

Florida Provider Network



Florida
Developmental
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UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA

University of South Florida,
Division of Applied Research and
Education Support
Funded by the
Florida Developmental
Disabilities Council



Building Personal Leadership for Youth with Disabilities

2010 Florida Youth Leadership Forum



The Florida Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) is an annual career and leadership training program that is both educational and motivational. Sponsored annually by The Able Trust, in partnership with the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, the YLF brings together rising high school juniors and seniors each summer to spend a long weekend in Tallahassee learning about community and academic resources, disability history, career options and personal leadership. Attendees also take part in social activities which enable them to network, learn from each other and build friendships that will last a lifetime. Those interested in applying for the 2010 YLF can go to <http://www.abletrust.org/ylf/> for an application form. Applications must be completed and postmarked no later than February 12, 2010.

For more information: The Able Trust at (888) 838-2253 or e-mail at info@abletrust.org

National Marketing Effort Targeted to Businesses

“Think Beyond the Label” Web Campaign Now Online



On February 1, a national campaign came online to try to persuade employers to hire persons with disabilities for their job openings. The national campaign is called Think Beyond the Label (TBTL). The web site is found at: <http://www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com>

The project is a partnership of health and human service and employment agencies with federal grants, coming together to build a uniform national infrastructure and approach that connects businesses to qualified candidates with disabilities. The goal

~~“Hiring employees with disabilities increases your insurance rates.”~~

Fact: Insurance rates are based solely on the relative hazards of the operation and the organization's accident experience, not on whether workers have disabilities.

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“Think Beyond the Label” Campaign

is simple: to raise awareness that hiring people with disabilities makes good business sense. The site states: “Employees with disabilities have unique, competitively relevant knowledge and perspectives about work processes, bringing different perspectives to meeting work requirements and goals successfully. Hiring someone who ‘thinks outside the box’ might be thinking too small when there’s an opportunity to hire someone who lives outside the box.”

Health & Disability Advocates (HDA), a national nonprofit organization that promotes income security and improved health care access for children, people with disabilities, and low-income older adults, is spearheading the Think Beyond the Label campaign on behalf of more than 25 states and various national and regional organizations by serving as its fiscal agent.

Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) is a participant in this national campaign, through funding by the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, and has its own Web page as part of the TBTL Web site. The page is <http://www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com/StatesPages/statespage.aspx?stateid=9>



Employers may now call APD and its partner agencies if they are interested in hiring a person with a disability for open positions within their companies. The Supported Employment Liaison (SEL) or Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) Employment Coordinator in each area office will field these calls. Calls to the Central Office will be handled by Lee Ann Herman (LeeAnn_Herman@apd.state.fl.us).

APD states that it “wants to make sure that employers are greeted with prompt and helpful service so that the people we serve can successfully compete for job openings.”

In Florida, Think Beyond the Label advertisements will be placed in Florida Trend magazine and on Web sites for local business journals in the spring.

The web site includes a link to Success Stories from the employer perspective. One story features a Florida Call Monitoring Company in Fort Meyers called J.Lodge. It tells the company’s experience hiring a man with quadriplegia. The site is seeking other success stories, and encourages employers to submit their experiences.

New Employer Initiative Launched by SSA and CESSI

- If a local employer is committed to hiring qualified workers with disabilities, it may choose:
- to Turn “Diversity into Dollars” by becoming an approved Employment Network (EN) of the Social Security Administration (SSA) - OR -
 - register as an Employer Partner to promote their organization as a disability-friendly employer on our website, where jobseekers will be referred to the employer’s job opportunities.
- Or, it can choose to participate in both types of partnerships.

Local employers, and employer associations - such as Chamber of Commerce and Business Leadership Networks - can be invited to join SSA as an Employer Partner to highlight their business as disability-friendly employer to gain exposure to thousands of qualified applicants with disabilities. If the employer has a demonstrated commitment to hiring people with disabilities and meets the Employer Partner criteria, they can post a company logo with a link to their job postings’ webpage directly from the CESSI Ticket to Work website. The partnership requirements employers need to meet are outlined at <http://www.cessi.net/ttw/employer/index.html>.

Thousands of jobseekers and service provider agencies will have direct access to their jobs. This opportunity will advertise and promote local employers to competitive and qualified jobseekers with disabilities. Although a new initiative, the Employer Partner project is gaining popularity, with such business partners as: Alumwire, Axiom, Harris, Lockheed Martin, Terremark, and Walgreen. You can help inform employers in your community of the critical need for them to include people with disabilities in their diversity outreach programs. Being involved in the Ticket to Work program as an Employment Network or as part of the Employer Partner initiative will help create a new pipeline of candidates.

For more information: <http://www.ssa.gov/work/documents/SSA-63-031%20Employers%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf> or contact Susan Samuels, CESSI’s Ticket to Work Employer Specialist, at: ssamuels@cessi.net



On-the-Job Skill Training of Workers with Disabilities

By Dale DiLeo

Vocational professionals know that success on the job is a combination of many factors. For example, the concept of natural support has taught us about the importance of building positive social relationships at work. This requires helping the supported employee to fit in with the workplace culture – the norms and expectations of dress, behavior, rules and rituals of the co-workers on the job.

But fitting in socially will be effective only if the worker can get the job done. Learning to perform the skills of a new job is thus another key aspect of job success. This means an employment specialist must be able to provide assistance in two areas:

- support the social behavior expected by people in the job setting
- ensure adequate skill training occurs for the worker to successfully complete the job

These two requirements influence each other. How skill training occurs can affect how the employee is viewed by the other workers and whether or not he or she is accepted as part of the team. The rest of this article will focus on techniques of good training that are complementary to social acceptance in the workplace.

