Preparing Children and Adults with Down Syndrome for Employment

July 10, 2024
NDSS Mission

NDSS empowers individuals with Down syndrome and their families by driving policy change, providing resources, engaging with local communities, and shifting public perceptions.
NDSS supports and advocates for the Down syndrome community by focusing on three key areas of programming:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources &amp; Support</th>
<th>Advocacy &amp; Policy</th>
<th>Community Engagement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 1-800 Helpline (800-221-4602)</td>
<td>• Federal, State, and Local Advocacy</td>
<td>• Scholarships, grants, and awards</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Resource and information from birth to end of life</td>
<td>• Develop and improve laws and policies for individuals with Down syndrome, their families and caregivers</td>
<td>• National Buddy Walk®</td>
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<td>• Education, employment, health and wellness, aging, caregiving, and more</td>
<td>• Legislative agenda spans the life experience of individuals with Down syndrome</td>
<td>• Times Square Video</td>
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<td>• Athlete Ambassadors</td>
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<td>• Virtual Racing for 3/21 for WDSD</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Gala, golf, and more!</td>
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NDSS Employment Program

- Employment Policy and Advocacy
- Resource Development
- Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment
- Private-Sector Engagement
- Affiliate Support
- Highlighting Success
NDSS Employment Program

Employment Resources

Partnering for Career Success
An employment guide for employers and employees with Down syndrome and other disabilities.

NDSS Employment Program Resume Checklist

Guide Me & Watch Me Succeed

Modeling Task Instruction:

These steps are critical to ensuring an employee is working effectively at their computer or with a task that should be evaluated when monitoring the employee.

- Have positive and genuine tone in each step. We will monitor as the employee completes the task.
- When appropriate, coach the employee through any necessary instruction steps.
- Employees with disabilities should be reassured to continue their best efforts. Encourage formative feedback and constructive criticism to increase their confidence, accuracy, and productivity.

Candidate's Objective

- This objective should be specific and measurable and should reflect the needs of the employer.
- It is important to consider the candidate’s unique strengths and abilities.

Personal Information:

- Name is spelled at the top.
- Include personal details about yourself.
- Include information about your education and experience.
NDSS Events

Times Square Video and New York City Buddy Walk®
September 7, 2024
New York, NY

Racing For 3.21
March 21, 2025
Virtual

NDSS DC Golf Outing
September 30, 2024
Washington, DC

Down Syndrome Advocacy Conference
April 28 - 30, 2025
Washington, D.C.

2024 Adult Summit
November 14-16, 2024
Costa Mesa, CA

NDSS Gala & Auction
TBA
New York, NY
Amanda Myers

- She has more than a decade of experience supporting individuals with diverse abilities.
- Amanda began her career working with children at a community mental health center where she was awarded Employee of the Year.
- In Vancouver, British Columbia she worked as an Employment Specialist for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Employment Coordinator
B.S. – Family Studies and Counseling, Manhattan Christian College
CESP - Certified Employment Support Professional
Preparing Children and Adults with Down Syndrome for Employment

Amanda Myers, Certified Employment Support Professional, CESP
Employment Coordinator, Down Syndrome Innovations
Why Employment Matters

Employment provides a sense of purpose and meaning to our lives, but it’s important to remember:

• Work can look different for everyone
• There are a variety of ways individuals can contribute to their community
• People can experience very fulfilling lives outside of employment

It’s totally okay if your child:

• Isn’t motivated to work
• Is experiencing barriers to employment
• Is prompt dependent
• Is older and you feel like they’re not prepared

They still have time to develop their skills if employment is a goal of theirs!
Presentation Goals

• Not intended to add more to your plate, but shine light into what you're doing and get you thinking about new ways to incorporate skill-building

• Answer the question, “Where do I start?”

• Train you on what an Employment Specialists does, so you feel equipped with the tools needed to prepare your loved one for the workforce

• Learn how to access support services through community providers and online resources available

• Leave here feeling inspired no matter how old your child is or where they're at on their employment journey
Where To Start
Developing Skills at Home

Many skills completed at home are the base of skills used in future jobs.

