

# Employment Resilience

People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities  
are Critical Frontline Workers

**Captioning Available:**

<https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=HealthMatters>



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Disability advocates call for protection of the most vulnerable during COVID-19 pandemic

13/05/2020

2 min

Pandemic heightens vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities

Home / News / Health News

12 May 2020

**People With Intellectual Disabilities Are Being Hit Hard by COVID-19**

COVID-19 Infections And Deaths Are Higher Among Those With Intellectual Disabilities

June 9, 2020 - 5:00 AM ET  
Heard on [Morning Edition](#)



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# What are the Reasons for Increased Vulnerability?

- Food Insecurity
- Lack of access to healthcare/testing
- Inadequate Safety Education
- Social Isolation
- Underlying Medical Conditions



# Impulse is to Protect and Shelter

- Panic is neither warranted nor helpful
- Withdrawal from employment can increase social isolation
- Don't disregard the risk, but, instead, come up with practical solutions to minimize risk

# CDC Guidance on COVID-19 and Disability

- Most people with disabilities are not inherently at higher risk for becoming infected with or having severe illness from COVID-19.
  - **All** people seem to be at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 if they have serious [underlying chronic medical conditions](#) like chronic lung disease, a serious heart condition, or a weakened immune system.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-disabilities.html>



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# Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

“...an employee’s medical condition is not considered a direct threat to themselves if the employer can reduce or eliminate the threat through a reasonable accommodation.”

<https://www.employmentlawworldview.com/eeoc-provides-updated-guidance-on-return-to-work-issues-addressing-accommodations-for-employees-with-covid-19-vulnerabilities-us/>



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# Employment is Key in Decreasing Vulnerability

- Increased Income reduces food insecurity
- Employment increases likelihood of access to health insurance
- Employers provide safety education and equipment
- Community engagement and inclusion is increased through employment
- Medical vulnerabilities can be accommodated in the workplace





# Project SEARCH is a Transition-to-Work Program

- We are NOT retreating from our goal of employment for people with disabilities.
- We ARE taking steps necessary to mitigate the associated risks and make employment as safe as possible.



# Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

- The pandemic is a rapidly changing situation. Therefore, there is uncertainty about what the 2020-21 program year will look like.
- Many businesses are dealing with response and prevention efforts and are not yet certain how this evolving situation will affect our programs.
- We recommend that program sites do what our business partners have done – create a Continuity of Operations (COOP Plan) – to address possible scenarios and offer a variety of possible solutions.



# Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

Scenario	Option	Pros	Cons	Comments	Proposal
<p><b>Scenario 1</b>  <i>The host business is available to the interns, but the classroom is too small to accommodate social distancing such that only half the interns can be in the classroom at one time</i></p>	<p><b>Option 1:</b>            Start one group at 8.30 AM and another at 9.30 AM</p> <p>Finish in the classroom at 3.30 PM and 4.30 PM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All interns will receive lessons from the employability curriculum each day</li> <li>All interns start the day with the employability curriculum</li> <li>Interns will get more individual attention in class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The group dynamic will not be as strong</li> <li>Instructor spends two hours repeating the work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This might help also with pressures on the skills trainer</li> <li>We might have to select the departments for the earlier and late starts</li> </ul>	Preferred option for scenario 1
	<p><b>Option 2:</b>            Do all the classroom activity on Friday in a larger classroom at the location of the education partner (school, career tech campus, or community college)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less time spent by the instructor delivering curriculum</li> <li>Interns all work together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interns may not feel as immersed in the business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education partner may not have room available to accommodate this option</li> </ul>	



# Tool to Assess Skill Competencies

- VocFit.com
  - Online tool, can be used remotely
  - Evidenced-based
  - Can incorporate feedback from multiple stakeholders
  - Identify individual training needs
  - Identify and focus on skills that can most easily be learned at home



# Virtual Skill Competencies

- Many Transition Programs will Be Online
- Some work skills will need to be learned in the home
- Need to shift focus from rewarding effort to measuring quality and productivity
- We have created 20 lessons
  - Skill-building at Home Activities



# Skill Building at Home-Skill Categories

- Cognitive Ability
  - Count, weigh, measure or organize Materials
  - Comprehend/read instructions
- Communication Skills
  - Communicate with others on the telephone
  - Speak clearly so that others can understand
- Computer Skills
  - Access an email system using a username and password
  - Print a file/document



# Skill Building at Home-Skill Categories

- General
  - Accepts constructive feedback
  - Follows rules
- Higher task-related activities
  - Perform clerical duties
  - Select materials needed to complete work task
- Interpersonal Skills
  - Ask clarifying questions
  - Cooperate with others to accomplish work activities



# Skill Building at Home-Skill Categories

- Lower Task-related Activities
  - Start and stop machines using levers and buttons
  - Clean work tools
- Physical Abilities
  - Perform physical activities repetitively
  - Work for prolonged period without a break
- Safety
  - Maintain sanitation, health and safety standards
  - Wear common protective and safety equipment





# Skill Building at Home-Skill Categories

- Self-determination
  - Make choices, decisions, and plans to meet own goals
  - Evaluate the results of own actions to determine effectiveness
- Work structure
  - Pace work according to demands of the work
  - Follow established procedures



