Work and Disability: Issues and Strategies in Career Development

AFFIRMING DIVERSITY AND DISABILITY IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT: MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES, ISSUES, AND CONSTITUENCIES
Christian D. Chan, Cheryl A. Love, Galaxina Wright, Janine Rowe, David Julius Ford, Jr., and Jonique R. Childs
Sound familiar?

Students are often expected to know exactly what they are doing next, but they may be overwhelmed with their choices. Help them find fitting programs of study and careers with the Self-Directed Search. It’s simple to use, flexible to administer, and easily accessible.

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FROM THE EDITOR

The number of students with disabilities attending school continues to grow. At the K-12 level, it is reported to be approximately 14% of all students, with higher education close to 20% of all students. Although the increased access, especially in higher education, for individuals with disabilities is a positive force, disability services providers often struggle to provide adequate support beyond the required academic accommodations, and this is a disservice to students with disabilities who need greater personal, social, and vocational support in order to be successful in college and beyond. Overall, persons with disabilities are chronically under- or unemployed. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2018), the unemployment rate of persons with a disability is 8% compared with approximately 3% of those without disabilities. Although greater access to postsecondary education is a key factor in better career achievement for students with disabilities, more attention must be given to help them develop job skills. On many campuses, career services centers are an effective resource in helping all students explore and attain a career; however, students with disabilities often present unique challenges that traditional career counselors and specialists may not be adequately prepared to address. Disability services providers can serve a vital role in partnering with career services staff in order to better serve students with disabilities. Research has shown that even before students with disabilities reach higher education, they have encountered challenges that have impacted their ability to focus on career development (Hitchings et al., 2001). These include the direct impact of their disability on their learning, the amount of time required to compensate for a disability, and the low expectations of others. These factors often combine to create a lack of vocational awareness. As a result, some students with disabilities arrive on college campuses already at a disadvantage when it comes to career development.
Assessing Personal Biases and Fears Before Serving People with Disabilities
Kathy Evans, President, 2019-2020

Recently, my mother broke her hip and went to a rehabilitation facility to regain strength. While visiting with her, I saw a man with an amputated leg and saw yet another man with both legs amputated. I felt so sorry for them that I found it hard to look them in the eye. This discomfort made me realize that because of my own able-bodied privilege, I rarely encounter people with disabilities and never have to think about people using wheelchairs or who have missing limbs. I know that this kind of discomfort with people with disabilities would be a hindrance if I were helping them with their career exploration or job-seeking efforts. I would need to address this bias/fear before I would be an effective practitioner for clients with amputations.

If a career counselor or professional believes, for example, that people with disabilities have limited career choices, then he or she will do more harm than good to those clients. To be culturally competent, I always recommend that career counselors and practitioners start with self-exploration.

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In a year-long internship where I was responsible for career counseling with students with physical disabilities. My students were challenged with the physical limitations that accompany muscular dystrophy, spina bifida, and cerebral palsy. I learned how to interact with people with disabilities and to overcome my awkwardness through their teasing and good humor. My lack of experience over the intervening decades means I have make-up work to do.

I was only with these students for one year and did not get to see how they fared in the world of work. Were they able to find and keep jobs? Were they able to finish their degrees? What kind of reception did they get on the job if they did find one? What kinds of accommodations were they able to negotiate? Or did they end up in sheltered workshops? (Note: This internship occurred before sheltered workshops were closed and it was not uncommon for students like mine to be placed in one especially if their physical limitations were severe).

There is so much to be done when it comes to people with disabilities participating in the work force that it can be overwhelming. When reading about this population in the Bureau of Labor Statistics report, and as described in more detail in the Marketplace column in this issue, I learned that they have higher unemployment, more underemployment, more part-time work, and higher numbers of leaving the workforce altogether than their counterparts without a disability.

What also saddens me is that in training career counselors and practitioners, we rarely spend more than a single chapter or a single session addressing how to work with people with disabilities. Unless we have personal experiences with this population, we need the assistance of people who work with them every day. I am happy Career Developments is addressing this issue so that career practitioners will have more information and strategies for securing social justice for all their clients.
B eing an NCDA member means you are part of a growing community of colleagues who are dedicated to “inspiring careers and empowering lives.” This summer, NCDA will once again host its Global Career Development Conference, with Dr. Kathy Evans presiding as the 100th President and first woman of color to hold this office. It has been a privilege to work with Kathy to plan the conference which will focus on Inspiring Innovation, Increasing Diversity, and Promoting Social Justice in Career Practice. NCDA received the highest number of conference presentation proposals ever for the Minneapolis Conference this year and the Program Committee had the difficult task of making selections on so many excellent and diverse subjects. Minneapolis is an exciting city, and one that I learned so much about as a result of planning the conference. I was surprised to learn that the greater Twin Cities area has one of the highest concentrations of Fortune 500 Companies in the country. Seventeen major corporations call Minneapolis home including Target, Best Buy, General Mills, and Land O’Lakes. I hope all NCDA members will plan to attend this innovative annual event and enjoy the vibrant city.

In some other exciting news, NCDA’s Government Relations (GR) Committee chair, Diana Bailey, our GR advocate, Jason Ortega, and NCDA’s Credentialing Director, Aaron Leson visited Capitol Hill this past Fall and their timing was perfect! Congressmen Jim Langevin (D-RI) and Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson (R-PA), co-chairs of the Congressional Career and Technical Education (CTE) Caucus, had planned to introduce the Counseling for Career Choice Act, “bipartisan legislation that would make new investments in school counseling to better prepare students for educational and career opportunities.” Diana and Aaron were given the opportunity to provide text for the bill and NCDA was given a prominent quote in the press release when the bill was released, in November, during National Career Development Week. We are very proud of their work on behalf of the association.

NCDA Membership — Being Part of a Growing Professional Community

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How do you define Neurodiversity, and what drives your professional commitment to this field?

SK: Neurodiversity is the concept that neurological differences, such as Dyslexia, ADHD, Autism, and Tourette Syndrome, should be recognized and respected just like any other human variation. This way of thinking regards individuals with differences in their brain function and behavioral traits as part of the normal variation in the human population. Harvey Bloom first coined the term Neurodiversity in a short article in Atlantic Magazine more than 20 years ago, where he claimed that “Neurodiversity may be every bit as crucial for the human race as biodiversity is for life in general”.

