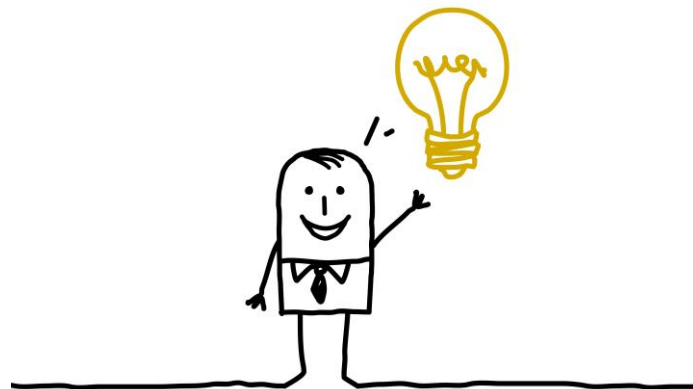


DEVELOPING SELF-ADVOCACY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR THE WORKPLACE

A Mini-Course for Adolescents in Transition-to-Work Programs

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Introduction

This curriculum is offered as a **framework** for guiding students in their development of self-advocacy knowledge and skills. Its content is divided into eight major sessions: Session 1: *Self-Advocacy at Your Job*; Session 2: *Soft Skills – Important Skills to Have at Any Job*; Session 3: *Self Inventory of Strengths and Talents*; Session 4: *Speaking Up About Your Strengths and Talents*; Session 5: *Disclosure of Your Disability*; Session 6: *Accommodations – What You Need to be Successful on the Job*; Session 7: *Your Rights as an Employee – Focus on ADA*; and Session 8: *Finding Help at Work*. Each session includes both academic instruction and related activities, with an emphasis on skills practice.

The sessions are designed to be **one hour in length**, with the assumption that a session is only a portion of students' instructional day. The sessions follow a deliberate sequence, but most can be taught as standalone units. The organization of the individual sessions was planned with an at-a-glance structure and considerable flexibility for instructors. The intent was to be respectful of instructors' time and their knowledge of their students' abilities and level of familiarity regarding self-advocacy in the workplace.

At the end of each session, both students and instructors are asked to complete brief evaluations for each session. As this is the initial version of the curriculum, the information collected will be particularly valuable in informing revisions for a final product.

Session 1: Introduction to Self-Advocacy at Your Job

Learning Objectives

- Define self-advocacy
- Describe the key components of self-advocacy
- Identify critical communication skills

Key Terms and Concepts

- Advocate
- Self-advocacy
- Needs versus wants
- Negotiate/negotiating
- Rights
- Responsibilities

Information to Convey

- This is the start of a series on self-advocacy. We will cover lots of information in our sessions that will help you speak up for yourself at your job—and in other parts of your life.
- Self-advocacy is speaking up for yourself.
- There are several steps to successfully advocating for yourself
 - Knowing what you need
 - Asking for what you need
 - Negotiating (working with others to reach an agreement that will meet your needs)
 - Knowing your rights and responsibilities
 - Using resources available to you
- We will be learning about each of these steps in the days ahead.
- Good communication skills are essential for successfully advocating for yourself
 - Respectful
 - Appropriate words, tone, body language
 - Clear (specific)
 - Careful listening
 - Asking questions (when you don't understand or when you need more information)

Materials

- Envelopes containing communication scenarios.
- Small sheets of paper listing an emotion.

