

Connecting with Families and Educators



DOL Launches Online Tool for Jobseekers on Skills



The Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration has launched an online tool, My Skills My Future, to help job seekers match their current skills to new careers and find out what training is needed to transition from one job to another. This resource includes information about occupational skills that can be transferred from one job to another, a side-by-side comparison chart of likely skill gaps from one occupation to another, and links to training programs that could help address skills needs. Job listings will also be available from the site. To access the tool, visit <http://www.myskillsmyfuture.org/>.

This article reprinted with permission from the August 24, 2011 Reference Points newsletter. Reference Points is administered by PACER Center <http://www.PACER.org> as a technical assistance activity of the TATRA Project. The TATRA Project is funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

“Just because something bad happened in the past, doesn't mean something bad is going to happen in the future” ...

These words of wisdom, and many others of which I've not kept track came from the mouth of a young adult I know. This person has dealt with challenges from a physical disability and chronic health problems for a lifetime. For her, the prospect of living her life with the cloud of “what if” over her head is not appealing. I get that.

As a parent of a child with chronic physical, health or other disability issues, it becomes a conditioned response to try to prepare and guard against the next crisis waiting in the wings. Ever vigilant, we read all we can to see what next issues are listed on the developmental chart for our child (or at least their disability.) We try to provide the right environment, education and opportunities to avoid any possible bad experience, illness, or complication. Under the banner of “being prepared” we research, plot and plan to the highest degree, typically dragging our less than willing adolescent through the process. And all too soon we find ourselves preaching the “be careful; have you done this or that; but you need to; you really should...” chorus as we think we are helping *them* think through decisions so they can land on their feet as they transition to adulthood.



Always better at offering advice in this area than taking it, I ask you to think about this. I wonder if both parents and young adults should have more faith in the foundations of problem solving and decision-making we built together while the children were growing up. We need to recognize that we all do the best we know how at the time. If life unfolds less than perfectly for our transitioning youth, perhaps life's lessons will be more valuable than unwanted advice from caring adults.

As for me, I have a quote on my desk I need to read and heed more often, “Worrying does not empty tomorrow of its troubles, it empties today of its strength.” — *Author Unknown*

— Sandy

Holidays Are Approaching

The Holidays are approaching and for most of us, that means increased expectations and busier schedules, at the same time energy and financial resources seem to hit all time lows. School concerts, athletic events, projects due, parties in and out of school, all combine to make the Holidays a potentially stressful time for parents and children alike.

There are a number of tips floating around out there for how to make the Holidays more enjoyable. Many apply whether you are a family with an individual who has a disability or not. In those lists of "Top 10 Hints" that I have reviewed, there are some common themes and a few suggestions that are especially good when your son or daughter has a disability.

1 Make a List of what is important

Identify what you enjoy about the Holiday and what makes it special. It could be an activity, an event, special foods, family traditions, decorations, or gift giving. Make a short list of the most important aspects of the Holiday for each of your family members. Use this "short list" as the guide to what you will do during the Holiday season.

2 Plan

Look at the calendar and determine when those activities and experiences could occur during the Holiday season. You may be able to enjoy more if everything is not crammed into one week. Some things are dependent on a specific date while others may not be. Don't over-commit.

3 Remember routines

In the scurry of shopping, visiting, and all those add-on activities schedules get changed. Meals and bedtime can become a casualty of the season. Try

to maintain regular bedtimes as much as possible. Well-rested children (and adults) are much happier and more pleasant to be around. Plan at least one nutritious meal a day. Fast food and sugary snacks can add to physical stress.

4 Limit screen time and Move

How tempting it is for busy adults to allow children more TV and video game time. Physical activity is one of the best ways to reduce stress. A few minutes of dancing or exercising to the music on the radio, taking the dog for a walk around the block or building a snowman at the park can help relieve stress, and make for a healthier mind and body.

5 Re-think gift giving

Set a realistic budget for gifts, review the "wish lists" of your children and have a conversation about what is doable and what possible alternatives might be. Living within a budget is something we all must learn to do, and this is an opportunity to teach it.