As far as what defines my professional commitment to this field, for me, to see any group being systematically overlooked and not given the opportunity to enjoy a meaningful life continues to drive my motivation.

What is most important for career counselors, coaches and specialists to understand about Neurodiversity and their work with Neurodiverse clients?

SK: I think the most important thing for anyone working with or wanting to understand Neurodiverse individuals is that meaningful employment is a basic human right for all people, even if someone has a disability. And, to have a meaningful life you really need to be able to have a job that has real impact and connection for a person.

The second thing that career professionals should understand is that, as a society, we need to stop seeing individuals with neuro-differences as a collection of deficits. This is what Neurodiversity is about—instead of a medical approach of what is broken, we focus on strengths. Intentional effort must be made to welcome and support this community of workers.

Another thing important to understand in this space is that Neurodiverse individuals bring a unique, and often highly sought-after, skillset and perspective, and they can provide value to companies once their skills and abilities have been properly assessed. Once we have an idea of what a person’s strengths, abilities, and interests are we can help figure out where they excel and make connections with companies and opportunities that can benefit from someone with those traits. Whether a parent, a career professional, a mentor or a teacher, it is helpful to work with the individual to look in the future and plan backwards. I always say to look five years ahead to identify what the client might need now to get them to that place.

Additionally, we need to recognize or understand that quite often, or historically, the education system does not have high expectations of students with intellectual disabilities and that parents are usually over-protective of their Neurodiverse students—understanding these types of factors can give career professionals a foundation and starting point for working with clients in a different way.

Specifically when working with Neurodiverse clients, I believe that our approach must be person-centered and strengths-based. These are the buzzwords of today, and almost every program that I see says these are their underpinning or philosophy, but I find that often they are not. The reason that they are not is that it is virtually impossible to truly take this approach if you do not have a non-biased career assessment tool that is specifically designed for people with cognitive differences to figure out what people are good at and interested in. Too often assessments or career programs focus on fitting Neurodiverse people into an available job, and often those jobs are below the individual’s capacity and in an area that they are not interested. I often talk about the 5 F’s—filing, folding, food, flowers, and filth.

We are commonly begging employers to give Neurodiverse people a job, and this is where they end up—undervalued. Understanding the client’s unique skills, abilities, and interests is really essential.

How does the Stanford University Neurodiversity Project support non-neurotypical students, and what role does Career Services play in this project?

SK: One of the things that makes this program so unique, and something that I am really happy to be a part of, is that the leadership at Stanford put out a call to action to all stakeholders for feedback about what Stanford University should be addressing and putting campus-wide effort into. Dr. Lawrence Fung submitted a proposal outlining the top priority as Neurodiversity. Only now in its infancy, the conversation has been started and has moved forward where people are less in their silos around recognizing and supporting Neurodiversity. Because of this large, campus-wide initiative, quite a few programs and campus groups (that you may not have imagined collaborating) are coming to the table to work together to figure this out.

The entire Stanford program is based upon a strengths-based, non-
medical model. Dr. Fung, the director of the program, is a both a scientist and psychiatrist. His teenage son with autism helps him gain a different perspective and urgency in making change. This program is out of the Stanford Medical School, and flips the medical model from focusing on what is broken to a strengths-based approach. It focuses on maximizing the potential of a student, based on their strengths and interests, while acknowledging challenges as challenges and not deficits. Every aspect of the Stanford program is based on collective knowledge from the fields of positive psychology, psychiatry, and psycho-social development.

One part of the program is the Neurodiversity At Work program, which hits on every aspect of employment. Just looking at the “At Work” part, it begins with modifying the interview, then adjusting the on-boarding process, and throughout the entire pre-hire to hire there is an on-the-job circle of support that stays with the person from mentors to mental health supports. The program uses a state-of-the-art matching process and job bank, where we connect the candidates with prospective employers.

It is also important that in the program we carefully evaluate the candidate, and if the candidate is not yet ready, we can refer them to a pre-employment training or internship program. We also have a peer mentor and student support program, and for every person in our program we provide free academic and career help, independent living, and mental health support. Two other components of the “At Work” program are the use of Rangam SourceAbled and Identifor to increase employment outcomes for long-lasting success.

Why do you think Neurodiversity as an area of study and application is gaining more and more traction?

SK: In the next 10 years we are expecting more than 500,000 individuals, just with Autism, to reach the age of adulthood and leave school. Once the school bus stops coming, somewhere between 83-94% of those students are going to be un- or under-employed. We are at a period in our time where so many people who have been diagnosed with Autism are coming into adulthood, and we are not prepared for it.

I believe it’s crucial to think about and understand that the stereotypical portrayal of people with Autism is that people are going to be lovable, quirky but brilliant—like Sheldon Cooper from Big Bang Theory or The Good Doctor who solves some kind of mystifying medical problem is far from reality. What about so many people with cognitive differences who are female? You don’t see that on television very often. Or, the people who are middle-impaired, who aren’t savants or able to be a physicist or to know astronomy like the back of their hand? So many people in this cohort are middle-impaired, non-STEM oriented, and have so much that they can offer but due to public stereotypes, companies are looking for this quirky, lovable brilliant person. I always push for people to look beyond this- the publicity is great because it brings attention to this area yet harmful in the sense that it is too stereotypical in an unnatural and unhelpful way.

What resources do you recommend to career professionals working with Neurodiverse clients in both K-12 and higher education settings?

SK: There are MANY different resources available that share information, best practices, and resources for working with Neurodiverse clients. A few places that I would recommend to start include:

- Autism Speaks’ Employment Toolkit https://tinyurl.com/ukw3uap
- Job Accommodation Network (JAN) https://tinyurl.com/nx3hecd
- Columbia Regional Program, Portland, OR - https://tinyurl.com/tw3jto
- National Collaborate on Workforce and Disability – Info Brief https://tinyurl.com/wgpteea
- Inside Higher Education – Sorting Out Career Assessment https://tinyurl.com/wen42ml

Additionally, at Stanford we use Identifor, a career assessment tool of which I am part of the leadership team. Identifor is a free tool designed specifically for (not limited to) Neurodiverse individuals with a proven track record for helping people set realistic goals and improve employment outcomes (https://tinyurl.com/tsj3uf). On the back-end we are measuring executive functions, multiple intelligences and career interests, and from there we are able to make specific job recommendations.