Use choice boards and task lists.
Practice Using Visuals

- **Task List**
  - Notes App/Password App
    - Employee ID/Passwords
  - Pocket-sized cards
    - Assists with routines
    - Make multiple copies

- **Social Stories**
  - Professional behaviors, learning expectations

- **Timers and Alarms**

  - **Task List**
    - Put clean dishes away
    - Sweep kitchen
    - Vacuum bedroom
    - Pack lunch

  - Hang Coat
  - Clock In
  - Wash Hands
Written and visual reminders are environmental cues that help support an individual’s success and independence in the least intrusive way.
Chunking

Give 2-3 tasks at a time

Once the initial tasks have been mastered, add 2-3 more

“Chunking” allows complex tasks to become simple

Tooth Brushing
- Turn on faucet
- Rinse toothbrush
- Turn off faucet
- Remove cap from tooth paste
- Apply toothpaste to brush
- Replace cap
- Insert brush into mouth
- Brush teeth for 2 minutes
- Turn on faucet
- Spit
- Rinse mouth
- Rinse brush

This is how people memorize telephone numbers!

913-689-5555
We Use Visuals Everyday!
Prompt Fading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Prompt</th>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Gesture</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Partial Physical</th>
<th>Full Physical</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Usually start with Modeling
- Try not to over prompt
- Be patient and let them problem-solve
- Fade as quickly as possible
Employment Skills Can Be Taught In Everything We Do!

Let’s Do An Activity Together!
Cooking Example: Chocolate Chip Cookies

You’re teaching pre-vocational skills without even knowing it! What are they learning in the examples below?

- **Grocery Shopping**
  - Spatial awareness pushing cart
  - Critical thinking and decision-making to find items
  - Learning concept of money
  - Identifying staff

- **Baking**
  - Hygiene
  - Following directions on recipe
  - Thinking ahead – measuring tools, preheat oven
  - Emotional regulation for spills
  - Technical skills – pouring, stirring, scooping
  - Time management, safety using oven
  - Stay busy with tasks while cookies cool off or oven is pre-heating, don’t just wait
  - Organizing – wash, dry and put away dishes
Expectations of Employers

How are they developing these employment skills during...

**Exercise: Playing at Park/Sports/Workout**

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**Communication**
- Communicates appropriately with others
- Understands non-verbal communication - body language, tone of voice
- Asks for help when needed

**Stamina/Endurance**
- Physical fitness – standing, moving for long periods of time
- Nutrition – eats snack on break to gain energy
- Staying focused

**Motivation**
- Willingness to work
- Self-starter
Expectations of Employers

Safety and Boundaries
- follows safety procedures and rules

Task Completion and Work Quality
- completes tasks in a timely manner
- meets or exceeds expectations

Hygiene and Appearance
- clean uniform/clothes
- washed hair and body
- clean and trimmed nails

Cleaning their Room

How are they developing these employment skills...
Expectations of Employers

**Enthusiasm and Positive Attitude**
- Acknowledges feelings
- Learns what’s in their control and out of control
- Focuses on positive (only have 30 minutes left, then I get a break)

**Teamwork**
- Learning to work with others
- Take turns and share

**Professionalism/Respectful Behaviors**
- What’s okay at work compared to what’s okay at home
- What do you talk about with different people (friends vs. boss)

Performing in the School Play

How are they developing these employment skills...
Expectations of Employers

**Relationships**
- Meeting new people
- Managing different kinds of relationships (peers vs. coworkers)
- Appropriate vs. not appropriate

**Mental Health**
- Take appropriate breaks at work
- Take time off when needed

**Technology**
- Using phones and iPads appropriately
- Social media safety
- Group texts vs individual texts, not over texting
- Use phone during breaks, not while working

How are they developing these employment skills...

Their Evening Routine
Expectations of Employers

Time Management
- Start/end on time
- Finds additional work if finished early
- Utilizes schedule/calendar
- Uses alarms and timers

Emotional Regulation/Self-Control
- Handles stress
- Practices coping skills

Independence
- Follows routine
- Follows chain of command
- Responsible for belongings – remembers to bring them from one place to the other

How are they developing these employment skills...

