Supported Employment

Best Practices for Best Outcomes for Individuals Living with Brain Injury

Presented by: Deborah Cottrill, MS, CRC, CBIS, of MaryT Maryland and Jessica Nesbitt, CBIS, Brain Injury Association of Maryland
Learning Objectives

- Attendees will learn some of the best practices for best outcomes for individuals living with brain injury in supported employment situations.
- Attendees will learn how to assess what the individual’s needs are and what support they might need in order to be successful in community based supported employment.
- Attendees will learn creative accommodations and compensatory strategies that can be used on the job to support success.
Assessment for Appropriateness of Services

- Should have adequate vocational information that supports the potential to benefit from Supported Employment Services
- If substance abuse background, should show evidence of NA/AA meeting attendance
- Must be medically stable and cleared to participate by PCP – Functional Capacity Evaluations are valuable information
- Person should give DORS Counselor their Pre-Injury job history. DORS Counselor should ask if they have attempted to return to this profession and if so, what happened. A conversation of creative ways to slowly re-enter the workforce should be had at this time.
Assessment for Appropriateness of Services

1. Identify if the person receives SSI or SSDI and coordinate immediate Benefits Counseling.

2. **Criminal Background**: Because individuals with brain injury often have memory deficits regarding their past it would be helpful to have a background check completed. We need to Trust & Verify.

3. Identify if there are mental health conditions present along with a brain injury. Verify that these conditions have been or are being addressed.
What is in Your Toolbox - Available Supports

- Does the person have long term care funding that included long term vocational supports?
From Day One – DORS Intake

If you work with a person with a hearing impairment, would you just talk and not have an interpreter present?

If you work with a person with a visual impairment would you hand them paperwork to read?

Just like other disabilities, we need to be prepared for the specialty of working with individuals with brain injury.

Successful Strategies for Day One!

- Calendar or the ability to use a smartphone to organize dates and assist with time management
- Binder for the individual to keep all pertinent information in one place
- Summaries of meetings, DORS Counselor, Physicians, Service Providers (use of appointment scripts)
- To Do List – to develop follow through and use of compensatory strategies
Importance of Current Neuropsychological Evaluations

- It is essential to understand the level of current functioning.

- Individuals with brain injury often have an altered awareness level - Anosagnosia.

- Understanding the level of memory deficits allows DORS and the service providers to provide much needed compensatory strategies from the very first meeting.

- Understanding the individual’s ability to learn new information and retain it will allow DORS and the service providers to assist them in setting up optimal supports in the Employment Plan.
Importance of a Neuropsychological Evaluation

- Understanding level of reading, writing and math is essential to determining whether the person’s current skills and abilities match their employment goals.
- Having a neuropsychological eval in the past may not reflect the person’s current level of functioning.
- By not having a current Neuropsychological Evaluation the DORS Counselor and Service Providers are “figuring it out as they go”
Transportation: Researchers found that unemployed people were most likely to be non-high school graduates and unable to drive their own vehicles.

Know where the client lives, how close they are to a bus stop, do they have a person who can provide transportation to and from the service provider, to and from a job site.

Mobility and Reduced Fair Bus Passes are just one piece of the puzzle, but because job coaches are not funded for transportation to and from a work site these should be coordinated ASAP.

Transportation training is essential for success, especially for individuals with brain injury, due to memory, organization and problem-solving deficits.

If DORS or service providers assess that the individual needs transportation training, that should occur immediately as a part of the job search process.

Strategies for Travel Training

Drivers may need specific directions, rather than following a GPS. Can be laminated and attached to dashboard.

Bus Riders may need side by side assistance all the way to carrying a checklist.

Person might be capably of using phone-based navigation assistance.
WIOA – How the Changes Might Affect Job Development, & Retention

- Some new job seekers with brain injury may not have behaviors conducive to a competitive integrated employment setting - so they will need opportunities to make changes and improvements of work appropriate behavior.

- If the job seeker has been in a day program sheltered employment setting for many years, their behavior has likely been accepted and managed - but that might not be quite good enough for a competitive employment setting.

- Some job seekers will be transitioning from earning a paycheck regularly and connecting with peers daily to a job search process - so we may need to deal with feelings of failure, isolation and loss, which can affect the job search attitude.

- With minimum wage raising year by year, many employers are expecting entry level employees to be able to be cross trained and multitask - and for people with brain injury this can be a challenge.
New DORS Procedures

- The continuity of the weekly appointments which are essential for setting a schedule with people with ABI, can be set off by the delays in requests for authorizations etc.
- Delays in authorizations can possibly derail the job process especially if they have a memory impairment.
- Some clients are not fitting nicely into the job development prep category and want to jump right into job search, which again requires a request for authorization before proceeding.
- Once employed, some ABI employees have work schedules that fly through their job coaching authorizations based on their needs. Example: Individual working 16 hours a week, extensive 20-hour authorizations are being used up weekly.
- We need to think creatively for individuals with brain injury, to ensure that they receive the adequate and needed supports for successful employment.
Strategies for Employment Skill Development

- A person with no recent work history should be assessed within an Employment Skill Development or Work Adjustment Training Program.

