



How You Can Help Your Adult Child with IDD Find and Keep Employment

As a parent you may often worry about your child's future - particularly when it comes to employment. Having a job or a career is a major contributor to a quality of life that often does not come easily to adults with IDD. As the parent of such an adult, it may be difficult to know when you should step in to help and when you should let your son or daughter be independent.

Your role, as a parent, will most likely include helping your child articulate their strengths and challenges, teaching them how to advocate for themselves and giving them encouragement and guidance to what their rights are regarding employment. Your support will be valuable to them both practically and emotionally. Even though you should not go on the job site to intervene on his/her behalf, you are a key player in your son or daughter's employment.

Parents have more knowledge about their child's skills and employment strengths than anyone else. However, this information is often overlooked because those skills have been demonstrated at home, school or in the community but not specifically on the job site. It will be helpful to work with your son or daughter to assist them in articulating their strengths, talents and challenges to their job coach, Bloom Community, a vocational rehabilitation counselor or anyone else who is working with your child. An ongoing dialogue is crucial to ensuring that everyone is aiming for the same employment goal.

Encourage your child to request a career assessment from the school's transition coordinator or a vocational rehabilitation counselor. This assessment should include on-the-job learning experiences such as job sampling, internships, apprenticeships and/or volunteering. **It is most helpful to start this process while your child is still covered under their educational entitlement and the school district is obligated to provide appropriate services.** It is never too early to start preparing for his/her employment.

Skill Development at Home and at School

Encourage learning “soft skills” at home and at school if your child is still a student. These skills should include:

- "active" listening
- speaking at appropriate times
- proper manners at lunch and/or breaks problem-solving
- planning
- time management
- teamwork
- communicating in your most effective way

The development of self-advocacy skills, are critical to your son or daughter successfully entering adulthood and employment. Be their loudest cheerleader as they transition into the next chapter of their lives,