The time we spend together is often the gift we remember most as the years go by.

6 Customize

Consider the needs of your family and modify accordingly. If your child could be hurt by fragile decorations, opt for more durable, kid-safe ornaments and put the delicate ones up high, or packed away for another year. If there are Holiday foods that are not in your child's diet, change the recipe or substitute an acceptable alternative. If shopping in a busy place is not comfortable for your child, get childcare or do your shopping online or through catalogues. If your child enjoys different toys than other children his/her age, focus on what is right for your child.

7 Ask for Help

Friends and family are more willing to help than we think, but people don't know when you need help unless you ask. Trade childcare, or share baked goods to help out yourself and your neighbor. Talk to your friends or relatives about errands and see if one of you can make the trip for both of you. A little help can go a long way.

8 Recognize stress signals

Recognize signs of stress in yourself and your family. Before the big meltdown, step back and take a different direction. Maybe that concert is too long and you need to leave early to get the little one to bed. Maybe the frilly dress is just too much and a familiar outfit is more comfortable. Even though it is easy to be influenced by well-meaning relatives and their ideas of "what would be nice," you know your family and can take steps to make experiences better for everyone.

9 Laugh

Find people that make you laugh and spend time with them. Laughter is great internal massage that provides physical as well as emotional benefit. Think of what puts a smile on your child's face and make sure you build those experiences into the Holiday schedule.

10 Remember why the Holiday is important

Holidays are a time for celebration. Families spend time together to reflect on the past and look to the future. Focus on what is right with your world.

This article reprinted from a previous issue of Connecting with Families and Educators newsletter.

Work Goals and Work Skills Start at Home

Families and other caring adults play a vital, yet unrecognized role in helping young people with disabilities explore careers, build work skills, and be successful in employment. Reasons why families are unrecognized in the career development process vary. Families themselves may not see the connection between work skills and everyday activities in the home. They may not realize that their knowledge of their son or daughter can contribute to the employment-related transition goals of their child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). They may think that schools, youth development professionals, or state vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs don't need their help, or may be unaware of how they might partner with such programs. Perhaps they simply have not been asked.

Families are often the first, most knowledgeable, and most consistent "case manager" youth with disabilities have. Families possess valuable information about a youth's strengths, interests, and needs. In a time of dwindling resources, family involvement can help professionals, such as teachers, social workers, and mentors, to streamline their assessment process, access personal networks for job opportunities, and build work readiness skills in the home.

Work Goals Start at Home

All families want their sons and daughters to be employed. This desire needs to hold true for youth with disabilities as well. Families can begin youth on the path towards successful employment by helping youth create goals for themselves. Even at a young age, youth begin to think about what types of jobs they may want. "I want to grow up and do what mommy does." or "When I get bigger, I'm going to be a policeman." Families can use this common curiosity to begin instilling an expectation that their family member will be employed as an adult. If the expect-



tation of employment is there from an early age, it will be easier to build more specific skills and higher expectations as the youth gets older.

Families Can Build Work Skills at Home

Where do people learn the skills needed to be successful in the workplace? How does a person learn to be responsible, problem solve, appropriately interact with others or take work direction? Does it come naturally? For some youth it might. However, many youth need opportunities to learn and practice these skills. Entry-level jobs have been a traditional way young people learn work skills, but recently the number of entry-level jobs available to youth has drastically decreased. Youth with disabilities may have greater difficulties finding work experience opportunities. Given these barriers, how do families help youth build the "soft skills" needed to be successful in the workplace?

Interacting Appropriately with Others

No matter what job a person has, it is necessary to interact with co-workers, suppliers, customers, or the community in an appropriate way. Employers are more likely to fire an employee if they have trouble interacting with others in the workplace.

From an early age, families can have their youth practice appropriate interactions with family members, friends, relatives, teachers, and workers in stores they frequent. Families can reinforce that interacting appropriately with people does not mean that they have to like them. Discuss the different types of communication one might use in dif-

ferent environments such as on the street, in a professional setting, and with peers, family, and coworkers. Doing so would help youth understand that what might be acceptable and expected in one setting may not be appropriate in another. Youth who are given the opportunity to practice how to deal with people in a variety of situations may respond better if conflict should arise.