- Basic Soft Work Skills not in place will likely lead to extended job development, lack of success in the job search process and impaired ability to maintain employment over time.

- Currently there are not many Work Adjustment Training Programs specializing with people living with brain injury (but they can be adapted with assistance).

- The result is that job developers and supported employment programs are teaching/re-teaching these soft skills during the job search process.
Soft Work Skills of the Employee with a Brain Injury

- Attendance and Punctuality
- Positive Attitude
- Adaptive Behavior
- Awareness of Deficits
- Willingness to use Compensatory Strategies
- Positive Social Skills
- Hygiene and Grooming
- Understanding what a job coach is and how to use one
- Willingness to consider disclosure
- Willingness to ask for help
Assessing Behaviors and Possible Supports Needed

- **Behavior**: Behavioral stability is a predictor of employment and relationship success. If an individual has behavioral challenges, several interventions can be helpful: Insight oriented psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and individualized behavior plans.

- If an individual has obvious behavior challenges, connecting to a skilled behavioral therapist can be an essential component for long-term success.

- Without professional intervention, job developers and job coaches are serving and behavioral therapists on the job and during the job search process.
Work Readiness - WAT

Work Readiness Programs that are capable of working with individuals with brain injury are needed! (The great part is that these programs can work for many disabilities!)

- Consistent Use of Compensatory Strategies
- One to One Job Coaching in a Work Setting
- Education of Community Placement People
- Continued Development of Soft Work Skills

Putting a person in trial work situations allows DORS and service providers to know what the obstacles to successful employment might be present and how to address them.

We can then assess their ability to follow directions, memory, problem solving etc.

Volunteer work or give work task lists at residence - cooking, laundry, cleaning
Education and Skill Level: Individuals coming in with no high school diploma, GED or level of education required for their vocational goal are precluded from many jobs, due to bottom line requirements.

Connection to GED programs or education can be an essential step to meet minimum job requirements.

This can be a challenge for those with brain injury, especially if they have transportation, behavioral and cognitive issues (memory).

Brain Injury Education should be given to GED programs on how to work with someone with a brain injury.

Connecting individuals to disability resources at colleges and programs is essential.
Benefits Education

- Benefits Education: Individuals who receive SSI and SSDI need to be educated before a job search about how working will and can affect their Social Security Benefits.

- Individuals will need to report income monthly and understand that depending on what they earn, it may change the amount of monthly benefit.

- Individuals with Brain Injury will need to be taught and guided through this process.

- Without proper benefits education, individuals can become confused and dismayed at the change in their check, they may end up owing back pay to Social Security and may become fearful and quit their jobs.

- Pressure from parents, spouses and family members regarding the change in check amount can also add pressure, so the rep payee should be involved from the beginning regarding these changes and responsibilities.
Strategies from Day One

- Job Seekers who have had a brain injury should ALL be given a binder with ALL information, resources, etc.
- That Binder should go with them everywhere
- From DORS’ Intake to Career Assessment to Benefits Consulting to Job Development and on to Job Maintenance and Retention
- Mary T. develops these binders on Day One
- The Binder should include everything the person will need to remember and keep track of – which is EVERYTHING
Compensatory Strategies for the Job Search

- Binder should have sections for Benefits Information, IPE's, Individualized Employment Plans, Resumes, Job Search etc.
- Require binder to be brought to each meeting
- Review binder at every meeting
- If they cannot remember to bring it, then you become aware that there is a significant memory issue and use more strategies to accommodate (calls before the meeting etc.)
Suggested Binder Contents

- Calendar
- Reminders
- To Do Lists
- Job Search Log
- Resume/Application Worksheet
- Disclosure Tips
- Career Assessment Reports
- Benefits Information – How to Report
A Job Seeker’s Binder might even need to include compensatory strategies to identify service providers. Once they have a job and a job coach, you can add them to this list, you can even add the employer to the list as well. Make sure you get permission for all Photos.
Definitions and Explanations

- Does the person understand what a job developer is, what they will do and how they need to participate with them?

- Does the employee understand why a job coach has been assigned to them? It is essential that they understand the importance of a job coach, they know how to use one offsite, onsite, long term etc.

- Does the employee understand how to utilize the ABI supports, how to phase out of job coaching?

- An explanation of both should be given in writing for the individual
Essential Relationships

Job Seeker

DORS Counselor and/or Service Coordinator

Service Providers, Job Developer, Job Coach
Communication

Monthly DORS Meetings on the site of the service providers can improve on communication and get:

- Updates on clients
- Requests for authorizations
- Roadblocks to job development
- Brainstorm on solutions
- Meet with clients and service providers
Relationships

- Employee
- Employer
- Job Coach
Worksite Education

- Disclosure
  
  Ensure the person is open to disclosure. Educate them about the benefits or pitfalls.
  