Their Morning Routine
Expectations of Employers

Flexibility
- Able to change tasks as needed
- Able to perform a variety of tasks

Follows Directions
- Follows individual and group instruction
- Accepts feedback appropriately
- Admits when they make a mistake

Resilience and Adversity
- Doesn’t give up when they fail or when things become difficult and problem solves through it

How are they developing these employment skills...
Doing Homework
Expectations of Employers

**Confidence and Commitment**
- Willing to try something new
- Sticking with something when they feel tired or don’t like parts of it - always pros and cons to any job

**Self-Advocacy**
- Saying no when necessary
- Communicating what they need

**Problem Solving**
- Small problem or big problem
- Knowing how to respond appropriately and who to ask for help

Job coaches help teach a task, create resources, and assist with transitions, but these foundational essential skills are difficult to train in a short amount of time and all of these can affect employment. Each of these is important because they all intertwine and impact each other.
Technical Skills

**Simple Locks**
- 1-3 Numbers
- Letters
- Lock and Key

**Assembling Work Attire**
- Tying Aprons

**Nametags**
- Magnetic Clip On
- Safety Pin
Setting Up The Environment To Optimize Skill Development

**Coloring Example**

- **Missing Item**
  - Requires them to ask you or find crayons themselves

- **Let them run out of supplies**
  - Requires them to problem-solve and find more or ask you and not just wait around

- **Ask them to complete tasks and check in with you**

We all want to jump in and help, but when we do this, they get used to having everything done for them and it actually takes away a learning opportunity for them.

**Less is better!** When you feel like you’re doing nothing, that’s a good sign they’re gaining independence.
Ready for a Job?

Obtaining Employment
Identifying Interests

• **Assess likes, dislikes, and places they like to go**
  • Don’t just go off what they say - expand generalizations – picture interest inventories are good, but sometimes misleading
  • Ideas of jobs might be misconstrued
    • Example: Pet store-like animals, but doesn’t want to clean up mess; loves KC Chiefs, but doesn’t get to watch game

• **Think about the underlying skill or what feels meaningful to them, not just the surface-level activity**
  • Example: Like to be part of a team or feel productive when they work with their hands

• **Is their interest a strength or distraction?**
  • Example: Love fashion but would shop for clothes instead of hang them

• **Areas of employment that might be harder to get into**
  • Example: Actor/Singer-Make a plan on how to achieve the goal or know it’s okay to have hobbies or volunteer somewhere – we all have things like this in our lives!

  **The best way to explore is by going to familiar and unfamiliar places and participating in a variety of tasks with different people!**
Environment Conditions

Including:

- Location
- Lighting
- Noise level
- Hours
- People
- Cleanliness
- Work attire

The environment is just as important as the job itself!
Where do I start looking for a job?

• **Start in your neighborhood!** Tour stores and identify jobs people are working.

• **Job Shadowing/Informational Interviews** – learn about a job from an experienced employee by observing them and asking questions.

• **Volunteering**

• **Work Experience/Internships** – great for Job Discovery!

• **Working Interviews** - work partial shift to try job instead of formal interview, or get tour of company to learn more about tasks and environment.
Common Job Sites

- **Grocery Stores**
  - Bagging Groceries
  - Facing and Stocking

- **Retail**
  - Processing Shipment
  - Stocking

- **Assisted Living Homes**
  - Companion/Dining

- **Hotels/Hospitality**
  - Housekeeping

- **Home and Garden**
  - Watering plants

- **Sporting Events**
  - Scanning tickets

- **Hospitals**
  - Administrative Work/Dining

- **Pet Stores**
  - Feeding, walking and cleaning up after animals

- **Banks/Offices**
  Sort and deliver mail, stuff envelopes

- **Restaurants, Coffee Shops, Bakeries**
  - Bussing tables
  - Food prep
  - Dishwashing

Individuals can work in many other different places! A lot of our own first jobs were in these areas, but we may no longer be in those positions. We want to encourage career development, just like how we have the opportunity to advance in our careers. Your first job does not have to be your last.
How To Access Employment Supports

Meet With Your Local Agency – “One-stop-Shop” – Federal and State Programs Provide Funding

- Community Developmental Disabilities Organization (KS)
- Kansas City Regional Offices (MO)
- Called something different in each state so it can be difficult to search for – talk and learn from other families. There are even county specific agencies with funding to support individuals in employment

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

- Counselors create career plan with goals, assist with job development and supported employment (job coaching)
- Provide prevocational training, assistance with resumes, job applications, job searching/interviews, paying for interview clothing, technology needs, on-the-job support, etc.
How To Access Employment Supports

Developmental Disabilities Association (DDA) – Medicaid, Waivers, Managed Care Organizations

- Coordinators can provide similar supports as VR, but Medicaid & waiver funding typically begin after someone has gone through Vocational Rehabilitation and it’s determined they need continued support past 90 days of employment or they did not qualify for VR due to the amount of supports needed.

- Benefits Specialists – You can work and not lose your benefits! Meet with a benefits specialist to learn how.

