Thinking About Employment Differently

Or Securing Employment for Individuals with Complexities

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Why it Matters

- OPWDD serves more than 120,000 New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

- Only 6% of people served by OPWDD work in competitive integrated employment (CIE) and 33% attend day habilitation.

- That means many people with complexities will never obtain CIE unless we start to think of work differently.

- The Employment 1st Executive order signed by the Governor on September 29, 2024, is one tool in the implementation of Employment First Principles.

Overview

How we view work impacts who we allow to work.

- **Your assumptions about work impact who you consider can work.**

  ❖Should employment be an expectation for all?

  ❖What role does or should competition play?

  ❖ Does obtaining employment for individuals with more complexity require different approaches and concepts of how people obtain employment and how we define work?

  ❖Should jobs be broken down into tasks? Or are the job requirements the most important piece to consider?

  ❖Do we have a right to assume some people just can't work?

Envisioning Employment for Students with a Significant Impact of Disability

- What is "work" is and who can work?

- Students don't need to demonstrate "readiness" to work or participate in work experiences in the community

- Employers hire people outside of job descriptions

Two Distinct Approaches

Labor Market Job Development

- – *Begins with the company*
- – *Job opening*
- – *Essential functions of the position*
- – *Job title*
- – *Application and interview*
- – *Competition for the opening*

Customized Job Development

- – *Begin with the job seeker's interests, skills, ideal conditions, and* **tasks** *to be offered for pay*
- – *Avoid job openings*
- – *Identify employers and employment settings that match the job seeker*
- – *Analyze the employer needs and benefits*
- – *Negotiate a position*

Customized Employment Example

Parent Expectations

- When parents envision their child with a significant disability working in the community that adult child is 5 times more likely to do so

- Expectations influence experience

- Experiences influence expectations

(Erik Carter, 2014)

Discovery is the process of getting to know who a person is where they are most who they are

When planning for employment, Discovery is the foundation of Customized Employment

During transition, Discovery can drive employment experiences; clarify ongoing support needs for employment, home and community activities; and identify successful support strategies for a young adult.

Use Discovery to identify:

- Interests and motivations;
- skills;
- Understand the impact of disability;
- support needs and effective support strategies;
- ideal conditions for success;
- tasks that student can do now or with training.

How does Discovery differ from PCP?

Person Centered Planning

- Gather people who know the individual well

- share their experience and knowledge of the individual

- plan for future experiences and supports

Discovery

- Iceberg analogy of what we know

- Relook at what we think we know

- Begin where the student is most who they are

- Gather factual information

- Don't jump to conclusions too soon!

- reexamine what you think you know about the individual

Teaching school staff to shift from observations that are evaluative to factual observation

- Descriptive

- Factual

- Non-judgmental

- Observable

- Measurable

- Avoid jumping to conclusions too quickly

Ideal conditions for success

– Access (Vision, Hearing, Physical Access, Communication Support)
– Sensory needs
– Time to explore the environment prior to beginning work
– Front loading information about task or environment
– Long term supports
– Things to avoid
– Flow to tasks
– Proximity to coworkers
– Time of day
– Emotional support
– Transportation
– Predictability of the tasks and environment
– Sturdiness of the work environment and materials
– Information about what is next, how many more, how much longer…
– Tasks that have a clear parameter for correctness

Importance of a well-matched experience

- Work experiences provide information about competence and potential to students, families, support staff and the community

- A well matched experience builds confidence, higher expectations of employment potential

- A Poorly matched experience can lead to perception of a student who needs lots of support, direction, physical assistance

Unpacking shoes versus restocking

Turning 'issues' and assumptions into 'Ideal Conditions for Success'

He requires staff supervision at all times to be appropriate with women, avoid wandering off, and to remain on task

Do to her lack of safety skills with strangers she needs to be in a supervised/sheltered setting

He can't work in the community because he has a history of punching walls and breaking fragile items

A customized approach focuses on tasks not job titles

- Tasks we have seen the student perform, or

- Tasks we know they could learn with instruction;

- For a student who uses technology such as switches- what could that technology do for tasks?

