

The Power of Employment Specialist: Skills that Impact Outcomes

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A quick look: ■

For individuals with disabilities, an employment specialist can be one of the most important, valuable resources when it comes to gaining and maintaining employment. Research shows that much of the employment success of these individuals depends on the competence and commitment of their employment specialist.

Through research and experience in the field, researchers put together keys to success for employment specialists to use in the form of four rules. For employers, knowing these rules can help them better understand the roles of employment specialists and what they should expect from their services.

Putting It into Practice: ■

The rules -- four rules for employment specialist to follow were developed to help increase positive outcomes for individuals with disabilities seeking employment using their services.

1. **Do No Harm:** understand when and when not to intervene to facilitate independence and ensure that the supported employee is considered a valuable asset to their work team. Employment specialists should never allow their own actions or inactions to harm the supported employee's relationships or reputation.
2. **Don't Be Weird:** be conscious of what is considered normal for a given workplace environment and try not to stand out in the work setting. Think about when the appropriate time, place and manner in which their supports should be provided to the supported employee, depending on that specific workplace.
3. **Provide Enough, but not too much support:** ensure that a supported employee is included into a workplace setting as typically as possible. Augment only when necessary and only as much as needed. If the employee can learn or do a job without additional assistance or support, allow them to do so.
4. **Do right by the supported employee:** use tried and tested supports for the supported employee, ensuring that the supports provided are the most efficient and effective way to help the employee succeed.

More about this Article (What did they say?) ■

These rules for employment specialists can also be used by program managers as teaching tools and as a way to evaluate the supports and training provided to staff members. Understanding the following concepts will also help support teams prepare, train and evaluate their own efforts in assisting a supported employee:

- ▶ Learn about and acclimate to the norms of the specific field in which the supported employee will work.
- ▶ Understand what technical competencies are needed by the employment specialist to be able to provide the best possible supports to the particular supported employee.
- ▶ Don't blame the supported employee if things don't work out or they struggle to fit into a work environment. Instead, employment specialists and support teams should take responsibility, evaluate the situation and what went wrong and adjust accordingly for the next attempt.

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