It is also important to note, that we can help a client get the best job in the world, but if a supervisor says to their employee on Tuesday, “You’ve done a great job this morning, go take a 15 minute break!” and that employee doesn’t come back until Friday, how long do you think that client is going to keep that job? At Identifor, we have also developed a 24/7 artificial intelligence companion app residing on an individual’s phone to keep them on-track throughout the entire day. Often with Neurodiverse individuals the task of identifying and securing meaningful work is not the only factor, it is also about daily functioning in a way that allows someone to maintain that work. These are concepts to help your clients think about and plan for as the manage and balance both their work and personal life—and we’ve found that an AI companion can be helpful.

What advice do you have for career counselors, coaches and specialists serving Neurodiverse clients?

SK: Everyone needs to understand that a purposeful life for everyone includes meaningful employment, so it is important to help people evaluate what they are good at, their inherent strengths, abilities and interests, and what type of employment makes the most sense for them. From there, a career professional working with Neurodiverse individuals needs to partner with these clients to develop a roadmap with clear expectations and benchmarks, and work backwards to help them get to that end-point. What education or training do they need? What kinds of supports or accommodations might be helpful? What needs to be done or what is necessary to get them to their identified end point?

LEARN MORE

To learn more about Neurodiversity or how to support your Neurodiverse clients, review Steve’s recommended resources included above. Check-out the Stanford University Neurodiversity Project at https://med.stanford.edu/neurodiversity.html and the Identifor assessment at https://www.identifor.com/ to further understand Neurodiversity and how to better support Neurodiverse client populations.

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AFFIRMING DIVERSITY AND DISABILITY IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT: Multiple Perspectives, Issues, and Constituencies

By
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The inclusion of disability justice and rights has continued to serve as an ongoing platform affecting career development, workplaces, and organizations. Despite the extensive attention dedicated toward disability in relation to differently-abled communities, diversely-abled communities, and persons living with disabilities, its visibility among culturally responsive practices, multiculturalism, and social justice can continue to benefit from further urgency. In numerous cases, training, supervision, and career services surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion do not always integrate disability explicitly as an identity. With a high prevalence and an expansive definition of disability, disability has become a much more encompassing concept that integrates both visible (e.g., vision and hearing changes) and invisible disabilities (e.g., cognitive ability, learning disability, chronic pain, mental health disorders). Consistent with our approach as a team and as members of the National Career Development Association Committee on Diversity Initiatives and Cultural Inclusion, we developed an article to emphasize critical thinking related to disability across career development and career education settings. Reflecting our viewpoints across the lifespan and constituency groups, this article provides several key aspects and potential action items to involve disability as a comprehensive component of career services.

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Career and Technical Education for Adolescents with Disabilities

As adolescent individuals gradually develop into young adulthood, they begin to feel heavy pressure from teachers, parents, and peers regarding the next steps towards a career path. In order to provide appropriate career and technical education to adolescent students with disabilities, it is vital that career planning initiates early on during secondary education years. Planning for career paths, while including both teacher and school counselor involvement, provides space for collaboration towards an intentional plan of action (Schmalzried & Harvey, 2014). In specific examples, comprehensive services for students with disabilities might include an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) as outcomes designated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It is suggested that a plan of action not only include career options, but specific details that surround firm and realistic goal setting, identifying skills for independent living, and obtaining applicable information about transitional services and resources (Kim, 2017). Implementing a detailed plan of action will not only allow students with disabilities to feel valued and supported, it can also provide room for autonomy, actively utilizing decision-making skills for their career interests and associated needs. Due to the level of staff involvement that is encouraged, secondary educational institutions are also urged to incorporate regular development pertaining to school administration and faculty’s understanding of various disabilities and coordinating challenges students may face. Comprehension of the legal requirements and accommodation laws can assist in providing psychoeducation to students with disabilities and ensures school administration are able to advocate for proper college and workplace adjustments (Dietrich & Smith, 2015). For instance, if a school principal were to input a systematic procedure for continual evaluation of students with disabilities, they would be able to identify which students may need additional time during the SAT as they prepare to enter college. By understanding the legal rights the student holds, school administration is able to advocate for the student in such situations, as well as avoid potential litigations. Consequently, we encourage career practitioners to continuously educate and seek out information on stipulations under IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Regarding additional resources and services for this population, another important area to consider is monitoring of mental health status. A strong career identity can lead to healthy psychological adjustment, well-being, and ultimately life satisfaction (Kroger, 2007). Thus, an individual with a career identity that is diffused or uncertain is at risk of increased symptoms for anxiety or depression, which is increased additionally for those with disabilities. Often adolescents with disabilities tend to have significantly lower confidence towards their abilities to prepare for a future, compared to students that lack disabilities (Lombardi et al, 2018). It is not atypical for postsecondary students with disabilities to minimize their career options or to feel as if they are alone in the process of deciding their future. Although these individuals may enter a school counselor or career counselor’s office with the surface goal of finding employment, career practitioners should closely assess students with disabilities for possible symptoms of anxiety and depression. Such symptoms may be evidenced in behaviors such as strong apprehensions in moving forward with tasks and continued outward expression of hopelessness. Individual counseling or career services can provide a safe space for students with disabilities to voice their concerns, especially if they feel they cannot share with those that might not understand or see them as a valued partner in their career success.

