

Supported Employment and Adult Services: What Secondary Special Educators and Parents Need to Know

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What Do You Think?

- What do you think are necessary skills for being successful in supported employment?

Don't we already know this stuff?

- Our work with OCO grant from 1999-2006
www.education.umd.edu/oco/
- Changes in adult services given funding, consumer choice, economy
- Changes in schools with funding, standards, assessments, access to general education (NCLB, IDEA 04)

What we found from teachers

- Teachers had good relationships with DDA; funded and connected (GTYI)
- Adult agency (CRP) personnel came to last IEP meeting when invited
- Parents pick agency based on transition fairs
- Many families and teachers do not visit agencies

What we found from teachers

- Informal Assessments for Transition during the program
- Not many links with DORS or career assessments at Workforce & Technology Center
- Curriculum materials vary (many cited *Attainment* or *PCI Educational*)
- Teachers reported good relationships and communication with parents

Our next step – Interview adult service providers

- *We asked about*
 - Collaborative partnerships with DORS, DDA
 - Acceptance criteria
 - Which vocational skills or training most important
 - Use of existing assessments, work history
 - What they thought secondary special educators and families should do to prepare students for services through adult agency (emphasis on supported employment)

Agency Interviews

- Piloted - Purposefully selected 7 adult agencies that served students (ages 18-21) from a program in a postsecondary setting
- Selected 5 additional agencies to make sure that we had representation from all four DDA regions
- These additional programs stated on DDA website that they offered array of services

What we found from adult providers...

■ Recruiting Clients

- Need GTYI, DDA funding or private pay (very rare!)
- Referrals from DORS, Service Coordinators, Schools
- Funding levels determine the scope of service plans

■ Accepting Clients

- *Issue:* Families involved; Often outspoken with unrealistic expectations about client's abilities and employment options
- *Issue:* Families may not understand roles & responsibilities with their adult children (decision-making & guardianship) and with agency professionals

What we found from adult providers..

Suggestions for secondary special education

■ **Essential Skills**

- Transportation/Travel Training Skills- What makes sense for this individual in this community
- Community Skills
 - Interacting with supervisors/peers on job
 - Speaking up for self
 - Expressing preferences and needs
- Personal Hygiene
- Social Skills
- Self- Monitoring Behavior (dealing with anger and frustration)

What we found from adult providers..

Suggestions for secondary special education

- *Academic skills*- none rated this as **required**
- *Paid Employment* - not required but important in terms of individual job placement with the agency
- *Work History* - would be great but most don't get any
- Clients need to be able to express preferences and abilities for preferred jobs or tasks NOT families
- Assessment and work evaluations need to be reliable and realistic for adult provider
- Age of majority needs to be explained and understood by client and family

Suggestions for *Students, Families and Teachers* Based on findings

- Visit the agencies and ask questions
- Understand *community* or *supported employment* may not be individualized
- Understanding the roles of various personnel in state and community agencies
- If individual community placements are the goal-fade teacher and family support in final school years

More suggestions – What needs to be taught..

- Real-life post-school supports must be addressed as part of transition planning!
- Emphasize travel-training, personal hygiene, social skills, and self-advocacy training, and realistic employment experiences in last years of school
- Students need opportunities to practice self advocacy skills (IEP meetings, at work, and in the community)

Bottom line..

- Teachers and parents need to understand that the parental role after special education is different
 - Eligibility vs. Entitlement!!!
- Planning for adult services should be approached systematically - new players and new rules!

Information....

- DDA website: <http://ddamaryland.org/>
- Transitioning Youth Handbook:
<http://ddamaryland.org/Developments/TYHandbook.pdf>
- Ask Me! Survey Results:
http://dhmh.state.md.us/dda_md/ReportableInc/Ask06report.pdf