

Job Skills: Getting Ready for Work



Learning and practicing job skills while youth are still in schools helps youth with disabilities to be more successful at finding and maintaining employment. Parents and family members can also work with and encourage youth to develop skills to be successful in the workplace. Depending on the needs and strengths of the youth there are many different ways these skills can be taught. A transition plan that focuses on both assessment and planning is essential to prepare youth for life after high school.

Job skills can be divided into three main categories:

Communication Skills Examples

- Following and giving directions
- Communicating information either verbally or in writing
- Understanding and processing information
- Requesting and offering assistance
- Non-verbal communication

Examples of how to help:

- Work on building vocabulary
- Encourage participation in school activities
- Practice different communication in different environments
- Teach appropriate speaking volume and personal space
- Work on listening skills by having conversations with others
- Model listening skills and proper posture
- Have youth repeat instructions that have been given
- Practice proper eye contact, facial gestures and expressions

Interpersonal Skills Examples

- Cooperating with others
- Displaying appropriate workplace behavior and etiquette
- Maintaining good personal hygiene and appearance
- Knowing appropriate topics for discussion in the workplace
- Knowing when and when not to socialize on the job
- Protecting oneself from victimization on the job
- Using social problem-solving techniques

Examples of how to help:

- Encourage volunteering in various settings
- Engage youth in games with friends or family to foster cooperation, following rules, taking turns, controlling emotions, and learning new skills
- Participate in athletics which encourages team work
- Role-play challenging situations
- Model proper appearance and hygiene

Decision Making Skills Examples

- Handling conflict
- Following directions and accepting instruction
- Getting along with others
- Respecting others
- Arriving to work on time
- Calling into work when sick
- Requesting vacation time

Examples of how to help:

- Assign responsibilities at home
- Ensure the youth understands use of phone and texting at work
- Enroll the youth in etiquette or mentoring program
- Encourage independence
- Encourage use of public transportation

Resources: Job Skills

- Helping Youth Develop Soft Skills for Job Success: Tips for Parents and Families- National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. (May 2011) <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/information-brief-28>
- Helping Youth Build Work Skills for Job Success: Tips for Parents and Families - National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. (May 2011) <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/information-brief-34>
- Also see: Preparing for Employment [Guide Sheet] – Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (November 2016)