When considering various levels of ability status, there are some statuses that are hidden or invisible to the practitioner, such as diabetes, chronic illness, and fibromyalgia. One invisible disability is the client’s HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) status, which is a protected class under the American Disabilities Act (ADA). At the onset of the AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) crisis, being HIV-positive (HIV+) was a death sentence since treatment was not a priority and was in its infancy. As treatment became more sophisticated, persons who were HIV+ began to enjoy a greater quality of life and prolonged life. According to Ford, Brown, and Filmore (2019), persons who are HIV+- are either returning to the workforce because of treatment or are remaining in

Understanding Hidden Disabilities

Every career counselor can take steps to contribute to an inclusive, disability-affirming culture within career services departments, which helps individuals with disabilities feel understood and respected, and view their career services department as a valued partner in their career success. When considering various levels of ability status, there are some statuses that are hidden or invisible to the practitioner, such as diabetes, chronic illness, and fibromyalgia. One invisible disability is the client’s HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) status, which is a protected class under the American Disabilities Act (ADA). At the onset of the AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) crisis, being HIV-positive (HIV+) was a death sentence since treatment was not a priority and was in its infancy. As treatment became more sophisticated, persons who were HIV+ began to enjoy a greater quality of life and prolonged life. According to Ford, Brown, and Filmore (2019), persons who are HIV+- are either returning to the workforce because of treatment or are remaining in
the workforce. Ford et al. also shared that counselors are not equipped to provide culturally-sensitive counseling to persons who are HIV+ and conceptualize how their HIV status impacts their job search, job productivity, and job satisfaction.

Ford et al. (2019) stated that Black/African American men who sleep with men (MSM) made up the largest number of HIV diagnoses with Hispanic/Latino MSM following behind them. Career counselors must understand the unique needs of queer men of color who are HIV+ and consider how race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and HIV status impact a client’s career. To that end, a career practitioner has to be intentional about HIV status and how various social identities (e.g., race, gender identity, sexuality) intersect with that status. When teaching Career Counseling, Career Development, or Multicultural Counseling, an educator can ask their students what they would do if their client told them they just found out they were HIV+. An educator is responsible for learning about the nuances of hidden disabilities, such as teaching students how HIV impacts the body, relevant terminology, various aspects of treatment, side effects of medications, and how these topics impact a client’s career. Such information can be helpful to integrate explicit discussions for clients and students who need support with advocacy in the workplace or are attempting to navigate workers’ rights with an invisible disability. Especially for training purposes, an educator can provide a scenario that connects several social identities by, for example, combining queer identity, being a man of color, and being HIV+, and how to work with that client who desires to return to work.

Culturally Responsive Career Services and Practices for Individuals with Disabilities: Community AIDS and Private Practice Considerations

With about 650 million individuals living with a disability in the world (World Health Organization [WHO], 2011), the need to integrate culturally responsive career practices becomes imperative for the sustainability of the workforce and this marginalized population. Currently, $2.8 billion dollars are spent to ensure that individuals living with a disability are provided with career services through state-and federal vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009). Career services, such as assessments, diagnosis, treatment, counseling, guidance, training, and assistive technology, job accommodations, job search assistance, and placement (Chiu et al., 2013; Dispenza, 2019), require attention to cultural variables (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation) that can impede the career trajectory of individuals with disabilities. Practitioners and disability service providers working in community agencies and private practice can become intentional and knowledgeable by developing strategies linked to advocacy, empathy, empowerment, and mindfulness to incorporate culturally responsive career services geared towards inclusion of ability status. Vast literature states that individuals living with disabilities encounter cultural barriers that include workplace discrimination, negative attitudes, stigma, social isolation, biases, prejudices, and stereotypes (Dispenza, 2019; Lee, 2013). The intersectionality of these barriers requires intentionality in how career services are employed with attention to awareness, knowledge, and skills for culturally responsive practices.

Career practitioners working in community agencies and private practices can first provide numerous workshops as part of the DRC Workshop series, including “Choosing Your Major and Discovering Your Sense of Purpose”. In teaming with DRC Staff on their Workshop Series, Career Center counselors help to provide a wide array of workshop topics for students with disabilities to facilitate stronger transitions into the workforce. This partnership has also helped the Career Center offer more workshops as part of their workshop series attuned to the needs of students with disabilities.

The second part of the three-pronged approach involves career counselors working with DRC Staff to plan and implement the DRC workshop series focused on academic, extracurricular, and vocational topics. The Career Center working with the DRC helps to ensure that the workshop series has Career Readiness as an integral part of workshops offered. The Career Center has provided numerous workshops as part of the DRC Workshop series, including “Choosing Your Major and Discovering Your Sense of Purpose”. In teaming with DRC Staff on their Workshop Series, Career Center counselors help to provide a wide array of workshop topics for students with disabilities to facilitate stronger transitions into the workforce. This partnership has also helped the Career Center offer more workshops as part of their workshop series attuned to the needs of students with disabilities.

The final part of the three-pronged approach is a referral process that has been established between DRC Staff and the Career Center to ensure that students are connected to the appropriate Career Center Staff as they work towards degree completion and career readiness. With eight colleges at Cal Poly Pomona, a career counselor is assigned to each College. As DRC staff are working with students, when appropriate, they connect them to a career counselor to receive guidance on a range of topics from finding an internship in their chosen field to applying to graduate school. With DRC Staff creating vital connections with the Career Center, students have been more effectively able to broach and understand ability status in career services, advocacy, and the transition to the workforce.
FINAL ACTION POINTS:
Creating a Disability-Affirming Culture

Examining an overview of diverse career settings, career pathways, and offerings from career services, we emphasize the importance of (a) ongoing initiatives to address disability and ability status in career settings, (b) career practitioners continuously integrating explicit discussions on ability status with clients and students, and (c) reflecting on gaps in personal awareness and able-bodied privilege. To exemplify these actions, we close with the offerings in the following list to enhance awareness, skills, knowledge, and action.

BE MINDFUL OF LANGUAGE

- Avoid using language that views disability as a negative trait (e.g., “crippled,” or “impaired”).
- Although the American Psychological Association recommends person-first language (“student with autism”) while referring to a person with a disability, some individuals prefer identify-first language (“autistic student”).
- Mirror clients’ language on how they describe their disability.

IDENTIFY AND REMOVE BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBILITY

- Address attitudinal barriers such as viewing disability as an illness or treating accommodations as an advantage.
- Develop a thorough understanding of disability law, accommodation practices, and disabilities, such as IDEA, the Rehabilitation Act, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and the ADA.
- Ensure that websites meet accessibility standards and are compatible with screen reading software.
- Availability of virtual and phone appointments increase accessibility of services for individuals who may have difficulty attending an in-person appointment.