Maintaining Personal Appearance for Work

Youth often express themselves through the clothes they like to wear. Being asked to wear dress clothes or a uniform can be seen as disrespectful to their individuality. However, there are very few jobs that don't expect some level of appropriate appearance from their employees.

Families are in a position to teach youth the difference between times when proper dress is called for, and times when they can choose what to wear. Situations like school, church, weddings, or certain family functions can be used to practice dressing appropriately for different occasions. Families can schedule times once a month where the family will dress up and eat at a restaurant. During these outings, have youth cover up any visible tattoos, leave baseball caps at home, forego gum chewing, and make sure pants are pulled up. Consider it a dress rehearsal and draw the correlation between dressing up for certain situations and dressing appropriately for work so youth understand the similarities.

This same concept carries over to other aspects of personal appearance. Youth should be encouraged to shower at least every other day, and to have a hairstyle that helps maintain personal appearance. Hygiene basics like teeth brushing, body odor awareness, and clean clothes are expected in the workplace, and for some youth this may not be obvious. Family members are in the best posi-

tion to give specific guidance to their son or daughter on these issues.

Responsibility

Employers want workers who are responsible enough to show up on time and do the tasks they are assigned. Chores in the home are an excellent way to help youth build a sense of responsibility that can carry over onto a job.

Assign tasks in the home that are the sole responsibility of the youth. For example, parents can make it the responsibility of their son or daughter to collect the trash from around the house and to bring the garbage can to the curb on collection day. Parents should check their youth's work and give feedback on how well the task was completed. It may be necessary to create a system of rewards initially so the youth has an incentive. Other ways to build responsibility could include tasks such as waking up and getting ready for school independently, caring for a pet, helping plan a family menu for the week, maintaining a clean room, being responsible for certain aspects of yard work, or babysitting.

Parents may already have these expectations in place for youth, so the value comes in relating the responsibilities a youth has at home with potential responsibilities a youth may encounter on the job. Jobs need to get done both at home and at work. A youth who recognizes this is better prepared for the world of work.

Problem Solving

The ability to solve problems as they arise is a skill desired by employers. What do you do if a customer is unhappy? How do you overcome barriers to finish an assigned task? When should you ask for help if needed? Eventually, youth will learn that things won't always happen as planned. Fortunately, family life presents plenty of opportunities to practice problem solving. Families can give youth the opportunity to give input to solve common problems such as cleaning the house, accommodating guests, budgeting,

making decisions on recreational activities or finding a needed service. If a problem has already been addressed, families can explain how they handled the situation and relate the situation to the workplace. For example, if the family needs a new dentist, the young person could do the research, develop some recommendations and discuss it with the family. As the family discussion occurs, an analogy can be made to doing similar research in an office environment to locate a graphic artist, an editor, or a printer. Instead of jumping in to solve a problem a youth might have, families can ask the youth to list all the possible solutions and consider them together to find a good one.



Working as Part of a Team

Teamwork is required in most workplaces. Even in a job where most tasks are completed independently, there is still a strong expectation that people will work together to meet the goals of the company. Families can work with their youth so they understand the importance of working as part of a team. Volunteering is a wonderful way for families to build this skill. Find a volunteer activity that requires teamwork to complete a task and sign up as a family to help. For example, a local food bank may need help taking donations, placing them into categories, and stocking shelves. This would be hard for one person to complete, but easy for a group of people. Families can also encourage youth to participate in school- or community-based activities, such as sports or fine arts, that require teamwork to produce a finished product.

Taking Work Direction

Most workplaces have goals, whether it's to serve food quickly, manufac-

ture something correctly, or provide a service that meets customer requirements. A major expectation of employers is that an employee is able to take directions from somebody else. The inability to take work direction is often a cause for youth to be dismissed from jobs or to quit jobs. Many youth have a hard time with this concept, especially if they have little exposure to the world of work. Taking work direction may be difficult during adolescence because it's a time that identities are forged and self-images are fragile. Families are the best source of support to help youth understand that they should not be offended when they are given directions in the home, at school, or at work. Families can remind them that taking direction is an important part being an employee and helping a business get its work done.