Session 1: Introduction to Self-Advocacy at Your Job

Activity Examples

- Discussion [*What's been your experience?*] - Ask participants if they have been in situations where they needed to speak up: What were the circumstances? What did they do? What happened? How did they feel? If they could do it over again, would they change what they did? What did they learn?
- Participants role play [*Different people/different ways to communicate*] – Instructors prepare envelopes containing various scenarios. Participants break into small groups or pairs (or some participants can be chosen). Participants select an envelope, review the scenario, and determine who will be in the role play and what they will say. Possible scenarios include:
 - The boss comes in to talk with you at work. How would you greet him or her?
 - Your boyfriend/girlfriend work at the same store as you. How would you say hi to him/her at work?
 - The phone rings at work. What would you say to answer it?
 - You see your boss at the mall. How would you greet him or her?
 - You see your friends at the mall. How would you greet them?
- Discuss with the full group when finished.
- (*Adapted from Skills to Pay the Bills*)
- Instructor role play [*Speaking respectfully and making your request clear*] - 1) Instructor role plays the contrast of speaking respectfully to a boss or supervisor and speaking inappropriately. Ask participants to comment. 2) Likewise, role play the contrast of requests that are unclear/vague and requests that are clear/specific (e.g., “It’s not good here. You have to fix it.” vs. “It’s very noisy in the building and it makes it hard for me to do my work. What can you do to make it easier to hear?”). Ask participants to comment.
- Quick game and discussion [*Sending a message without words*] - On separate small sheets of paper, write down an emotion or attitude (e.g., angry, bored, *that’s stupid*, upset, confident, understanding, etc.). Ask for volunteers to pick one of the sheets—without showing it to others—and ONLY use body language (no speaking!) to demonstrate what’s written. Explain that they can use facial expressions, body positions, and movements to express themselves. Ask the other participants to guess what messages the actors are sending.
- When finished, discuss with the group the effect body language has when talking to people, especially at a job.

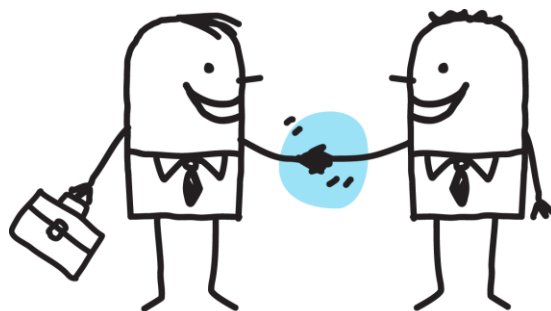
Session 1: Introduction to Self-Advocacy at Your Job

Summary

- Briefly recap the content covered
- Ask participants to complete the evaluation form (Allow time in session)
- If time permits, ask participants to share comments—based on their evaluation comments or other thoughts
- Inform participants of the upcoming topic (*Important Skills to Have at Any Job*)

Resources

- **www.selfadvocacyonline.org**
 - Includes short videos of self-advocates and general information about self-advocacy, in easy to understand terms. The site is sponsored by the Research and Training Center for Community Living at the University of Minnesota.
- **www.ncwd-youth.info/tip-sheet/becoming-a-self-advocate**
 - This is the site of the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability—for Youth (NCWD), which contains broad array of information regarding preparing youth for transition to adulthood. This link is for one of NCWD's information sheets, *Youth in Action! Becoming a Stronger Self-Advocate*.



Session 2: “Soft Skills” - Important Skills to Have at Any Job

Review

- **Briefly** summarize key points from the previous session (*Self Advocacy at Your Job*)
- Address questions and comments, as time permits

Learning Objectives

- Define and identify “soft skills”
- Recognize the relationships between soft skills, getting a job, being successful at work, and keeping a job

Key Terms and Concepts

- “Soft skills”
- Communication
- Enthusiasm and attitude
- Teamwork
- Networking
- Problem solving and critical thinking
- Professionalism

Information to Convey

- “Soft skills refer to the traits, work habits, and attitudes that all workers across all occupations must have to obtain, maintain, and progress in employment.” (from *Skills to Pay the Bills*, Office of Disability Employment Policy)
- Soft skills are important for any job and are the skills most often desired by employers.
- You should emphasize these skills and qualities in job interviews and job applications.
- Here are some general categories of soft skills:
 - Soft skill: **Communication** – Someone with this skill communicates well to others and listens or receives information from others well. We need to think of communication in the broadest terms: spoken, and unspoken (body language) ways, as well as written/visual forms. All of the other soft skills depend on having good communication skills.
 - Soft skills: **Enthusiasm & Attitude** – Someone with these qualities is upbeat and eager to work; shows interest in their work and gets the job done; is willing to listen, learn, and try new things; and looks for ways to help others.
 - Soft skill: **Teamwork** – Someone with this skill cooperates with others, works together with others on assignments and projects, contributes ideas to the group and respects differences in opinions.
 - Soft skill: **Networking** – Someone with this skill makes connections with other people to help himself/herself find jobs and build his/her career; talks with friends, family members, and other people about his/her goals and interests.
 - Soft skills: **Problem solving & Critical thinking** – Someone with these skills can identify problems and think of possible ways to solve the problems.
 - Soft skill: **Professionalism** – Someone with this quality demonstrates the other five soft skills combined together, is honest, gets along with others, is flexible and adapts to changes, manages time well, works hard and does their best because they know it’s the right thing to do.
- [Information adapted from *Skills to Pay the Bills*]