- Activities a student does at home, in the community, at school.

Task Examples

– Scoop, mix, blend using food processor, fill items
– Package items
– Deliver items
– Put items where they belong
– Scan items
– Organize by letter or number
– Hand wash dishes, toys, work items
– Table set up
– Replenish supplies
– Use a switch to greet people, provide information, direct them, turn devices on and off

Considerations for Tasks

- Authentic tasks and methods

- Teach complicated tasks

- Expect high quality performance of tasks

- Use teaching strategies that lead to independent, confident and competent workers

Discovery for Students

- Outcomes of discovery may differ based on age
  - chores or activities at home
  - activities in the community or school
  - an individualized work experience
  - paid job

- Not as time intensive for students as adults

- Revisited annually

- Collect pieces of information throughout the year

- More likely to be conducted by a team

- Family involvement

- Needs to be woven into what schools already do

Conducting Discovery within a school setting

- What opportunities do you have weekly to collect information about student performance?

- How is the information captured and shared with team members?

- What training does staff need to collect information that is factual, robust, descriptive and free of judgement?

- Who is involved in translating what is captured into: ideal conditions, interests, skills and contributions, and tasks?

- How do apply the translated information to responsibilities at home, school and the community? To work experiences?

Assisting a person with complexities obtain CIE

- **<u>You must see the person not the complexity of their disability.</u>**

1. You believe they can work. Be able to paint a picture of what that could look like.

2. Your belief will drive the process.

3. Help the individual and family understand work is possible.

4. Understand who that person is in relationship to work- what they need to be successful and what to avoid.

5. Understand people are scared and the difference between risk and uncertainty.

6. Be open to the twist and turns it can take.

It is your job to understand the job seeker and the business community.

The best way to understand the job seeker is:

- To Use Discovery approaches:
  - Spending time with the person in their home and in the community
  - Interviewing people who know them will and see possibilities
  - Observing them in an array of setting to learn who they are in different environments

  - **Translating what you learn to:**
    - Tasks they want to do for pay,
    - Contributions
    - Type of environment they need,
    - Needed supports
    - Conditions to avoid

Translation

People are made up of so many different elements.