INCREASE REPRESENTATION

- Recognize and celebrate individuality of students with disabilities on bulletin boards, websites, and social media.
- It is important to recognize that ability status is not only important to people living with disabilities, but rather, ability status and disability inclusion is important comprehensively across career services.
- Highlight disability-related services in promotional materials. Include examples of art, music, literature and magazines either created by, or highlighting, individuals with disabilities in lobby areas.

INVITE DISABILITY COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

- Request input from students with disabilities in program development.
- Ask about needs before making assumptions about needs based on a specific disability.
- Educate employers about cultural inclusion and affirming culture about ability status and disability.
- Develop collaborative relationships with campus offices supporting students with disabilities and student clubs and organizations such as Active Minds.
- Create voluntary opportunities for students to disclose and request accommodations for all career services events, including classroom workshops and presentations.

Continued on page 24
The 2020 NCDA Global Career Development Conference

*Inspiring Innovation, Increasing Diversity, and Promoting Social Justice in Career Practice* is the theme of the 2020 conference scheduled for June 30 – July 2 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Convened by the premier career development association for over 100 years, the NCDA conference is an annual opportunity to learn and earn continuing education units, network, meet leaders in the association and the field, explore a vibrant city, and gain significant professional and personal resources for another year of service to clients, students, and ourselves. The collaborative effort of many individuals and organizations makes this three-day event (or four, if professional development institutes are added on) full of presentations, keynote sessions, constituency and committee meetings, receptions, and exhibitor interactions.

Full details are posted on the NCDA website – visit www.ncdaconference.org – including how to register at the conference hotel, the Hilton Minneapolis in downtown Minneapolis.

**Keynote Speakers**

NCDA received over 420 proposals for presentation, roundtables, poster sessions, and Professional Development Institute (PDIs). From these, the conference program committee, chaired by Paul Timmins, had the difficult job of selecting the most valuable and unique to be a part of the conference. The NCDA President, Dr. Kathy Evans, personally selected the following keynote speakers:

**Dr. Rosie Davis**, professor of counseling psychology at the University of Memphis, has focused her impressive career on the power of inclusion, multicultural vocational psychology, ethics and living well in a diverse society.

**Dr. Patricia Arredondo**, is a scholar, licensed psychologist, and author of more than 100 publications and bilingual counseling training videos. Her seven books reflect her research interests in diversity-driven organizational initiatives, Latinx mental health, women's leadership, and the application of multicultural guidelines for professional development.

**Lisa Taylor** is the President of Challenge Factory and the Centre for Career Innovation. Lisa offers a dynamic perspective on the Future of Work and how demographics, the freelance economy and new market dynamics present opportunities to gain strategic advantage.
Pre-Conference Professional Development Institutes (PDIs)

For those interested or needing more continuing education, NCDA offers the option to register for Professional Development Institutes (PDIs) for a more in-depth look into specific career topics. (PDIs require an additional registration fees). The June 29th PDI options are listed here, with complete details posted online.

**PDI #1**  
Military Culture and Its Impact on Career Development

**PDI #2**  
30+ Interventions for Employee Career Development Integration: A Developmental Model and Its Use

**PDI #3**  
Innovating Career Practice Using Career Construction Counseling

**PDI #4**  
Innovation in Private Practice: How to Reinvent Your Process, Pricing and Promotion

**PDI #5**  
Career Group Work: Creating Meaningful Conversations to Break Client Barriers

**PDI #6**  
Social Justice and Career Practice: Using Superhero Storytelling to Design Empowered Career Narratives

**PDI #7**  
Enhancing Career and College Readiness Self-Efficacy of Children and Adolescents

**PDI #8**  

**PDI #9**  
Hands-on Tools for Veteran Career Counseling

**PDI #10**  
Experience of Service

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For those interested or needing more continuing education, NCDA offers the option to register for Professional Development Institutes (PDIs) for a more in-depth look into specific career topics. (PDIs require an additional registration fees). The June 29th PDI options are listed here, with complete details posted online.

**PDI #1** Military Culture and Its Impact on Career Development

**PDI #2** 30+ Interventions for Employee Career Development Integration: A Developmental Model and Its Use

**PDI #3** Innovating Career Practice Using Career Construction Counseling

**PDI #4** Innovation in Private Practice: How to Reinvent Your Process, Pricing and Promotion

**PDI #5** Career Group Work: Creating Meaningful Conversations to Break Client Barriers

**PDI #6** Social Justice and Career Practice: Using Superhero Storytelling to Design Empowered Career Narratives

**PDI #7** Enhancing Career and College Readiness Self-Efficacy of Children and Adolescents

**PDI #8** Social Justice 101: An Introduction of Concepts and Applications for Career Practitioners

**PDI #9** Hands-on Tools for Veteran Career Counseling

**PDI #10** Experience of Service

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Experience of Service
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Career Services for Students with Disabilities

BY CAROLYN D. JONES

Career Centers are responsible for the provision of support services to assist students in career decision making and successfully attaining their employment goals. When working with students with disabilities the programs and services offered require additional and specialized planning and implementation. The role of the career counselor is to find tools to assist all students to gain independent career decision making skills and to integrate support services for students with disabilities. The unpredictable reality exists of the possibility of having a disability from birth and also has the potential to be part of an occurrence later in life that impacts the life of the individual. Therefore, it’s very important for Career Centers to have systematic and targeted responses to support students with disabilities.

There has been an increase in the number of students with disabilities enrolled in colleges and universities. As career services providers we must acknowledge how impactful life situations such as these significantly influence students overall career development. Having a disability no longer solely suggests a medical response. Intervention options are now more diverse and expand beyond assistance from medical support systems. And, there is a disproportionate level of under and unemployment rates among graduates with disabilities, (Luzzo, Hitchings, Retish and Shoemaker, 1999). To add to the challenges presented there has not been a significant amount of work done on career development theories that incorporate approaches that consider options that are woven into the fabric of the student’s disability (Luzzo, Hitchings, Retish, Shoemaker, 1999).

We recognize that a disability is part of an individual’s self-identity and must be taken into account as we explore their interests, skills and abilities. It’s part of the journey to self-actualization in career decision making. The level of the disability and the onset of the disability play a role in services provided in the career development process. The creation of integrated approaches to the provision of career services for students with disabilities requires the understanding of several factors; the type of disability, family support systems, institutional commitment and the attitude of the career practitioner.