Session 2: “Soft Skills” - Important Skills to Have at Any Job

Materials

- Internet access
- Projector and screen

Activity Examples

- Discussion [*What do the soft skills look like?*]- Instructor asks participants to give examples of various soft skills at the workplace and why they would be important at a job.
- Video viewing [*Soft skills depicted*] – <https://www.dol.gov/dol/media/webcast/20121015-softskills/>
 - The *Skills to Pay the Bills* Curriculum includes video examples of soft skills. Best video clips to view: Soft Skill #2: Enthusiasm & Attitude; Soft Skill #4: Networking; and Soft Skill #6: Professionalism. Discussion should follow after each clip. (The clips are very brief. It may be helpful for participants to view a clip twice.)

Summary

- Briefly recap the content covered. Relate back to overarching theme of self advocacy.
- Ask participants to complete the evaluation form. (Allow time in session.)
- If time permits, ask participants to share comments—based on their evaluation comments or other thoughts
- Inform participants of the upcoming topic (*Self Inventory of Skills & Talents*)

Resources

- <https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/>
- The *Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success* Curriculum, which was developed by the Office of Disability Employment Policy of the U.S. Department of Labor, is found at this site. The full curriculum can be downloaded. Links for video examples of the soft skills and various related resources are included.



Session 3: Self Inventory of Strengths and Talents

Review

- Briefly summarize key points from the previous session (*Important Skills to Have at Any Job*)
- Address questions and comments, as time permits

Learning Objectives

- Identify personal strengths and talents
- Define hard skills and contrast these with soft skills
- Recognize the hard skills required for specific jobs
- Identify soft skills and hard skills related to personal career interests

Key Terms and Concepts

- Strengths
- Talents
- Hard skills
- Soft skills
- Job-specific
- Formal education
- On-the-job training
- Realistic self-assessment

Information to Convey

- Hard skills are job-specific skills, knowledge, and abilities. They are usually acquired through formal education programs and training, including training, on-line courses, certificate programs, as well as on-the-job training.
- Examples of hard skills include writing, math skills, computer programming, medical skills, automotive skills, construction, mechanical skills, etc.
- Hard skills are usually listed in job announcements or job descriptions.
- To get and keep a job you need a combination of hard and soft skills.
- It is essential to recognize how your personal strengths and talents relate to your career.
- It is important to be realistic about your career.
- Your strengths and talents and training may not be sufficient for what you see as your ideal job.
- If you can't qualify for your ideal job, you may be qualified for other work related to your ideal job—what you CAN do. (For example, you can have a strong interest in TV and may want to be a TV reporter, but you do not have all the education and skills needed for that job. You can still work in a related job at the television station, maybe as a clerk or setting up the equipment, etc.)

Session 3: Self Inventory of Strengths and Talents

Materials

- List of soft and hard skills
- Easel paper (or individual sheets of tablet paper for participants)
- Self-inventory (strengths, talents, previous work experience, job interests)

Activity Examples

- Group activity -Soft skills v. hard skills [*Sorting it out*] – Instructor posts two sheets of easel paper, one labeled “soft” and one labeled “hard.” Instructor reads the numbered list of skills provided. Participants can call out whether the skill is soft or hard. Instructor asks participants to explain their answers and then writes the skill on the appropriate sheet. Variation: Participants make two columns (Soft – Hard) on a sheet of paper. As the instructor reads the skills, participants list the number (e.g., #4 Willingness to learn new things) in one of the columns. Participants compare lists when finished.
- Self-reflection* - Participants complete a Personal Inventory, including information about their strengths, talents, previous work experience, and job interests.

•**Note:** * This activity is essential for upcoming sessions and should be a priority for the session.