In Closing

Youth with disabilities benefit from many supports and experiences to explore careers and build work skills. School programs and workforce development efforts are seen as the main suppliers of these supports, but families play a vital role as well. It is important that families and other caring adults leverage the school years, learn the expectations of employers, use everyday activities in the home to build work skills, and understand that they are partners in helping youth prepare for and maintain employment. Families who are knowledgeable about employment, are willing to provide needed supports and experiences, and who maintain high expectations for success give youth a much better chance to be successful in the job search and in the workplace.

*This article is taken from **Tapping into the Power of Families: How Families of Youth with Disabilities Can Assist in Job Search and Retention**, April 2011 - Info Brief Issue 27, authored by Sean Roy, PACER Center. This Information Brief is part of a series of publications and newsletters prepared by the NCWD/Youth. This document was developed by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, funded by a grant/contract/cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment (Number #OD-16519-07-75-4-11).*

Free Tutoring for Military Families

All Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve military families now have access to free on-line tutoring, regardless of deployment status. The on-line tutoring site provides tutoring and homework assistance for K-12 students, college students, and service members going back to school or through a career transition. Adult learners can get back-to-school and career help, including GED prep and resume writing. Find the site at: <http://www.tutor.com/military>

Iowa Used Equipment and Referral Service (UERS) Ranks # 1

Thanks to people like yourself having used and referred others to this free service we were able rank first in the nation for savings to consumers compared to all other assistive technology re-use services in the county. Help us keep this awesome ability to pass along savings to consumers through letting others know about our services.

UERS is a division for Iowa COMPASS that provides free listings of adaptive equipment for sale. Individuals wishing to either buy or sell equipment may post the listing free of charge through UERS.

To reach the page, go to: <http://www.iowacompass.org/> <<http://www.iowacompass.org/>> and look on the purple row for "Used Equipment Referral Service (UERS)".

Print lists are also available to people who do not have access to the list on the internet by calling 800.779.2001 or emailing Iowa COMPASS. You can email us at compass-UERS@uiowa.edu <<mailto:compass-UERS@uiowa.edu>> or follow the links on the website to post an ad.

This information provided by UERS.

Information on ASD

According to NECTAC eNotes, the Maternal and Child Health Library at Georgetown University has an on-line collection of resources about autism spectrum disorders that includes information about diagnosis, treatment, education, vocational challenges and family impact.



Called the *Knowledge Path for Autism Spectrum Disorders*, you may find the collection at: http://www.mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/kp_autism.html

New Podcast Series "Helping Youth Develop Soft Skills for Job Success"

The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) has just released a new podcast series for parents and families titled, "Helping Youth Develop Soft Skills for Job Success." The podcast series includes the following four episodes:
Episode 1: Helping Youth Develop soft Skills for Job Success
Episode 2: How to Build Communication Skills for Job Success
Episode 3: How to Build Interpersonal Skills for Job Success
Episode 4: How to Build Lifelong Learning Skills for Job Success

This podcast series provides ideas for parents and families on activities they can do at home and include in their child's Individualized Educational Program (IEP) to ensure he or she develops skills needed for job success by the time he or she completes high school. Learn more and listen to podcasts at: <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/podcast/helping-youth-develop-soft-skills-for-job-success>

This article reprinted from Intersections: Navigating the Road to Work, developed by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, funded by a grant/contract/cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (Number #OD-16519-07-75-4-11).

Free Internet Resources for Teachers



Every week it seems like there are more free internet resources to support teachers. To help teachers wade through the long list of those resources, the U.S. Department of Education has pulled together a list of resources from federal agencies, Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE). Teachers can look through the many resources organized by category and also sign up for E-Mail

notification when new resources are added. You can find the FREE list at: <http://free.ed.gov/>

The Library of Congress has easily accessible materials for teachers under "For Teachers" on the home page. Classroom materials include interactive strategies, videos, presentations and lesson plans. You can check it out at: <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/#>

As part of its "Stop. Think. Connect" campaign, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has pulled together a wealth of resources from the federal government and its partners to help teachers educate their students on internet safety. Check out this resource at <http://stopthinkconnect.org/>

Genetic Counseling Clinics

Regional Genetic Consultation Service (RGCS), Iowa Department of Public Health, provides genetic health care to individuals and families throughout Iowa with statewide outreach clinics.