# Example Task: Virtual Game Night

- Communication: Speak clearly so that others can understand, Understand the speech of another person
- Self determination: Make choices, decisions, and plans to meet own goals, Make decisions independently, Set personal goals that satisfy own interests and needs, Determine work activities, Determine customers' needs
- General: Completes tasks accurately
- Computer skills: Navigate to a specific web address, Click on a desired web link
- Interpersonal skills: Work with a co-worker in a group or team, Follow directions, Ask clarifying questions, Listen actively
- Higher Task-related abilities: Select materials needed to complete work tasks



# Partnering with Occupational Therapists

- Learning ways to teach people with disabilities in the home setting
- Gaining expertise in accommodations and adaptations
- Working to establish virtual consult service for individuals with disabilities and their families



# COVID-19 Lesson Plans

- Cleaning and Disinfecting Materials
- COVID and PPE
- Handwashing, Coughing, Sneezing
- Mental Health
- Social Distancing

\*All lesson plans can be used virtually



# Parent Education

- Recognize impulse to protect and shelter
- Help parents consider and evaluate all risks
- Understand balance of risks and benefits of work
- Don't disregard the risk, but, instead, come up with practical solutions to minimize risk



# Identify Training Opportunities Resulting from COVID-19

- Decreased Capacity combined with Increased Regulation
  - Restaurants and Retail:
    - Reduced seating or number of customers in store
    - New disinfection protocols are required
    - Income is reduced
  - Grocery Stores and Distribution Centers:
    - Difficulty maintaining inventory
    - Need help with materials handling
  - Hospitals and Retirement Communities
    - Surface sterilization
    - Screening incoming patients, guests, and employees



# Essential Workers at Cincinnati Children's Hospital

- Approximately 55 employees with significant disabilities
- 16 remained working as essential employees throughout the COVID-19 crisis
- Remaining workers have been brought back to work over the last 3 months



# Project SEARCH Grads as Essential Workers

- Jefferson Health New Jersey, Cherry Hill, NJ
  - 2020 Project SEARCH Spotlight on Innovative Employment Awardees

Billy: 2019 Graduate now  
employed in Patient Transport



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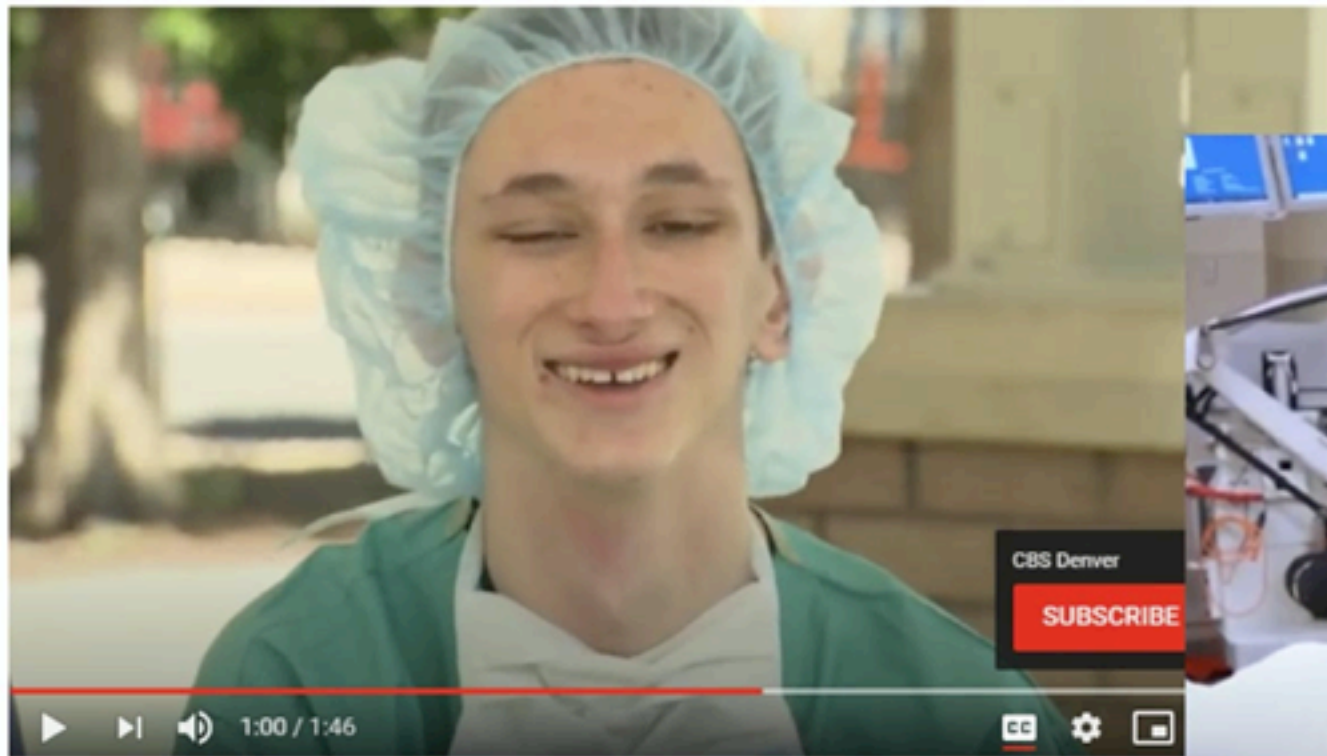
Anthony: 2017 Graduate, essential employee keeping the Emergency Department stocked, supporting doctors and nurses on the front lines of the pandemic.



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# Project SEARCH Grads as Essential Workers

This Project SEARCH graduate is proud to be an essential worker on the front lines at UHealth University of Colorado Hospital.



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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9oA91FU0q0&feature=youtu.be>