Summary

- Briefly recap the content covered. Relate back to overarching theme of self advocacy
- Ask participants to complete the evaluation form (Allow time in session)
- If time permits, ask participants to share comments—based on their evaluation comments or other thoughts
- Inform participants of the upcoming topic (*Speaking Up about Yourself*)
- IMPORTANT:** Ask participants to bring their personal inventories to the next session

Resources

- Blogs**
 - “Soft versus hard skills” is a common topic on business and training program blogs. A quick search of the Internet yields numerous sites.
- <http://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/toolkit.aspx>
 - Comprehensive source for information on career exploration, training, and jobs. Includes information on writing resumes, designing a skills profile, etc. Notable section allows users to enter current or past jobs to find possible career matches. Site is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor.



ACTIVITY: SORTING HARD SKILLS AND SOFT SKILLS

1. Cooperation
2. Spelling and grammar
3. Mechanical skills
4. Team skills
5. Honesty
6. Reading and comprehension
7. Use of case registers
8. High school diploma
9. Manufacturing skills training
10. Communication skills with fellow workers, supervisors, and customers
11. Math
12. Courtesy
13. Motivation to do a good job
14. Adaptability
15. Driver's license
16. Staying with a task until it's finished
17. Use of technology tools
18. Neat personal appearance
19. Willingness to listen
20. Carpentry
21. Problem solving skills
22. Common sense
23. First aid course
24. Being on time
25. Work experience

SELF INVENTORY WORKSHEET

NAME _____

MY STRENGTHS (Consider your soft skills.)

MY TALENTS (Consider your hard skills.)

MY WORK EXPERIENCE

MY JOB INTERESTS

Session 4: Speaking Up About Your Strengths and Talents

Review

- Briefly summarize key points from the previous session (*Personal Inventory of Strengths and Talents*)
- Address questions and comments, as time permits

Learning Objectives

- Articulating strengths and talents
- Giving and receiving feedback

Key Terms and Concepts

- Preparation
- Self-inventory
- Job description
- Rehearsing
- Feedback
- Constructive criticism

Information to Convey

- For interviews, appointments to talk with an employer, or other important meetings, it is always best to prepare ahead of time.
- Your personal inventory contains valuable information for an employer, but this is not a document that you give to an employer or read to an employer.
- A Self Inventory is a way for you to think about your strengths, talents, and interests and to collect your thoughts.
- You need to use that information to develop a summary.
- You need to pick out the most important qualities and skills to share with an employer. Usually, individuals who are applying for a job or who want to change jobs within their current worksite look at the job description for that position and emphasize the qualities and skills that match the particular position.
- Practicing what you want an employer to know about you—strengths, talents, previous work experience, interests—will help you feel more comfortable and less nervous when you do talk with an employer.
- Be sure to keep in mind all the things your teachers have said to you about speaking, like having good posture, making eye contact, organizing your thoughts before speaking, etc.
- It is helpful to practice with people you trust and to get their feedback. Often the feedback gives you clues as to how you can improve what you're saying.
- When you give feedback to others, it should always be respectful and constructive.

Session 4: Speaking Up About Your Strengths and Talents

Materials

- Paper for participants to develop summaries based on the Self Inventory Feedback Sheet (each participant will need multiple copies to rate peers)

Activity Examples

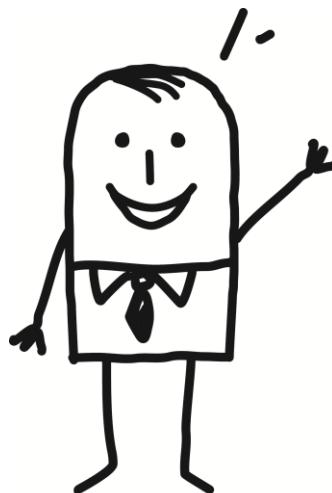
- Summarizing strengths and talents, etc. – Participants use the Personal Inventory they completed in the past session to write a summary. Instructor reminds participants that they have to prioritize the most important information.
- Practice – Each participant will present his or her personal summary and receive feedback comments from the other participants. Based on the time available and the individuals in the class, the instructor can decide whether participants present to the full group or whether they practice in small groups. After each presentation, the remaining participants will share feedback with the presenter. (Participants can use a worksheet to record their feedback/comments before sharing with the group.)