The counseling sessions should begin with a carefully worded brief user-friendly needs assessment presented to entering students/clients can generate important data to identify individuals with specific needs and can target individuals for appropriate interventions. At the same time this provides important justification data for budget allocations for increasing both human and material resources to more effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities (Colozzi, 2000). Reasonable accommodations for assessment and the delivery of services (e.g., offering different approaches to the counseling session) should be a consideration when working with a student with a disability. As in all counseling situations, the assessment and evaluation of individual skills is imperative to create the career development plan.

Identifying the type of disability of each individual is necessary to make the best determination of the types of services to be provided (Enright, Conyers, Szymanski, (1996). If the student has had to construct his/her life from birth to accommodate the disability, there are likely support systems or resources with which they have become familiar. However, if the disability occurs later in life it requires a different approach that includes assistance in the establishment of support systems and information about available resources. In both instances, the counselor should consider the impact of the disability in the students’ career development.

For students with disabilities, usually the parent is the advocate for services within educational systems. As the student enters college, they may be less prepared to function independently. The student may not have had control of their situations in the school setting and the result could be the lack self-confidence. Inevitably the parent likely may continue to play a role during the student’s college experience. In the home environment and working with school systems, the focus is of the parent as advocate is usually on physical accommodations and social adjustments rather than career exploration. Therefore, the lack of meaningful experiences can limit the acquisition and development of requisite skills for career decision making due to the limited development of independence and work engagement skills.

It is most advantageous for the student to communicate with the Student Disability Services Department on campus early on in their college experience. Career Centers are then better able to
offer collaborative programs with that office to develop support services. As an example of collaboration efforts, the University of Central Florida offers support services to students with disabilities through the department of Student Accessibility Services (https://tinyurl.com/yeqywgsk). They offered an Academic Majors Exploration workshop to prospective students through the Down Syndrome Foundation College and Career Program. Participants learned their Holland Interest Code and how to use online resources through Career Services to explore majors and career related to their interests.

Regardless of the availability of support systems at home or at the institution if working with students with disabilities creates an unwelcoming attitude, it will result in a negative experience for the student. According to Smart and Smart, “countertransference, and other emotional reactions to the disability of the client, may prevent the counselor from fully understanding the client and therefore negatively affect the counseling relationship”.

Similarly, as a part of the training for career counselors as with other underrepresented groups based on socioeconomic factors, race/ethnic identity, gender or sexual orientation, career practitioners may have prejudicial thoughts or opinions, or values based on their perception of the disability. To ameliorate this situation the counselor should seek out opportunities to gain the necessary skills and knowledge to properly assist their students. It is very important for career counselors to function within their preparation and training, (Hume, Szymanski and Hohensul, 1989). In addition to working with the disabilities offices on campus, career centers should maintain a list of community resources with disabilities for students and Career Center staff. For example, training for counselors to work with students with disabilities is available in the state of South Carolina. According to Sherry Williams, the Coordinator, Leadership Curriculum and Partnerships in Lexington School District One, all career service providers in the District (career specialists) are trained and certified in the Microburst Employability Skills program, teach the program in the special education classrooms.

Career Centers that design and offer programs to increase awareness of disability issues or supports the employability and life skills of persons with disabilities. With the incorporation of support services and guidance it’s very likely that students with disabilities will be able to gain the necessary skills to participate in the career development process, persist to graduation and gain meaningful employment.

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A complete list of references is available upon request from the author.

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RETHINKING CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND DISABILITY:
School Counselors Supporting ALL Students

BY LAUREN TAYLOR

Over the past 45 years, the support of local and federal government for students with disabilities continues to grow. Originally enacted in 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has become a driving force in providing all students with the opportunity for equity and access within our public education system.

The IDEA ensures the initial placement in an age appropriate classroom and least restrictive environment for children with disabilities ages three to twenty-one (ed.gov, n.d.). Traditional barriers of this population include low expectations, lack of sufficient resources, greater needs in social and life skills, and chronic under or unemployment. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for persons with a disability was 8.0% in 2018, more than twice that of persons without a disability. Counselors in the K-12 setting have the unique calling to assist support agencies within the school and community with preparing these students for independent living and employment. By understanding the structure and supports needed, and using a holistic view to understand the student’s abilities, school counselors are poised to deliver services that may lead to a greater chance of student success.

Continued on page 16
Understanding the Population

When considering the needs of disabled students, it is important first to understand the population’s characteristics and limitations. Disability is a complex term and the needs of one disability may vary greatly from another. Along with this comes the diverse strategies required to assist each student. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 2004) lists 13 disability categories (3-21 year olds are eligible for services). These categories include:

- autism
- deaf-blindness
- deafness
- emotional disturbance
- hearing impairment
- intellectual disability
- multiple disabilities
- orthopedic impairment
- other health impairment
- specific learning disability
- speech or language impairment
- traumatic brain injury
- visual impairment (including blindness)

Of these disabilities, students commonly experience problems with isolation, lack of social and life skills, along with feelings of inferiority and negative self-concept (AAIDD, n.d.; Krell & Perusse, 2012; Riesen, Schultz, Morgan, & Kepferman, 2014). Traditionally, academic supports have been the focus of aid delivered to students, however, their need to understand themselves and their role in society has lacked the same support. Understanding the emotional and physical needs of the student is the first step to developing a comprehensive career support system. This along with career training and preparation are vital to students with a disability because they may have limited access to services to acquire and maintain employment after graduation (Carter, Trainor, Ditchman, & Owens, 2011; Swank & Huber, 2013).

The School Counselor’s Role

Promoting equity for all students leads one to consider the traditional roles of a school counselor and ways to use these channels to assist this population. Consultation, assessment and intervention play equally important roles in supporting students with disabilities in their post-secondary goals. Consultation extends to avenues such as family, community, and other service providers within the school. Parental involvement tends to be the most salient form of support. Disabled students’ families provide aid in two key areas: advocacy and independent living skills. Family members have the closest relationship with their children and by far the most impact. By empowering families with information, resources, and skills, they are perfectly positioned to support their children, promote autonomy, and encourage a positive self-concept, all strong indicators of individual success. Self-determination skills, self-advocacy, social skills, interpersonal skills, and independent living skills (Song & Tang, 2016) should be a part of the services provided through the school counseling curriculum and direct services.