Translation looks at the elements that are need for successful employment

Interviews

Spending time with job seeker

Visiting the home

Observations

Impact of disability

Threads
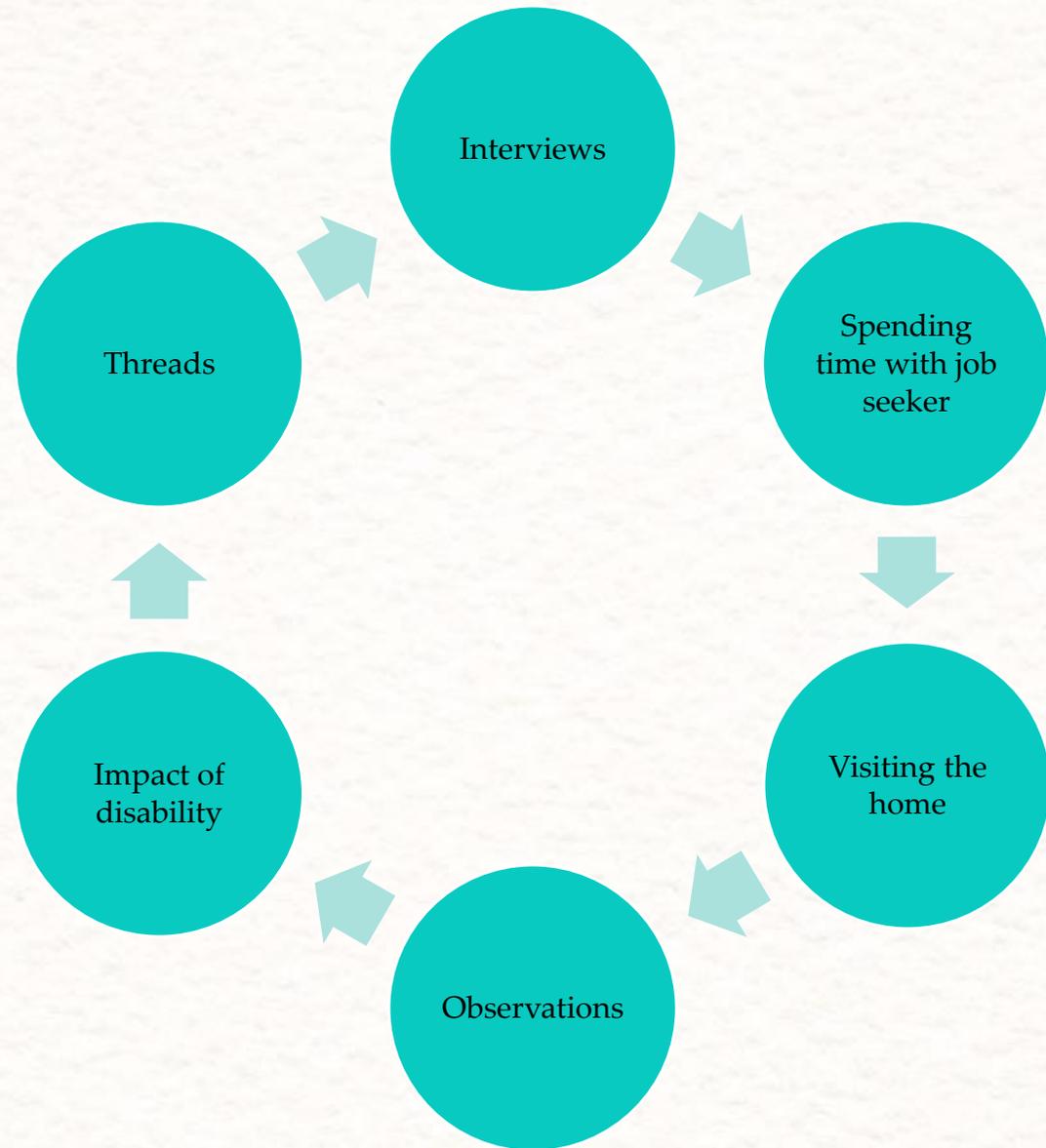
Discovery with the Business Community

- What you need to know about your business community.

    - Businesses are fluid, constantly changing.
    - What are their struggles?
    - How will what you are offering be part of the solution?

    - What trends are impacting them:
        - Retention
        - Automation
        - AI
        - Tariffs
        - Economy

    How can they be a resource to you?

Techniques for Learning about the Business Community

Assume People Want to Partner and Help.

- Research Businesses You are Interested in

- Go on Informational Interview to Learn about the Business and industry not to get a job,

- Interview your Chamber of Commerce, Office of Economic Development (OED) to learn how they can partner with you.

- Go on Tours- look at the tasks being performed.

- Conduct a Benefit Needs Analysis of the Business.

- Do a network tree with in your agency to learn who is connected to who and how they can help.

- Form a Employer Team that is interested in assisting you in the employment of individuals with complexities.