Services include:

- Diagnostic evaluations
- Confirmatory testing
- Medical management
- Provision of non-directive counseling to individuals and families
- Case management
- Individual and family support
- Education
- Consultation
- Referral

These services are provided to over 700 clients and 1,800 family members at 80 clinics in 12 communities annually.

Cost

Some insurance companies reimburse for genetic consultation. Insurers will be billed if a family has coverage. Families will be charged based upon their ability to pay, using a sliding fee scale. Laboratory procedures, if needed, will be billed separately.

Clinics are located in Ames, Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, Fort Dodge, Mason City, Ottumwa, Sioux City, Spencer, and Waterloo.

Referrals will be accepted from doctors, nurses, social workers, clergy, teachers, families, and others. To schedule an appointment for genetic consultation services, to find out about educational opportunities or to find out more about genetic counseling services, call 1 800 260-2065.

Information for this article obtained from the Iowa Department of Health web site at http://www.idph.state.ia.us/genetics/rg_consultation.asp

Social Networking and Youth with Disabilities

Social networking using computers, smart phones or other technology is a way of life for most people under 30. Whether it is E-mail, texting, tweeting or blogging...staying connected and making connections through technology works for young people. While social networking is everywhere and has some real benefits, this can be a minefield of potential issues for youth, including youth with disabilities.

The Spring/Summer 2011 issue of Impact newsletter suggested some resources that may be helpful for parents and youth as they look for ways to be safe online.

YO! Safety Tips <http://yodisabledproud.org/resources/safety-online.php>

Cyber Disclosure for Youth with Disabilities <http://ncwd-youth.info/cyber-disclosure>

Internet Safety, Social Networking and Technology <http://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/documents/transition/internet.pdf>

Is Your Child Being Bullied in Cyberspace? <http://www.pacer.org/publications/bullypdf/bp-13.pdf>

Impact newsletter is published by the Institute for Community Integration and Research and Training Center on Community Living from the University of Minnesota. You may find Impact on-line at <http://ici.umn.edu/products/impact>



Looking for Support? Support Groups

There are a number of support groups across Iowa and in AEA 267. If you are affiliated with a support group and would like information about the group listed on the AEA 267 Family-Educator Connection web site and in our newsletters, send information to Sandy Kraschel at skraschel@aea267.k12.ia.us or call 800-392-6640.

ADHD support group

Meets second Monday of the month during the school year at Upper Iowa University. 3563 University, Waterloo from 6:30-8 pm.

For more information contact Barb at 319-266-2901 or bum1992@cfu.net

Autism Spectrum Support Group

Individuals wanting further information or a personal parent contact should contact Chris or Tyann Rouw at 319.266.5876 or the Family & Educator Connection at 319.273.8265 or go to www.autismiowa.com

Designer Genes - A Support Group for families of children with Down Syndrome,

provides parent groups as well as family events and playgroups for young children in the Cedar Falls, Charles City and Mason City areas.

For more information call 319-404-0396 or e-mail designergenes2005@yahoo.com.

continued...

**Prader Willi Syndrome
Association of Iowa**

For more information please contact:
Edie Bogaczyk, 515-987-0288 or dbogaczyk@msn.com.

Epilepsy Support Group

Waterloo/Cedar Falls Area
Held at the Kimball Ridge Center,
Conference Room 1
2101 Kimball Ave. Waterloo, IA
Held the 2nd Thursday of every ODD
month at 6:30 pm

For more information contact Karly
Ashlock, Services Coordinator for
Iowa Epilepsy Foundation North/
Central Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska,
1111 9th Street, Suite 275,
Des Moines, IA 50314

Phone: 515-238-7660; Email:
kashlock@efncil.org



Calendar

November

Wednesday - Saturday, November
9-12, 2011

**International Dyslexia
Association 62nd Annual
Conference**

Chicago, Illinois
Sessions include presentations on
working memory, vocabulary, tech-
nology, strategies for the classroom
and home.

