

Employment Articles from DC Partners in Transition (DCTransition.org)

Getting a Job

Modified from: <http://www.dctransition.org/resources/subtopic.cfm?subtopicID=6>

Getting any job is an achievement; getting the right job is a triumph. Of course, most people have a series of jobs throughout their careers, but your chances of having a sustained and satisfying work experience go way up if you can find a job that matches your interests and skills. So before you look for a job, take a good look at yourself:

- List topics and ideas that interest you in school.
- List things you like to do with your free time.
- List things you do well, including everyday things in school and around the house.
- List things that you do not like to do.
- List areas in which you can handle tasks and take responsibility.
- Think through the extent of your mobility and independence.
- List any potentially job-related activities that you have experience in.

Using this self-evaluation, talk with your family, teachers, friends and an employment specialist or someone who helps people find jobs about opportunities that may be available and well-suited for you. This group might even meet to brainstorm about options and resources you should explore.

Consider what supports, equipment, or services you may need to get a job. If you will need accommodations or support to be successful, think about how to meet those needs. The Rehabilitation Services Administration may be able to assist you with accommodations related to your disability.

A resume is a list of your experiences and education that is sent to an employer. Model resumes are easy to find on the Internet. Develop your resume and ask others to help you improve and polish it.

Most job applications ask for the same details. Gather this information and take a copy with you whenever you go to apply for a job to help you fill out the application.

Many questions are also common to job interviews. The following questions, many others, and suggestions for handling them are given at this web site

(<http://www.jobinterviewquestions.org/questions/general-questions.asp>).

- Get someone to help you practice answering such questions as:
- Tell me about yourself.
- What experience do you have in this field?
- Do you consider yourself successful?
- What do you know about this organization?
- What have you done to improve your knowledge in the last year?

- Are you applying for other jobs?
- Why do you want to work for this organization?
- Do you know anyone who works for us?
- What kind of salary do you need?
- Are you a team player?
- How long would you expect to work for us if hired?
- Explain how you would be an asset to this organization.
- Tell me about a suggestion you have made.
- What is your greatest strength?
- Tell me about your dream job.
- Why do you think you would do well at this job?
- What are you looking for in a job?
- What is more important to you: the money or the work?
- Tell me about your ability to work under pressure.
- What motivates you to do your best on the job?
- Are you willing to work overtime? Nights? Weekends?
- How would you know you were successful on this job?
- How do you propose to compensate for your lack of experience?
- Tell me about the most fun you have had on the job.
- Do you have any questions for me?

Networking with others may lead you to job opportunities. Let everyone know that you are looking for employment. Be patient! Finding employment takes time. Stay focused on looking for the job that is right for you.

On the Job

Source: <http://www.dctransition.org/resources/subtopic.cfm?subtopicID=7>

Here are some tips for keeping a job once you land one:

- Start by getting to work on time. If you have to punch a time clock, do it earlier than expected.
- Show up rested, wearing appropriate clothing, and ready for a few days of stress.
- Read employee manuals. Learn the job rules and obey them.
- Use your common sense. Ask questions about anything you don't understand. Keep a paper or pad and pencil for making notes.
- Learn the job as fast as you can—don't stay the "new guy" for long.
- Be responsible. If you make a mistake, admit it and move on.
- Watch your manners. Respect and get along with others.
- Good communication is important. Discuss matters; don't argue. Be appreciative of help offered.
- Be loyal to your employer.
- Leave your personal problems at home, and stay away from gossip.

- If you want to earn a raise or promotion to a better position:
- Do what your boss wants done, and do it his or her way.
- Do more than what is expected.
- Make sure the boss knows what you have done.
- Do your homework—raises and promotions go to those who want to grow.
- Be a team player.
- Learn how performance is evaluated: work output? attendance? attitude? Work to excel in those areas.

Supported Employment/Day Programs

Source: <http://www.dctransition.org/resources/subtopic.cfm?subtopicID=11>

If you need ongoing support to be successful with a job, consider supported employment, which provides extra supervision and assistance to employees with disabilities. Supported employment encourages people to work within their communities and encourages work, social interaction, and integration. It includes services such as job coaches, transportation, assistive technology, specialized job training, and individually tailored supervision. A job coach provides specialized on-site training to assist an employee with a disability in learning and performing the job and adjusting to the work environment. The goals of supported employment are the opportunity to earn equitable wages and other employment-related benefits, development of new skills, increased community participation, enhanced self-esteem, increased consumer empowerment, and quality of life.

Other options available to persons with disabilities include day programs. Day programs do not focus on jobs or employment but instead serve individuals who want to get out and be a part of the community.

In DC, young adults with developmental disabilities can find assistance with supported employment opportunities through the Developmental Disabilities Administration, 1125 15th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005, 202-730-1700. Use the Local Resources database to find individual providers.

Rights & Benefits

Modified from: <http://www.dctransition.org/resources/subtopic.cfm?subtopicID=10>

Federal laws, especially the Fair Labor Standards Act, administered by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), govern many aspects of hiring, wages, hours, workplace safety, and benefits.

The DOL Wage and Hour Division (WHD) regulates and enforces several employee rights related to pay and work hours, such as those granted by the laws that govern the minimum wage, overtime, and family and medical leave. You should be aware that the Fair Labor Standards Act authorizes employers certified by WHD to pay special minimum wages (less than the federal minimum wage) to workers who have disabilities for the work being performed. See this website for more information.

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) develops and influences policies and practices affecting the employment of people with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) require employers with 15 or more employees to provide reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities unless it would cause undue hardship. A reasonable accommodation is any change in the work environment or in the way a job is performed that enables a person with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities. Guidance on what types of accommodations might be appropriate for a variety of functional limitations is available from the Job Accommodation Network, a free service of ODEP.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is the government office for researching employment discrimination on the basis of age, disability, national origin, race, religion, genetics or sex (gender), in violation of federal discrimination laws. If you feel you have been discriminated against, you can file a discrimination charge against an employer or its representatives, on your own or through a lawyer. The DC Field Office is at 131 M St., NE, 4th Floor, Suite 4NWO2F, Washington, DC 20507, 1-800-669-4000.

Another great resource is Disability.gov, a comprehensive online resource providing people with disabilities, employers, and others with information on accommodations, employment resources, tax incentives, and other relevant information.

Volunteering

Source: <http://www.dctransition.org/resources/subtopic.cfm?subtopicID=12>

Volunteering can be satisfying. In fact, the basic idea of volunteering is to do something not for gain, but because it is worth doing, making life better somehow. It could be helping people (or animals) directly, or it could be through an organization or even a company devoted to a cause you feel worthwhile. Helping others, just because it's the right thing to do, is endorsed by just about every moral system and religion. The Corporation for National and Community Service reported that about one in five Americans volunteered to help their communities in 2009, contributing more than 8 billion hours of service with an estimated dollar value of nearly \$170 billion.

While giving away time and effort is clearly reward enough, there can also be side benefits for those in transition to employment and independent living. At the very least, you are likely to broaden your circle of acquaintances and make contacts for possible employment. You will probably have the chance to demonstrate punctuality, dependability, and responsibility, maybe even creativity and problem solving. Many people who have targeted their volunteer efforts gain skills and experience relevant to fields of work that interest them, and more than a few have found jobs. It is certainly reasonable to expect to gain helpful experience for your resume and associates who could serve as references when you apply for a job.