Summary

- Briefly recap the content covered. Relate back to overarching theme of self advocacy
- Ask participants to complete the evaluation form (Allow time in session)
- If time permits, ask participants to share comments—based on their evaluation comments or other thoughts
- Inform participants of the upcoming topic (*Disclosure*)

Resources

- <http://www.wikihow.com/Be-a-Good-Speaker>
- Briefly explains 13 general steps for good speaking. Includes cartoon-like illustrations.



FEEDBACK SHEET

Name of speaker _____

CONSIDER THESE:	Circle the words below that describe the speaker's presentation.
Voice	too loud hard to hear good
Speaking pace	too fast too slow good
Posture	needs improvement good
Eye contact	needs improvement good
Message/ideas	unorganized unclear good
Timing	too long okay
Attitude	negative/bored positive/enthusiastic

What did the speaker do well?

How can the speaker improve?

Session 5: Disclosure of Your Disability

Review

- Briefly summarize key points from the previous session (*Speaking Up about Your Strengths and Talents*)
- Address questions and comments, as time permits

Learning Objectives

- Define disclosure
- Identify advantages to disclosure
- Identify disadvantages to disclosure
- Consider your personal view of disclosing a disability

Key Terms and Concepts

- Disclosure
- Intentional
- Personal decision
- Advantages and disadvantages
- Confidential
- Accommodations (to be covered in detail in the next session)
- Exclusion
- Self-image

Information to Convey

- In general, “disclose” means to tell something or reveal something. When we disclose, we are intentionally providing personal information about ourselves.
- For this session, when we talk about “disclosure,” we specifically mean telling or revealing information about our health or disability.
- Disclosing information about a disability is a personal decision—about what and to whom you want to give the information.
- There are advantages and disadvantages to disclosing information about your disability. (Handout included)

Session 5: Disclosure of Your Disability

Materials

- Link to Difficulties of Disabilities Disclosure: <https://sixbyfifteen.org/2015/08/19/difficulties-of-disability-disclosure/>
- Handout of disclosure advantages and disadvantages.
- Reference 8-5 & 8-6 of *The 411 on Disability Disclosure* for discussion ideas.

Activity Examples

- Read Aloud - Read Emily Ladau's blog outloud on the "Difficulties of Disability Disclosure"
- Discussion – After reviewing the handout listing advantages and disadvantages of disclosure, instructor asks participants about their views (positive or negative) in general.
- Instructor provides examples of situations when participants might choose to disclose. Participants offer pros and cons of disclosing in each situation.
 - Third-party phone call or reference
 - In a letter of application or resume
 - In a cover letter
 - Pre-interview
 - On the employment application
 - At the interview
 - After he or she has been offered a job
 - During the course of employment
 - Never

Summary

- Briefly recap the content covered. Relate back to overarching theme of self advocacy
- Ask participants to complete the evaluation form (Allow time in session)
- If time permits, ask participants to share comments—based on their evaluation comments or other thoughts
- Inform participants of the upcoming topic (*Job Accommodations*)

Resources

- <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/411-on-disability-disclosure>
- This is the Job Accommodations Network, sponsored by the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) of the U.S. Department of Labor. It is the premier “Go To” site for information about accommodations.



DISCLOSURE OF YOUR DISABILITY

*Adapted from 411 Disability Disclosure

Advantages

- It allows you to receive reasonable accommodations so that you can work more effectively.
- It provides legal protection against discrimination (as specified in the Americans with Disabilities Act).
- It reduces stress, since protecting a “secret” can take a lot of energy.
- It ensures that you are getting what you need in order to be successful (for example, through an accommodation).
- It can improve your self-image through **self- advocacy**.
- It increases your comfort level.

Disadvantages

- It could lead to the experience of being excluded.
- It could lead to your being treated differently than others.
- It could bring up conflicting or negative feelings about your self-image.
- It could cause other people to view you as needy, not self-sufficient, or unable to perform as well as your peers.
- It could cause you to be overlooked for a job, team, group, or organization.
- Disclosing personal and sensitive information could be extremely difficult and/or embarrassing.