Local Non-Profit Organizations

- Free or Private Pay – Examples: Project Search, Gigi’s Playhouse, Best Buddies

Staff that work at these agencies are called, Employment Specialists, Case Coordinators, Counselors, Job Developers, etc. act as a professional liaison between the employer and the individual.

Not getting anywhere? Ask for a different counselor or seek out a different provider.
Finding Employment

• Networking
  • Family, Neighbors, Friends, Religious Members

• Internet Websites
  • Indeed.com, Glassdoor.com

• Job Fairs

• Work Experiences – short-term, preferably paid a livable wage

Finding a job takes time, especially if resources are limited, a person is specific on what they’re wanting, they’re experiencing barriers to employment or there are things outside of the provider’s control. Just try to keep things moving by having them in the community as much as possible.
Finding Employment Continued

• **Create or update resume**
  - Video resumes using iMovie, Google templates
  - Use professional language and emphasize skills they developed and what they learned
    - Instead of saying, “Cleaned tables and trays”, you could say, “Ensured business complied with environmental sanitation requirements by performing a variety of cleaning duties in a hospital setting”
    - Change “Chopped vegetables” to “Worked as a team preparing food on the line in fast-paced industrial kitchen”

• **Assist with applications**
  - Some have online assessments

• **Prepare for the interview**
  - Ask common interview questions
  - Have a friend call in and practice a phone interview

• **Have a transportation plan**
  - Paratransit services
  - Rideshare
  - Connect with individuals in your community
They’re Hired! Now What?

- Coordinators Assist with Orientation/Onboarding
  - Assist providers with getting them the information they need
    - Direct Deposit
    - 2 Forms of ID
    - Tax information
  - Keep good communication with the provider
    - **PROVIDERS NEED YOU!** They need your buy-in to help with transportation, scheduling, etc.
    - Build good relationships with providers and remember employment takes times and there are things outside of their control
    - Ask the provider to be fully transparent with you – you can help them with strategies that work at home so they can implement them in the workplace
  - Make sure employers feel supported and respect their systems, what they feel comfortable with or can allow, and remember, all businesses are different!

*It takes all of us working together!*
Maintaining Employment
When issues occur at work, it typically has nothing to do with the job itself.

Examples include:

- **Hygiene** – wiping your nose and then touching the food instead of washing hands or wearing gloves

- **Understanding Rules** – taking a candy bar off the shelf and eating it during your shift instead of buying it and eating it on your break

- **Behaviors** – eating food off trays when bussing tables instead of throwing it away
Helping Your Loved One Keep Their Job

How to avoid these issues:

• Choose a different workplace environment where that is not an issue

• Learn the rules of that environment

• Keep good communication with the employer to resolve issues in the beginning before they become a bigger problem, continue doing routine check-ins

• Things can look worse than they really are, usually not intentional behavior - Example: Coming back from break late consistently looks bad, but can be easily fixed by setting an alarm earlier
Helping Your Loved One Keep Their Job

- Have a transition plan for how to continue relationship with employer if/when provider closes file or fades out
- Can potentially reopen case if support is needed later
- Expect turnover of natural supports, managers/supervisors and try to be as proactive as possible
- Expect their job to change – ex. self-checkouts eliminating need for baggers, restaurants building more drive-thru’s instead of having lobbies.
- Always be teaching new skills so they could transfer to another position in company if needed – ex. practice facing items in grocery store or taking orders
Resources

Rehabilitation Services Administration
https://rsa.ed.gov/about/states

Job Accommodation Network
https://askjan.org/

Pacer Center
https://www.pacer.org/employment/

Interest Inventories/Common Interview Questions

Ideal Conditions of Employment
Online Skill Building Tools & Activities

• **Use What You Already Have At Home!**
  • Calendars, Smart Phones or Smart Watches for Timers, Reminders, Alarms, Tasks Lists

• **Boom Cards**
• **Teachers Pay Teachers**
• **Lessonpix**

**Action Items:**

1. Incorporate vocational skill building into activities they’re already doing

2. Get connected with your local agencies, providers, and organizations

3. Start getting out in the community and gaining experiences – social groups, volunteering, have a friend, sibling or care worker go with them if they don’t want to go with a parent
THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!

Questions or want to learn more about Down Syndrome Innovations?

Contact info@kcdsi.org
Questions?
Post-Webinar Survey
Thank you for attending!

Questions? Send an email to employment@ndss.org