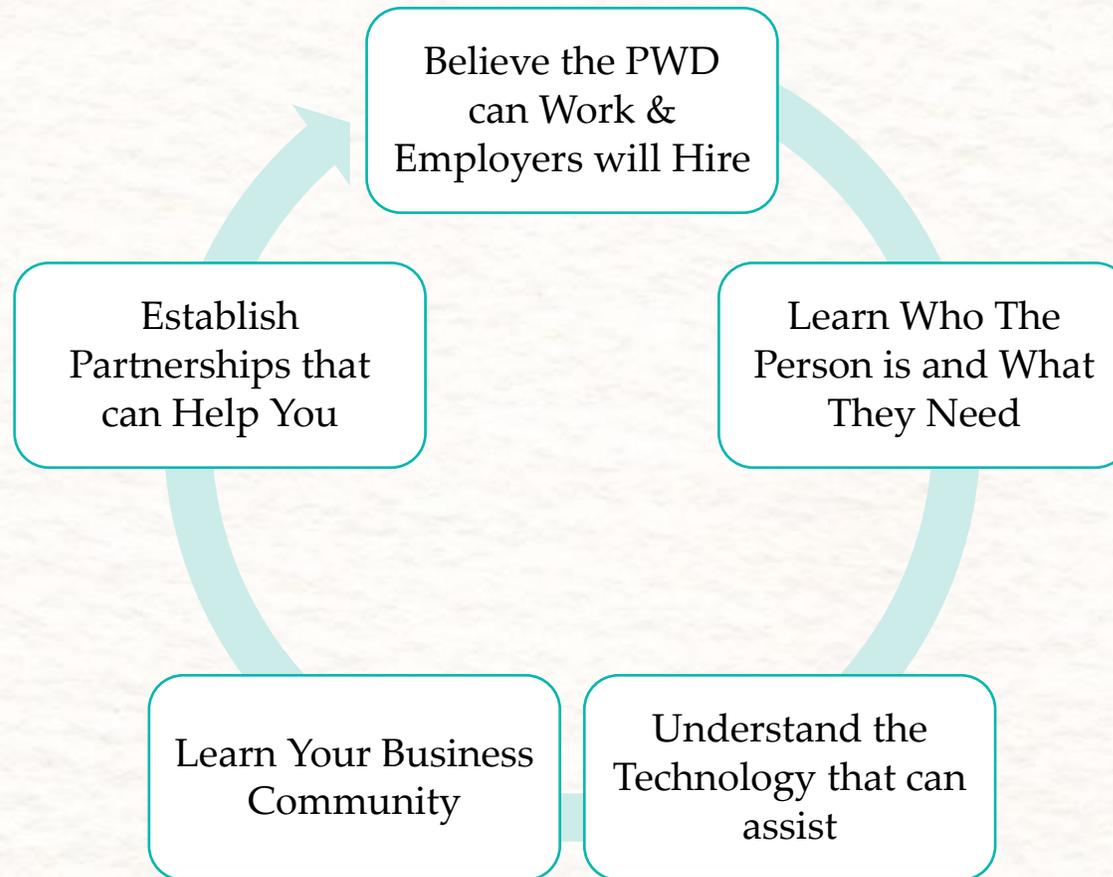# The More You Know- The More Ideas You can generate

- Frequently when helping someone obtain employment who has had limited exposure or success with CIE; they need time.

- Helping someone obtain a image (s) of them working is important:
  - Where are they working
  - What are they doing
  - What time of day is it
  - Who is assisting them
- The more you know the more you can help them.

- Follow the treads you uncover during discovery.

Useful Resources

Educate Yourself

- Every state has a Assistive Technology Program under the Tech ACT –Tech ACT – New York Tech ACT – New York Program https://www.justicecenter.ny.gov/traid-program,Job

- Job Accommodation Network, National Rehabilitation Center, https://askjan.org/

- RESA- Rehabilitation Engineer and Assistive Technology Society https://www.resna.org/

Steps

Believe the PWD can Work & Employers will Hire

Learn Who The Person is and What They Need

Understand the Technology that can assist

Learn Your Business Community

Establish Partnerships that can Help You

Main Points for Adults

- Adults with complexities and their supports frequently do not believe they can work.

- You must be willing to help them see the possibilities and how CIE can work for their life.

- Remember people are always more concerned about what they will loss as opposed to what they will gain.

- Understanding your Assistive Technology (AT) resources is important i.e. what can the person do with the support of AT.

- Establish partnerships and know your business community

Main Take A Ways…

- Always see the person not the disability.

- Discovery is an important tool in understanding who the person is and what they need to be successful.

- School is a natural time to lay the foundation for work and to implement Discovery.

- It is your job to believe that CIE is possible.

- Think in terms of tasks not jobs.

- Believe employers want to partner.

- If families understand the understand the possiblities they will be your best support.

- Know your resources and what supports can expand possiblities.

Thank you

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