Session 6: Accommodations - What You Need to be Successful on the Job

Review

- Briefly summarize key points from the previous session (*Disclosure of Your Disability*)
- Address questions and comments, as time permits

Learning Objectives

- Define accommodations
- Identify accommodations needed for specific jobs
- Communicate with an employer regarding personal accommodations needed

Key Terms and Concepts

- Accommodations
- Environment
- Equal access

Information to Convey

- Previous discussions/sessions focused on how both soft skills and hard skills are needed to be successful on the job. These are important “ingredients” that you are responsible to bring to your job.
- Sometimes a person may have good soft skills and hard skills, but still need some supports to be able to do a job or to do a job well. These supports are called *accommodations*.
- Job accommodations are adjustments made to the environment, the workspace, the building, or the work task.
- A job accommodation allows an individual with a disability to apply for a job, do the job, or enjoy equal access to benefits available to other individuals in the workplace.
- Accommodations are based on an individual’s needs to be able to do their job.
- Some accommodations may be simple (e.g., more time to do a task, a picture sequence for the steps of a task) and some may be more complicated and more expensive (e.g., a table with height adjustments for a wheelchair, special computer software).
- There is a special website that can help you identify accommodations that you might need: Job Accommodation Network. The web address is www.askjan.org.

Materials

- Accommodations Worksheet
- Internet access
- Projector and screen

Session 6: Accommodations - What You Need to be Successful on the Job

Activity Examples

- Discussion – Instructor asks participants about accommodations they may be using currently: How do they help? Are there other supports that they would like to have—and why?
- Information research – Instructor explores the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) website, www.askjan.org with participants. Be sure to examine the section titled *A to Z of Disabilities and Accommodations*. It offers information on accommodations and can be searched by three major categories: disability, related topics, and specific limitations.
- Identifying specific needs – Instructor directs participants to complete the brief *Accommodations Worksheet*. Participants can refer to the Ask JAN website for relevant information.
- Role play [*Talking with an employer about accommodations*]- Instructor pairs up participants to role play talking to an employer about accommodations they may need. Each participant should take a turn to practice. Participants can use the bulleted list at the end of the *Accommodations Worksheet* as a guide for their statements to their employer.

Summary

- Briefly recap the content covered. Relate back to overarching theme of self advocacy
- Ask participants to complete the evaluation form (Allow time in session)
- If time permits, ask participants to share comments—based on their evaluation comments or other thoughts
- Inform participants of the upcoming topic (*Rights at Work*)

Resources

- **www.askjan.org**
 - This is the Job Accommodations Network, sponsored by the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) of the U.S. Department of Labor. It is the premier “Go To” site for information about accommodations.
- **http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/guides/411/411_Disability_Disclosure_complete.pdf**
 - Unit 5 of this 411 Disability Disclosure manual by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD) focuses on accommodations.



ACCOMODATIONS WORKSHEET

Name _____

How does my disability show itself? What does it look like?

What job am I working at or interested in?

What accommodations/help do I need in this job?

ASKING FOR ACCOMMODATIONS

When you talk with your employer to ask for accommodations, you should

- **Introduce yourself**
- **Share some of your strengths and job-related talents**
- **State your disability and difficulties you are having with your job**
- **Explain what you do to accommodate your disability**
- **Ask for specific accommodations**
- **Thank your employer for talking with you**

(Adapted from Stepping Forward – Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center)

Session 7: Your Rights as an Employee – Focus on the ADA

Review

- Briefly summarize key points from the previous session (*What You Need to Be Successful on the Job*)
- Address questions and comments, as time permits

Learning Objectives

- Define discrimination
- Describe the employment rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act for an individual with a disability
- Recognize the responsibilities of an individual with a disability according to ADA
- Recognize situations in which the rights of an individual with a disability are being denied or negatively affected in the workplace

Key Terms and Concepts

- Discrimination
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Federal law
- Equal opportunity
- Access
- Rights and responsibilities
- *Reasonable accommodations*
- *Undue burden/Undue hardship*
- Violate/violation

