years old)
  – Outcomes
  – Barriers

• Discuss strategies and recommendations for career advancement for young adults with disabilities during the early career years.

• Explore tools for planning!

• Question and Answer
Why Should We Focus on the Early Career Years for Young Adults with Disabilities?

- Opportunities for employment, training, and education during this time is heavily correlated with adult income and occupational achievement.
- Without planning and supports, tracking into low paying or unsatisfying jobs
  - Lack of opportunities for advancement
  - Lack of motivation for advancement
- Gainful employment has a positive influence on the outcomes and overall life satisfaction for individuals experiencing a TBI.
Why Should We Focus on the Early Career Years for Young Adults with Disabilities?

Young adults with disabilities including TBI in their early career years are more likely to be:

- Unemployed
- Underemployed
- Living below the poverty line

Percentage of individuals between 18-34 years old earning wages that placed them below the federal poverty line. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010)
What We Know: What Causes These Outcomes? What are the Barriers to Career Advancement?

- Lack of career experiences and limited aspirations
- Early patterns of employment
- Lack of access to ongoing training and higher education
- Discrimination and prejudice in the workplace
Barrier: Limited Early Career Experiences

- Limited knowledge/awareness potential job opportunities & career paths
- Lack of exposure to work experiences

- Job Shadowing
- Mentorships
- Cooperative Education
- School-Based Businesses

Higher Annual Income
Stable Employment
Full Time Work

Higher Hourly Wages
Likelihoods of Benefits

- Work Based Internships
Barrier: Limited Aspirations

- Lack of self-confidence
  - Less confidence and optimism
- Restricted aspirations
  - Influenced by peer groups, parental & teacher expectations, academic skills, and realities of the labor market.
  - Occupational aspirations are a predictor of later aspirations and future career choices.

DQ: Do you see an overall lack in overall lack of self confidence when discussing vocational goals? How do you work with your students to increase their confidence?
Barrier: Early Patterns of Employment

• The “first job” setting the stage for lifelong earning
  – Importance of entering the workforce directly after completing school
  – Many young adults with disabilities are not immediately employed or enter unskilled positions

• Difficulty maintaining stable employment over time.
  – Staying in a job long enough to advance
    • Growing responsibilities
    • Increased wages
  – Adjust to work demands
    • Occupational skills
    • Ability to adapt to barriers and changes
Barrier: Lack of Access to Ongoing Training

In the workplace, young adults with disabilities may have limited:

- Opportunities for challenging job assignments
- Access to on the job training options
- Access to experienced mentors
Barrier: Lack of Access to Higher Education

For young adults with TBI and other disabilities, postsecondary education and training is associated with:

| Higher wages | Higher rates of competitive employment | Greater numbers of hours worked | Less occupational restrictions |

however

Young adults with disabilities are less than half as likely as their peers without disabilities to attend college!
Barrier: Discrimination and Prejudice in the Workplace

43% of adults with disabilities have encountered job discrimination (National Organization on Disability, 2010)

Employer misconceptions, misinformation, and stereotyped beliefs can create invisible barriers to employment:

- Impact hiring and discharge
- Limit opportunities for training and promotion
- Failure to provide reasonable accommodations
- Intimidation and harassment
Characteristics and Skills Associated with Positive Trajectories for Employees with Disabilities

- Problem solving
- Goal setting
- Time management
- Prioritization
- Effective relationships with peers
- Effective relationships with supervisors
- Adaptability to new/changing work environment
- Aware of own disabilities
- Coping and self-advocacy skills
- Ability to persist in difficult situations
- Maintain a sense of personal control
- Clear self-concept (awareness of strengths and skills)

DQ: How do you work with people with TBI to teach and accommodate these skills? How do you work with your students to learn more about their disability?
Effective Accommodations for Employees with TBI

• Questions to ask:
  – What functional limitations in the young adult experiencing?
  – How do these functional limitations affect their job performance?
  – What accommodations are available?
  – What has worked for the individual with TBI in the past? Are they involved in the process?
  – How do you assess if the accommodations are effective?
  – Does employer and/or other personnel require training on TBI?
What accommodations can you use to support students with TBI in the development of these characteristics?

- **Physical Accommodations**
  - Simplified environments (removing unnecessary materials)
  - Ramps, elevators, etc.

- **Organizational Accommodations**
  - List-making
  - Color-coding
  - Timers
  - Additional reminders
  - Technology & Apps

- **Problem Solving Accommodations**
  - Have visual representations of problem solving techniques visible (diagrams)
  - Have direct resource for when individual has questions

- **Emotional Accommodations**
  - Praise and reinforcement
  - Provide awareness training for co-workers
  - Explicit stress management plan with visual cues

- **Sensory Accommodations**
  - Large printed materials
  - Change florescent lights to whit light/natural light
  - Glare guards for technology
  - White noise machines or noise-cancelling headphones

- **Memory Accommodations**
  - Recording meetings/trainings
  - Provide written materials for meetings/trainings
  - Written Instructions next to equipment

- **Endurance Accommodations**
  - Flexible scheduling/breaks
  - Increased training for new tasks
  - Self-paced workload

- **Concentration Accommodations**
  - Dividing large assignments into manageable tasks
  - Reducing distractions
Strategy: Awareness of Individual Characteristics and Skills and How to Develop Them

– Strengths-based exploration and planning
– Accurate career assessments
– Individual or group instruction to teach career adaptability skills (problem solving, self-advocacy, and communication skills).
– Accommodation Advocacy and Exploration
Strategy: Broaden Career Exploration

- Information gathering
- Job shadowing
- Visiting job sites
- Exploring online labor market surveys

CAPT
Career Advancement Planning Tool

ECAM
Environmental Career Advancement Measure
Strategies: Develop Work Opportunities

• Develop work opportunities with access to further post secondary education or training and skill development.

• Encourage high school work-based instruction and community work experience

• Consider job-person fit (challenging and personally rewarding)

• Encourage learning skills on the job with supervision from an experienced co-worker

• Utilize financial incentives
Strategy: Obtaining Post Secondary Education & Training

- Look beyond service industry for opportunities with occupational training/coursework.
- Provide initial information about a range of post secondary programs.
- Ensure students have complete information about program requirements.
- Provide assistance with completing applications & financial aid paperwork.
- Connect students with disability resources.
- Encourage positive communication and self-advocacy skills.
Strategy: Growing on the Job

- Teach problem solving skills
- Role models and mentors
- Peer support groups
- External support systems
- Workplace accommodations
  - Modifying application procedures
  - Adapting features of the workplace or tasks
  - Shifting workplace rules
- Assistive technology
Strategy: Changing the Workplace

- Partner with employers to make the case for hiring people with disabilities
- Working with human resources personnel to:
  - Assess accessibility standards
  - Develop a budget for accommodations
  - Promote recruitment efforts
  - Support employee mentoring programs
- Conduct employer training to increase disability awareness and address discrimination
CAPT
Career Advancement Planning Tool

• Focus: For young adults
  • Forward Planning
  • Backward Planning

• Purpose:
  • To develop an understanding of the process of career development as well as to gather information on the needs of career advancement.
ECAM: Environmental Career Advancement Measure

• Focus: For professionals supporting young adults with disabilities
• Purpose:
  • To assess the career advancement opportunities in various employment environments.
Questions or Comments?

Thank you!

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