Systematic Instruction

In the late 1970s, researchers such as Marc Gold and others studied how to teach people with intellectual disabilities to learn new skills. Their work changed forever the notion of the limits of people to learn new things. Gold noted that good teaching and learning depended on a balanced relationship between the learner and trainer. He stressed mutual cooperation and respect. Gold and others also brought a systematic approach to training that works well today. This approach isn't just for those with cognitive disabilities or any other disability, its principles help anyone who needs to learn a set of skills.

The basics of systematic instruction can be summarized by the following:

1. Break down complicated tasks to learnable steps.

2. Cluster steps into teachable chunks.
3. Provide prompts to remind the learner how to perform.
4. Provide feedback and reinforcement as the learner learns.
5. Expand the chunks into bigger sets of skills.
6. Help the learner perform independent of prompts.
7. Help the learner generalize the skill.

Much research and several new approaches have enhanced how trainers can best do the simple steps above. Here is how some of these effective procedures can fit within a natural supports framework:

Task Analysis

A task analysis organizes an activity to be learned into teachable steps and strategies for instruction. It allows the learner to develop multi-step, complex skills that would otherwise be difficult to acquire. For example, learning to stock items at a store consists of many different operations that generally should proceed in a certain order. By breaking these steps down into small learning units, a trainer can help an individual concentrate on one step at a time.

Each individual differs on what is a teachable step. Betty may need to focus only on replacing one item at a time, while Ray may be able to learn to stock an entire department. The first step in developing a task analysis is to decide on a method of performing the activity. There are usually many ways to do any task. Always consider the learner's most natural way of doing a task.

Equally as important, the trainer should carefully research the most accepted method of performing the task in the setting where it is to be performed. Performing a job in a way that is unusual can jeopardize social acceptance. The method of learning a task must have natural validity.

Once a method is selected, develop a list of the teachable steps for the person in the order they normally occur. When this is accomplished, decide on instructional strategies such as those that follow.

Prompting and Shaping

All people learn differently. We each have a unique best way to get information or develop a skill. Each person uses

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On-the-Job Skill Training

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different modes for different kinds of learning. Providing the right assistance during learning promotes error-free learning. Assistance can take the form of any number of prompts – verbal, visual or physical. Simple modeling may be sufficient for the person to perform the task.

Using prompts wisely requires the trainer to keep each prompt simple and use it only if needed. This includes a natural tone of voice or use of a naturally occurring cue. When additional supports are needed, they should be as unobtrusive as possible to ensure performance occurs.

Again, the concept of natural supports should influence the types of prompts chosen as learning aids. In order to facilitate performance and not make the person appear unusual, utilize cues that occur naturally in a setting or develop cues that are acceptable to others in the setting. Some trainers will over-cue persons as a way to get things done quickly. Often a visual or gesture cue is combined with unneeded verbal cues. This barrage of prompting can be confusing and difficult to fade and should be avoided.

Even with prompts, some learners may have too much difficulty successfully performing a new skill. This is when the concept of shaping, or reinforcing successive approximations of the performance, can help.

Feedback

For the person to learn effectively, he or she will need encouragement and feedback on performance. One of the best forms of feedback is reinforcement. A reinforcer is an event that follows an action that makes the action more likely to occur.

Most of us receive social reinforcement all the time. We are told “nice work,” “thanks for your efforts” or “way to go!” This tells us we did well and makes us more likely to repeat our efforts.

By the same token, we need to learn from our mistakes. Most people respond well to feedback that is respectful and informative. Sometimes workers can learn by letting the outcomes of their mistakes teach them, other times a good trainer will interrupt actions and offer advice. The best strategy depends on the circumstances and the learner.

In systematic instruction, each teachable step should produce feedback. That way, learners can build success with the largest chunk of behavior they can handle at one time. Like prompts, reinforcement and feedback should be natural to the setting and comparable to what others experience or acceptable by others as appropriate.

Fading and Generalization

Eventually it is important for learners to demonstrate performance without the need of trainers or their prompting. Fading prompts is a skill that requires an understanding of the learner’s needs and the setting. Fading is not just a process of reducing trainer assistance, but also of building up support within the natural setting. Once artificial trainer prompts are no longer available, the setting must be able to support the learner by the cues and supports that it can provide through events, other people or parts of the environment.

For some difficult tasks, built-in prompts are used permanently, such as a signal alarm in a timer. You may have to develop this type of fixture for some tasks in order for an individual to function more independently. The process of fading prompts best occurs after the learner has demonstrated skill competency. This may be for only a part of the complete task, not necessarily the whole task. Prompt reduction can occur by reducing the intensity of a cue, changing the kind of cue or doing smaller portions of the cue, each giving less assistance to the learner.

Generalizing skills learned in one environment to another with a different set of circumstances can be difficult for the learner. It is important to master, otherwise the person will depend on new training every time a situation or setting changes where the skill is required. A good generalization strategy is to have the learner successfully perform a skill in different settings under different circumstances. Building relationships with the people in the setting will also support generalization, as those people can then offer support if the person needs occasional assistance.

Just as prompting should be gradually reduced, the schedule of reinforcement should move to a more intermittent basis. If reinforcement is reduced too quickly, the individual may become confused and frustrated. People must also have an opportunity to practice what they have learned, or have a number of successfully reinforced performances.

Beyond Instructional Technology

While these basic principles work well for most teaching, there is more to learning than the technology of instruction. Based on the concept of natural supports, an often overlooked source of instruction is co-workers who are a part of the setting the skill is to be performed in.

Since so much training historically has been in segregated settings for people with disabilities, most new staff have the mistaken notion that they are the sole source of all training. Instead, the trainee should be more of a facilitator of learning opportunities within the setting in which the skill takes place.