Consultation with community agencies is another key resource for the school counselor’s toolbox. Community agencies, services, and policies play a vital role in supporting a student’s success in their career goals. Being knowledgeable of what players are working alongside counseling staff bolsters opportunities and outcomes for students in this traditionally underserved population. It is essential for school counselors to join forces in IEP (Individual Education Program) meetings, work with school social workers and administration, and lead conversations around career and long-term outcomes for students with disabilities.

Utilizing resources such as Holland’s Self-Directed Search (Gottfredson & Holland, 1996) and disability-specific assessments such as the Personal Capabilities Questionnaire (Crewe & Athelstan, 1984) and the Work Experience Survey (Roessler, 1995) clarify a disabled student’s vocational interests and personality factors. Holland’s Self-Directed search provides information matching aspirations, activities, and talents related to career choices and educational opportunities that align with student goals. The Personal Capability Assessment is helpful in identifying physical and mental disability or illness. The information from this can be used to identify holistic treatment options to support the individual in daily functioning and pave the way for better career readiness. The Work Experience Survey (WES) allows...
individuals with disabilities to direct their accommodation planning by identifying productivity barriers through six measures: background information, barriers to physical access, problems with essential job functions, job mastery concerns, job satisfaction, and accommodation planning priorities (Rossler, Hennessey, & Hogan, 2009). By using these assessments and others, counselors can structure supports to eliminate obstructions commonly experienced by this population when preparing for entry into the workforce.

Workforce skills interventions for disabled students mirror those offered to the general student body. Providing opportunities commonly associated with self-determination training such as “coaching, modeling, rehearsal, feedback, reinforcement, goal setting, instructions, discussion, peer training, problem solving training, self-instruction, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement” (Maag, 2006) open doors for the student to identify areas within themselves to focus on when preparing for entry into the workforce and/or higher education opportunities. The use of social skills training along with self-determination training supports students using a multifaceted approach, addressing a wide array of areas within the individual, that once identified, can be used to hone employment skills, aid in job searches, improve social skills for interviews, enhance professionalism, and solidify work ethics all leading to greater levels of employability. This parallels the processes that school counselors use to help non-disabled students achieve their academic and career goals. However, there may be more emphasis placed on a student’s individual learning style or an area where they require additional support as they work through the social skills training and self-determination training processes.

**IMPLICATIONS**

The problems common to disabled students require school counselors to take a proactive approach in addressing their needs. Understanding the physical and mental capabilities of the student allows counselors to provide resources to the family and connect students with outside support agencies. Students with disabilities face social barriers, negative self-concept, isolation, and can lack the social and life skills necessary to be successful in careers. Collaborating with support staff within the school, their caretakers, and outside agencies provides the resources students need. Using assessments to identify specific areas of focus allows school counselors to understand the student from a holistic point of view and develop interventions matched to the individual’s particular needs. By supporting the students physical, mental, and social development, school counselors are better able to answer the call of providing career readiness skills and employability support to disabled students.
Improving Employment Outcomes for Students on the Autism Spectrum with Career Ready Boot Camp

BY LAURIE ACKLES AND JANINE ROWE

Rochester Institute of Technology’s Neurodiverse Hiring Initiative — a campus collaboration between Career Services and the Spectrum Support Program — initiated an innovative program that offers rising second year college students with autism the opportunity to learn and practice job readiness skills.

Students on the autism spectrum are arriving to college campuses in greater numbers than ever before, placing demands on college career centers to ensure that their advising policies and career programming are inclusive to neurodiverse students. While students on the autism spectrum may perform well academically, common characteristics of the autism spectrum may contribute to challenges navigating the career development process and leading to underemployment and unemployment rates as high as 90%. Many individuals with autism lack the early work experiences that contribute to building the important skills needed for future employment success. Likewise, campus career centers may lack the training, tools, and resources to meet the needs of job seekers on the autism spectrum, which necessitates innovative programming and cross-campus collaborations.

**Needs-Based CRB Services**

Rochester Institute of Technology’s (RIT) Career Ready Boot Camp (CRB) provides a dedicated, tailored opportunity for students with autism to build competencies that employers value, including problem-solving, communication, teamwork, leadership, and professionalism. The CRB experience boosts the work-readiness skills that are often lacking in young adults on the autism spectrum, such as stress management, taking initiative, working under pressure, taking feedback, and resolving conflict. Students receive direct instruction on these skills during classroom sessions, and then put the skills into practice by working in project-based learning teams to build 3D printers. Students further refine their skills while working with customers from the RIT campus community, teaching them to use the newly constructed printers.

Week one instruction includes classroom lessons covering initiative, cooperative teamwork, planning and organizing, decision-making and coping with pressure. Participants practice building supportive relationships within their project team by focusing on listening, adapting to fellow team members’ diverse work styles, and focusing on shared goals. During project sessions in the campus makerspace, students work in teams to establish and prioritize project tasks and objectives, and set working deadlines. Participants practice building supportive relationships within their project team by focusing on listening, adapting to fellow team members’ diverse work styles, and focusing on shared goals. During project sessions in the campus makerspace, students work in teams to establish and prioritize project tasks and objectives, and set working deadlines. Students work in teams to establish and prioritize project tasks and objectives, and set working deadlines. Students work to develop confidence in making decisions with incomplete or ambiguous information, working under time pressure, and taking responsibility for their role in the project. During the second week, students are assigned a “customer”, an organization or campus group, and begin the 3D printer build. Teams are coached on how to anticipate customer needs and practice communicating clearly and confidently within their project team. The third and final week includes lessons on demonstrating integrity, applying an analytical approach to solving problems to reach logical conclusions, and working effectively with complicated or conflicting information. Participants are expected to maintain a positive attitude and show a readiness to adapt when presented with new information, new situations or shifting priorities.