Information to Convey

- We know that it is wrong to discriminate against people because of their race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or where they were born. In the United States there are laws against discrimination.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is perhaps the most important federal law regarding the rights of individuals with disabilities.
- The ADA is considered an “equal opportunity” law for people with disabilities and prohibits discrimination in many aspects of daily life, for example as in access to public facilities and transportation.
- Regarding employment and the workplace, the ADA makes it unlawful to discriminate against individuals in key practices: recruitment, hiring/firing, training, assignments, pay, benefits, leave, etc.
- Under the ADA, individuals with disabilities who are attempting to get a job or who are employees already also have certain **responsibilities**: a) They must be qualified to do the job; b) They must disclose their disability (self identify) to the employer if they intend to request accommodations; c) They must ask an employer to provide the needed accommodations that are not currently available to them.
- Under the ADA, an employer has to provide accommodations that are considered “reasonable” and do not cause “undue burden” for the employer.
- A “reasonable accommodation” may be any change or adjustment to a job, the work environment, or the way work is done that allows a qualified person with a disability to perform the essential functions of a job or to receive the benefits and privileges of employment, which are available to employees without a disability. This is equal access.
- Under ADA, the accommodation must be appropriate, but may not be *exactly* what the individual with a disability wants.
- “Undue burden” or “undue hardship” generally means that the change would be extremely difficult to make, so would disrupt the business and/or would be extremely expensive.

Session 7: Your Rights as an Employee – Focus on the ADA

Materials

- None needed.

Activity Examples

- Discussion [*Would the ADA support doing this?*]- Instructor presents scenarios and asks participants to indicate whether or not the actions are supported by the ADA—and why. This can be full group activity or participants can discuss these in pairs or small groups.
- Jose applies for job at library checking returned books for damage before they are placed back on the shelves. Last year, Jose worked at a different library doing the same job and earned the “Worker of the Month” award several times. Jose is deaf and wears hearing aids, but he can speak and can understand speech when someone is directly facing him. The interviewer tells Jose that he’s sorry but they can’t hire him. The interviewer says that others will have difficulty communicating with him because of his hearing loss. [*Answer: This is a clear violation of ADA. Jose is qualified. The interviewer is discriminating against Jose because of his disability.*]
- Eva works at a lab in the hospital. She has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair. Eva takes the bus to work because she doesn’t have a car. She learned that there has been a change in the bus schedule and the bus that has a wheelchair lift will be coming an hour later. Eva will ask her supervisor to let her start work an hour later. [*Answer: Eva has the right to request this accommodation. Her employer will likely honor it because it is a reasonable accommodation and does not disrupt work. If the employer does not honor it, filing an ADA claim is appropriate.*]
- Tran works at the reception desk for a small business. He has a spinal disorder and needs a chair with special back support. He likes a particular brand of adjustable chairs that have other convenient features like cup holders and side pockets. He asked his employer to purchase a chair that can support his back and gave his boss information about the brand that has the cup holders and pockets. His employer bought an adjustable chair from another company. The chair does not have cup holders or pockets. [*Answer: Although the chair that the employer purchased is not exactly what Tran requested, it is an appropriate accommodation because it does provide the back support needed for Tran to do his job effectively.*]
- Ashleigh is applying for a position as an office clerk. Her resume indicates that she has worked as an office clerk at another business for two years. She voluntarily tells the employer at the new site that she has an intellectual disability and will need to have a daily written list of tasks she is responsible for, or some type of assistive technology device that can remind her what needs to be done. The employer said that he could have one of the managers send an email list to her on her cellphone each work day. [*Answer: This is a very appropriate accommodation.*]
- Add other scenarios to the discussion, as time permits. The content for this session is majority of the session.

Summary

- Briefly recap the content covered. Relate back to overarching theme of self advocacy
- Ask participants to complete the evaluation form (Allow time in session)
- If time permits, ask participants to share comments—based on their evaluation comments or other thoughts
- Inform participants of the upcoming topic (*Finding Help at Work*)

Resources

- <http://askjan.org/links/adalinks.htm>
 - This is the Job Accommodations Network, sponsored by the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) of the U.S. Department of Labor. This specific link is to their ADA library, a comprehensive source of information on the ADA.
- http://www.ncwd-youth.info/assets/guides/411/411_Disability_Disclosure_complete.pdf
 - Unit 4 of this *411 Disability Disclosure* manual by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD) focuses on ADA rights and responsibilities.



Session 8: Finding Help at Work

Review

- Briefly summarize key points from the previous session (*Your Rights as an Employee*)
- Address questions and comments, as time permits

Learning Objectives

- Understand the role of a self-advocate as it relates to seeking help at work
- Recognize the different types of support available at work
- Know when and where to seek advocacy support for workplace rights
- Know what to do in case of experiencing discrimination at work

Key Terms and Concepts

- Natural supports
- Job coach
- Advocates
- Legal support
- Human Resources Department
- Charge of discrimination
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

Materials

- None needed.

