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Strategies for Effective Interaction with People with Intellectual Disabilities

Presented by:


Mid-Atlantic  Center

Today's presenter:

Amy Dwyre D'Agati
Senior Associate at TransCen, Inc.,

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TransCen, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization dedicated to improving educational and employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

To learn more visit **TransCen.org**

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Strategies for Effective Interaction with People with Intellectual Disabilities

Amy Dwyre D'Agati
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Today's Objectives:

Understand how to adapt components of workplace communication strategies to people with intellectual disabilities

Recognize the importance of matching personality and communication style of an employee with an ID to a workplace setting

Strategies for employers, employees and employment consultants

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A Social View of Employment

Why we work



- Describes who we are
- Gives us status in the community
- Social connections
- Gives us economic power
- Gives us more independence

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What jobs mean in our society

Why everyone wants and deserves a job



- Image enhancement
- Create or support socially valued roles for people
- Competency enhancement
- Provides dignity, respect, acceptance, a sense of belonging
- Opportunities to have a voice and participate in one's community

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What is an Intellectual Disability (ID)?


A person with an ID is affected in the areas of intellectual functioning (intelligence) and adaptive behavior

Intellectual functioning—also called intelligence—refers to general mental capacity, such as learning, reasoning, problem solving, and so on.

Adaptive behavior is the collection of conceptual, social, and practical skills that are learned and performed by people in their everyday lives.


- Conceptual skills—language and literacy; money, time, and number concepts; and self-direction.
- Social skills—interpersonal skills, social responsibility, self-esteem, gullibility, naïveté (i.e., wariness), social problem solving, and the ability to follow rules/obey laws and to avoid being victimized.
- Practical skills—activities of daily living (personal care), occupational skills, healthcare, travel/transportation, schedules/routines, safety, use of money, use of the telephone.

American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities ¹⁵



Please recognize that no 2 people with an ID are the same – just as no 2 redheads are the same, no 2 teenagers are the same, or no 2 people from Kentucky are the same!


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Communication strategies are important in any workplace, for all employees.

This is no different for people with intellectual disabilities

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There are two main goals of Workplace Communication:

- A. To get the job done
- B. To fit in

In my experience, the more common reason that people with intellectual disabilities lose their jobs is their ***inability to fit in***

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Example:
Teresa

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All workplaces have their own distinct Communication Culture

The 4 main components that determine effectiveness are:

- Consistency
- Clear Direction
- Accountability
- Capacity

Insider's Link to Productivity, March 2011



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These components can become that much more important when working with a person with an ID

- Don't assume someone will 'catch on'
- Practice might be needed, and may take longer

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CONSISTENCY

No conflicting messages; source of message remains the same

Getting the Job Done

- Same instructions are given each time
- One main mentor or supervisor gives instructions
- Tasks are taught in the exact place where they will be expected to perform the task (skill transference difficult)

Fitting In

- Routines are maintained
- No change in body language
- Facilitated inclusion in rituals (ordering lunch on Fridays, bringing in cream for coffee, etc.)

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CLEAR DIRECTION

Goals and outcomes outlined; hierarchy clear

Getting the Job Done

- Instructions need to be concrete and repeated
- Show end product first and use as a guide
- Everyone says the same thing

Fitting In

- Model expected behavior
- Be wary of subtle relationship differences within a body of co-workers – its natural, but confusing for someone with an ID
- Clear instructions for all social events

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Accountability

People held responsible for their actions and words

Getting the Job Done

- Make it easy to ask for help when it is needed
- Extra training/monitoring in the beginning
- Make consequences clear
- Have same consequences for all employees

Fitting In

- Guide appropriate social behavior – what is accepted and not accepted within the work culture
- Explain consequences of negative social behavior, that EVERYONE experiences
- Make it easy for someone to ask/assign a ‘social mentor’

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Capacity

All feel accepted and respected

Getting the Job Done

- Include the worker with an ID in decision-making
- Give the worker with an ID a role within a team – one that matches their skill level, talent, or capacity to add value

Fitting In

- Include the worker with an ID into culture – inside jokes, history
- Assign the worker with an ID a social 'job' or role (hands out the white elephant gift at the holiday party...presents a co-worker with an award, etc.)

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For anyone starting a new job, it is important that personality and communication styles match the environment and workplace culture

In the right setting, ASSETS SHINE


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QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS?



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What are the roles of everyone involved?

Employment Consultant
Employer
Employee

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Role of the Employment Consultant

Before Placement:

- Do Discovery on the jobseeker with an ID
- Conduct Informational Interviews with businesses to look for needs, workplace culture – really get to know a business
- Match the jobseeker skills, talents, and personality to the workplace where value will be added and they can ‘fit in’
- Prepare the jobseeker with an ID – work on self-advocacy skills, social skills, etc.

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Role of the Employment Consultant

After Placement:

- Facilitate natural supports (on the job - job skills, facilitate relationships; and off – travel training, additional skill development off-site, counseling)
- Offer support to the supervisor and co-workers
- Observe employee on the job and surroundings and make recommendations to the supervisor about new tasks or changes in tasks
- Provide supports while maintaining the typical job training/orientation for that company

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Role of the Employment Consultant

After Placement:

- Coach the employee in soft skills
- Manipulate the environment as needed
- Be seen as a Business Consultant
- Conduct an inventory of internal expertise
- Assess organizational needs
- Facilitate decision-making and planning
- Facilitate social inclusion

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Role of the Employer

Before Placement:

- Assess jobseeker's personality and style for a match within your business
- Match a current employee as a mentor for training purposes
- Understand the role of the Employment Consultant and how best to utilize her/his skills
- Put the jobseeker through the same process you would for any other new hire, with the recognition that supports might be needed or they might do things slightly differently
- Make clear your needs and expectations

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Role of the Employer

After Placement:

- Watch the Employment Consultant model communication strategies and follow those
- Make clear the role of the mentor and manage how they are doing and feeling
- Model inclusion for the rest of the staff
- Follow-up with new employee
- Continue to make clear your needs and expectations

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Role of the Employee

Before Placement:

- Be clear about skills, talents, desires and expectations with the Employment Consultant
- Follow through on all tasks
- Be prepared
- Practice self-advocacy skills

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Role of the Employee

After Placement:


- Ask questions (or communicate needs in the most appropriate way possible that matches skill level to environment, with the help of a mentor or employment consultant)
- Use appropriate self-advocacy skills – let someone know when confused or need help

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Interview with Meghan Jones

Office Assistant with the Mid-Atlantic ADA Information Center
Rockville, MD

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Summary

- An employee with an ID should go through the same processes and have the same expectations as an employee, WITH SUPPORTS when and where necessary
- Managers and Supervisors are trained to work with all types of people; it is no different working with a person with an ID. Learn each individual's communication style and work together to adapt
- Use the Employment Consultant as your guide for working best with the new employee.
- Treat an employee with an ID as you would any employee – in terms of praise and promotion as well as reprimands and dismissal

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QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS?



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