Direct Support Professionals - Transition Roles and Opportunities

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My inspiration

Transition outcomes today

Across disabilities, transition-age people identified with autism spectrum disorder are more likely to:

- experience some of the lowest employment rates following high school
- become disengaged, underemployed, earn low wages, work few hours, and lack opportunities for career advancement.

Individualized support is critical

People identified with autism have unique challenges with flexibility, interpersonal interactions, executive functioning, and sensory integration.

These characteristics often necessitate a need for transition-age clients to receive individualized and specialized direct support in work readiness skills and employment.

Some predictors for transition success

Direct support availability and quality
- Transition planning and program
- Vocational rehabilitation
- Career counseling

Self-advocacy in college/university and workplace
Parents set high expectations for their children
Explicit Teacher Beliefs

- All students belong in the schools: IDEA
- Inclusion is valued in colleges and universities: Section 504 and Title II
- Inclusion is valued in the workforce: Employment First, ADA
- Inclusion is valued in the community: Person-centered planning

Implicit Teacher Beliefs

- Student behaviors will disrupt the classroom
- Student behaviors will make others feel uncomfortable
- Not likely to see successful outcomes from school
- Not likely to experience a high quality of life

Factors that influence positive teacher beliefs

- High expectations for students with disabilities
- Internally motivated and passionate about teaching
- Experiencing success (direct or indirect)
- Personal experiences with persons with disability
- Special education certification and related professional development in autism
- Appropriate resources and supports

Direct Support Professionals (DSP)

- Also known as: Personal Support Workers (PSW), Personal Assistants, Personal Care Aides
- Generally refer to non-medical care support
- No minimum education requirements or federal training requirements
- Oregon wages average $11.48 - $13.61/hour.
- Oregon expects to need 3,918 personnel annually in a DSP role

DSP employers and working relationships

- Residential care - supervised by director, case manager, or ancillary medical staff
- Support service agencies - indirectly supervised by case manager
- Clients and families - supervised at the discretion of client/family - may be a client's family member
Direct Support Professionals (DSP)

Uniquely positioned to provide one-on-one supports in natural settings: home, community programs, work skill development, job site

- Provide in-home support for life skill development and socialization
- Provide person-support in the community for inclusion and skill development
- Act as a liaison between the client and the community; in a position to promote access, equity, and inclusion
- Operate within a working alliance with the client to meet goals

Evidence - Direct Support Professional Skills

Some of the best practices for successful employment for people identified with autism includes identifying and providing support personnel with expertise in:

- Career pathway success strategies
- Knowledge of the unique issues and challenges within autism spectrum disorder

Questions?

What is the role of the DSP in transition?

What is needed to develop DSP as transition assets?

Support planning intersections

Reflect on major roles for DSP

Implement an individual support plan
- Coordination with agency and DHS varies
- Protect from harm at home and in community (physical, emotional)
- Practice and perform life skills
- Advocate for client at home and in community

Where is “work” readiness?
Life skill development
Creating opportunities for the client to practice and gain skills that optimize function and independence:

**Cognitive:** analyzing and using information
**Personal:** self-management and developing agency
**Interpersonal:** communicating and interacting effectively with others

Direct Support Professional Skills for Transition to Work
- Adept in interpersonal communication
- Integrate learning styles into skill building
- Promote effective workplace relationships between the client and other employees and supervisors
- Interpret autism characteristics and workplace observations
- Apply support interventions that align with employment goals, employer expectations, job culture, and job demands (Migliore, Butterworth, & Zalewska, 2014)
Considerations:

Promote DSP agency and intersection with transition goals

- Provide opportunities to learn and implement high impact practices
- Set high expectations for the support role
- Model explicit beliefs connecting life skills to work roles
- Develop sample lesson plans or activities for DSP connected to transferable work skills
- Share work success stories about people with autism to normalize transition to work

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