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Information to Convey

- When someone is hired for a job it is generally not expected that they automatically know how to do **everything** that may take place in that job. Even when someone has a job, new things come up and there are new things to learn.
- Being a self-advocate does not mean doing everything independently. Everyone—from the boss on down—needs help at some time.
- Self-advocates recognize their need for help, know how to get the help they need, and use their best communication skills to speak up and ask for help.
- There is a broad range of supports available to workers with disabilities:
- Natural supports** – These are naturally occurring supports; that means they are generally part of the environment. At work, this can be support that is provided by supervisors or co-workers, who can answer questions, demonstrate how to do a task, help find materials that an individual needs, etc. Natural supports have special advantages: they foster social integration with co-workers, are automatically part of the workplace--so are more permanent, and more easily available than paid job coaches. Natural supports are an important factor in job retention. (adapted from *One Stop Toolkit* website)
- Job coaches** – Some workers with disabilities have job coaches who can help individuals to learn and do their jobs. Job coaches provide individual, one-on-one training specific to an employee's needs. The goal of a job coach is to train and help an individual to be able to do the job without assistance.
- Manuals** – Most often there are manuals at a workplace that explain the procedures for various jobs and general information about the workplace, like when paychecks are distributed, times allowed for breaks, etc. Individuals with disabilities have the right to ask that the information in the manuals be provided in a way that they can have access to it. This may include an auditory version, an easy-to-read version, an electronic version, or other forms.
- Advocates** – These are individuals who are specially trained to assist in upholding the rights of people with disabilities. Advocates may be paid or work as volunteers. Individuals with disabilities can check with the local Vocational Rehabilitation Center to find advocacy services in their area
- Circumstances for special support** – Often, a supervisor or boss can resolve problems at the work. At times, however, individuals with disabilities may need special support, especially if they believe they have been discriminated against at work. (Remember what we learned about the ADA and workers' rights.) It may be necessary for an individual to get special support, including possible legal support, to resolve the issue.
- If you experience discrimination at work, there is a general procedure you can follow to help resolve the problem:
 - 1. Get an advocate – The advocate knows the law and the rights of individuals with disabilities in the workplace. They are trained to support you and can help you get your message across clearly and accurately.
 - 2. Go to the Human Resources (H.R.) Department – Request a meeting with an HR representative. Bring the advocate with you to the meeting. Also bring a written description of the discrimination. This should be a clear statement about what happened. (If the company does not have an H.R. department, go to the owner of the company or your boss. Do NOT do this if the owner or the boss is the person who you believe discriminated against you.)
 - AS A LAST RESORT...
 - 3. File a formal charge of discrimination – If you have gotten advice from someone you trust (e.g., advocate, job coach, mentor, etc.) and you are positive that you are being discriminated against at work because of your disability, the next step is to file a charge of discrimination. This is a formal complaint to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which is responsible for enforcing federal laws regarding discrimination in the workplace. You may need an advocate or lawyer to help you. The EEOC is also available to support you in filing a complaint.

Session 8: Finding Help at Work

Activity Examples

- Role play - split the class into pairs and have the participants brainstorm ways a job coach can support them once they get a job vs. the ways other colleagues and natural supports on the job can support them. Have all pairs share their ideas with the full group.
- Discussion – [*Course wrap up*] Instructor lists the major topics that have been covered in the sessions one-by-one and asks participants what they remember or what they thought was most important in the session.
 - Self-advocacy at work*
 - Soft skills*
 - Self-inventory*
 - Speaking up*
 - Disclosure*
 - Accommodations*
 - ADA rights*
 - Finding help*

Summary

- Ask participants to complete the evaluation form (Allow time in session)
- If time permits, ask participants to share comments—based on their evaluation comments or other thoughts

Resources

- MyPathNY.org**
 - A FREE online tool that connects young people with disabilities in NYS to the people and resources they need to find and keep a job.
- <https://www.eeoc.gov/youth/downloads/general.pdf>**
- <https://www.eeoc.gov/youth/filing>**
 - These links for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission address rights and responsibilities at work and information on the process of filing a formal charge of discrimination.
- <http://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/toolkit.aspx>**
 - This is a comprehensive source for information on career exploration, training, and jobs.