For more information contact
conference@interdys.org or call
410.296.0232 or go to www.interdys.org/AnnualConference.htm

**Friday, November 18, 2011
Future Horizons Minnesota Au-
tism & Asperger's
Syndrome Conference**

St. Paul, Minnesota
Presenters include Dr. Temple Gran-
din and Dr. Jed Baker. APA and ASHA
CEUs available
For more information call
800.489.0727 or go to: www.fhau-tism.com/Conference/MinnesotaAu-tismAspergersSyndromeConference/tabid/299/Default.aspx

**Saturday, November 19, 2011
Teaching Your Child
Independence: Autism
Webinar & Live Presentation**

Iowa City, Iowa (origination site)
This workshop is being provided both
on-site in Iowa City and as a webinar.
Presenter is Bill Weaver, MOT, OTR/L,
Center for Disabilities and Develop-
ment, University of Iowa Hospitals
and Clinics.
For more information contact Lisa
Kemmerer at 319.467.5658, or lisa-kemmerer@uiowa.edu

December

**Thursday, December 8, 2011
Work Incentive Seminar Event
(WISE)**

Charles City, Iowa
WISE workshops are intended for
people with disabilities and families.
The workshop will cover SSA work
incentives, Ticket to Work, HCBS
waivers, supported employment and
Consumer Choice Options. Similar
workshops are held around the state
the second Thursday each month.
For additional information on this
and other WISE workshops go to
www.iowawipa.org

**Saturday, December 10, 2011
Improving Your Child's
Social Skills
Iowa City, Iowa**

This workshop is part of the work-
shop series Understanding Autism:
Practical Help for Parenting Children
with Autism. Speaker is Kelly Pelzel,
PhD. This workshop will feature
research-based strategies that apply
to individuals from infancy through
adolescence.
For more information contact Lisa
Kemmerer at 319.467.5658 or lisa-kemmerer@uiowa.edu

January

**Tuesday, January 10, 2012
Cognitive Strategies for
High Functioning Autism
& Asperger's Syndrome**

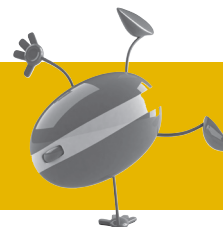
Cedar Rapids, Iowa
This class, sponsored by Grant Wood
Area Education Agency will include
information on characteristics of
autism spectrum disorders (ASD),
behavior management techniques,
and strategies including TEACH,
social stories, Power Cards and Clear
Thinking.
For more information go to www.aea10.k12.ia.us/profdev/diversity.html#_4274 or call 319.399.6771.



**Remember, December 26 through
January 2 the AEA 267 offices are
closed for Winter Break.**

THE FAMILY & EDUCATOR CONNECTION

Check us out on the Web! www.aea267.k12.ia.us



The Family & Educator Connection

The AEA 267 Family-Educator Connection provides information and support for families and educators around disability related issues. Whether you would like to talk about family adjustment issues with a new baby or newly diagnosed disability, home-school communication issues, questions relating to understanding a disability, or parenting strategies, we are happy to take your call. We have quite a library of resources available for loan and a number of highly qualified people to consult. If you have a question, we will do our best to help you find the answer. We are available by phone, mail, e-mail or by appointment, in-person.

Cedar Falls/ Waterloo Office

Deb Paton

3712 Cedar Heights Drive

Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

Ph. 1-800-542-8375 or 1-319-273-8265

dpaton@aea267.k12.ia.us,

Clear Lake/Mason City Office

Sandy Kraschel

Mason City Airport Grounds

9184 B 265th Street

Clear Lake, Iowa 50428

Ph. 1-800-392-6640 or 1-641-357-6125

skraschel@aea267.k12.ia.us

Marshalltown Office

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909 South 12th Street

Marshalltown, Iowa 50158

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