  Evaluation of level of disclosure necessary, to whom, and when
  
  Development of a master script for individual to use for disclosure
  
  Have the client practice disclosing information so they become comfortable with it
  
  Follow up after disclosure to ensure understanding by employer
The 5 S’s of Disclosure

Handout of 5 S’s
More Compensatory Strategies for the Job Search and Job Retention
Checklists as a Pre-Work Strategy

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**Pre-Work Checklist for Men**

- **Bathing - Keeping Your Body Clean**
  - Take a shower or bath (within 24 hours)
  - Wash face
  - Wash underarms
  - Use deodorant
  - Comb/brush/style hair

- **Dressing - Looking Your Best**
  - Put on clean shirt or uniform shirt
  - Put on clean underwear
  - Put on clean pants
  - Put on clean shoes
  - Check for neatness

- **Oral Hygiene - Taking Care of Your Mouth**
  - Brush your teeth with toothpaste
  - Floss
  - Rinse your mouth with mouthwash
  - Dentures - make sure they are clean

- **Food - Eating Healthy and Preparing Meals**
  - Eat a healthy breakfast
  - Eat slowly and use good manners
  - Make a healthy lunch to bring to work

- **Other Tasks to Remember Before You Leave the House**
  - Shaving - make sure your facial hair is trimmed or shaved
  - Nails - make sure they are clean and trimmed
  - Medication - make sure you have taken your medication
  - After smoking - wash hands, use mouthwash or have a mint
Picture Checklists as a Work Task Strategy

Bathroom Cleaning Checklist

_____ Toilets Cleaned
_____ Mirrors Cleaned
_____ Sinks Cleaned
_____ Floors Mopped
_____ Trash Empty
_____ Wipe Down Rails
_____ Wipe Down Walls
_____ Toilet Paper Available
_____ Paper Towels Available
Written Chart Checklists as a Work Task Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jarditorial Checklist</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
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<td>Sweep the Warehouses</td>
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<td>Take out all trash</td>
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<td>Wipe down stall partitions</td>
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<td>Clean Bathroom 2</td>
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<td>Clean Bathroom 4</td>
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Actual Picture Checklists as a Work Task Strategy

Sweeping and Trash

- Sweep the Warehouse
- Sweep ALL the Isles
- ALL Isles are Clean
- Sweep Up and Throw Out ALL
- Dust and Trash

Collect Trash From:
- Offices
- Cubicles
- Break Room
- Bathrooms
- Showroom
- Warehouse
- Shipping & Receiving

- Put Good Boxes in Bin
- Throw Old Boxes in Trash
- Put All Trash in Large
- Grey Trash Bin
- Take Trash to Green Dumpster
A site map can be used as a strategy for the employee to remember location of essential areas at their workplace.
Basic Strategies for Work/Home

Calendars – Whether the employee uses a wall calendar, a pocket calendar, a calendar on smartphone or all of the above. Keeping track of dates, appointments, times etc. is essential to job security.
Simple Strategies for Work/Home

- Lists – Employee and job coach should both have a list of essential contacts at the jobsite. Supervisors and co-workers names and phone numbers if appropriate.

- Post it notes – Put them in places to remind you of something. (Ex. Bring copy of check to work for direct deposit)
Other Strategies for Work/Home

- Notebooks – Carry a small notebook of to-do’s in a pocket with a pen. Jot down reminders throughout the day.

- Timers – Can be used to make sure job duties are done with a good work pace.
Digital Voice Recorders – Can be used with permission for trainings, group meetings, presentations or even doctor’s appointments.

Simple Voice Recorders – There are many varieties from key ring sizes, mounts in your car or portable. Abledata.com is a great website for resources. They can be used to remind the employee where they parked or that tomorrow is their boss’s birthday.
More Strategies for Work/Home

GPS – In the past, getting to an interview, a work site or making a deliveries might have been a challenge for a person with a brain injury. GPS’s and Smartphones have helped with that, but always have a back up plan, just in case.
Case Examples of Importance of Extended Job Coaching Needs

- **Client A** - DORS client in 2009, obtained job at Home Depot, TBI Waiver funding in addition to DORS funding. Able to remain employed until 2019 when he retired due to health reasons. Constant job coaching used for orientation, online trainings, memory support, emotional support, onsite education of employer and co-workers.

- **Client B** - DORS client in 2010. Active substance abuse issue. Need for transportation training (service provider). Need for assistance with reporting to SSA (service provider). Need for job coaching on site due to distractibility. Once job coaching funding ended: Late to work, trouble on work site, written up and eventually fired. Re-referred to DORS - the process begins again.

- **Client C** - DORS client in 2012. Found employment at Safeway-still employed, TBI Waiver funding in addition to DORS funding. Job coaching was phased out for onsite support in 2016. Client works independently on work site. Offsite job coaching then transitioned to: Assisting client with transportation to work (unable to be transportation trained), Assisting client with reporting to SSA, Employer education when changes in management and new co-workers.
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Best Practices for Best Outcomes for Individuals Living with Brain Injury

Thank you! We enjoyed being here with you today!

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