In addition to classroom and makerspace project sessions, participants tour RIT’s technology business incubator. Other local employer visits, arranged by the employer relations team with the Career Services office, provide opportunities for students to practice professional networking. Students also participate in wellness activities, including a visit to the RIT Exercise Science Program’s Fitness Lab and travel to off-campus social outings to build team cohesiveness. Students participate in weekly performance reviews.
Continuing on page 20

with program staff, with each participant rated and evaluated in several key areas, encompassing teamwork, sharing credit, putting the team first, managing stress, and remaining optimistic. Students are assessed on their ability to reframe criticism, as well as daily punctuality, preparedness, and professionalism including maintaining appropriate attire and grooming. Students also complete daily reflection exercises to assess lesson take-a-ways and consider areas for personal growth. As they progress, students participate in a mock interview conducted by Career Services staff and learn to detail the 3D printer project in their resume, and talk about it during an interview.

Creating a Program Structure

CRB’s opportunity is offered to students who are finishing their initial year at RIT and are enrolled in the Spectrum Support Program (SSP), a specialized program that provides individualized coaching and mentoring support throughout the academic year to RIT students with autism. To be eligible, SSP enrolled students must be in good academic standing and registered to return for coursework the following fall. Interested students fill out an online application and complete a face-to-face interview, giving program staff the opportunity to identify each student’s motivation to participate, and understand their current approach to working in groups and receiving feedback. Once accepted into the program, students are required to pay a deposit to hold their place, with the remainder of the cost covered by philanthropic support. Attendance is mandatory at all program functions from 9am-4pm Monday-Friday for the duration of the 3-week program. In these simulated work environments, business casual attire is expected of students throughout, with some casual dress days built in.

Participants’ Range of Outcomes

In the two summers of its offering, 18 students successfully completed the 3-week camp. Five of the eight students who participated in year one secured a work experience in their field of study the following summer, including electrical, chemical and software engineering internships. In pre- and post- Boot Camp evaluations, students identified an increase in their comfort level working in teams, including significant increases in the ability to resolve group conflicts. Program evaluations indicate that students are highly satisfied with the experience. Recent student feedback included: “The camp was amazing and I loved every day” and “The makerspace provided insight into how a hands-on project team works”, and “Everyone felt very connected.” At the conclusion of the program, students have finalized resumes and a personalized disclosure script. The opportunity to share on-campus housing during the camp led to increased social connections between participants, and at least one group who resided together for CRB made arrangements to share on-campus housing the following academic year.

Facilitating this Boot Camp

In collaboration with the University’s Development team, we were able to secure a lead gift from a family whose son has benefited from the Spectrum Support Program and who believes in our vision for the Neurodiverse Hiring Initiative. Their gift, in addition to the support from other

Continued on page 20
donors, is the primary source of funding for the CRB.

The Career Ready Boot Camp is primarily run by SSP staff. Additionally, the camp relies on mentors and staff from the RIT Simone Center for Innovation who run the campus maker-space. Simone Center staff oversee the printer build and support the build process. Career Services staff are frequent visitors during the camp, providing instruction and support including assisting with resume and cover letter writing, and leading the discussion regarding disability disclosure.

Making a Difference

The Career Ready Boot Camp can help campuses close the gap on underemployment and unemployment among students on the autism spectrum by providing both direct instruction and opportunities to practice, then refine soft skills and work readiness skills. In the weeks and months after the programs’ conclusion, participants were observed to have greater confidence in their skills, increased clarity on their career goals, and were well prepared to engage in job search tasks such as attending networking events and career fairs. The program also caught the attention of RIT employer partners, who requested to engage with our students as a way to create a recruitment pipeline of talented students with disabilities to their university recruiting programs.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

2015 National Autism Indicators Report: Transition into Young Adulthood (Roux et al., 2015)

National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE): https://tinyurl.com/t33e3tt

YouTube Video: Career Ready Boot Camp at RIT: https://youtu.be/KiF34clf4c8

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Janine Rowe, MSEd., CCC, NCC (rowe.janine@gmail.com), is President of the New York State Career Development Association and a counselor at the University of Rochester Medical Center. She was formerly the Assistant Director for Careers and Disability at Rochester Institute of Technology, and maintains a private career counseling practice.

A complete list of references is available upon request from the authors.
Ethical Practice for Working with Persons with Disabilities

Labor market statistics regarding persons with disabilities are sobering. In 2018, the employment-population ratio—the proportion of the population that is employed—was 19.1 percent among those with a disability, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018). In contrast, the employment-population ratio for those without a disability was 65.9 percent.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018) also reports that persons with disabilities are more likely to be underemployed, or to work part time. Persons with disabilities are less likely to have completed a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to those with no disability. Across all levels of education in 2018, persons with a disability were much less likely to be employed than were their counterparts with no disability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

As career practitioners, how do we ethically work with clients with disabilities who may under-employ or unemployed?

The NCDA Code of Ethics is clear: “Career professionals actively attempt to understand the diverse cultural backgrounds of the individuals they serve” (Sec. A, Intro.). The NCDA Code of Ethics also calls career professionals to be competent and to seek appropriate training for areas in which they have limited knowledge (Sec. C, Professional Competence).

Persons with disabilities comprise a rich and diverse culture, encompassing many different physical, emotional and/or medical conditions that affect those persons’ lives. To understand this population and its culture, and to work competently as a career professional, a critical first step is to have a baseline knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act (Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA], 1990). The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the public. A 2008 amendment to the ADA expanded the definition of disability.

Knowledge of the appropriate resources is an important second step. Regardless of practice setting for the career professional, there are numerous referral resources or partners in providing assistance for persons with disabilities. These resources can include state departments of vocational rehabilitation, disability service offices on college campuses, special education coordinators in K-12 settings, and the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy, for example.

A third step for career professionals is to examine their own biases and attitudes when working with persons with disabilities. Ethical career professionals engage in self-reflection to determine what biases may affect their working relationship with clients with disabilities (NCDA Code of Ethics, Sec. A Intro.).

Finally, career professionals must be willing to engage in advocacy, in collaboration with clients with disabilities. The NCDA Code states: “Career professionals are encouraged to promote change at the individual, group, institutional, and societal levels in ways that improve the quality of life for individuals and groups and removes potential barriers to the provision or access of appropriate services being offered” (Sec. C, Professional Responsibility).

CASE EXAMPLE

Here is how this might all fit together. Chris P. (real student with identifiers removed) was a graphic design and business double major at a small private college in the upper Midwest. In early childhood, Chris had been diagnosed with a specific learning disability that affected his ability to understand what he heard.

On the campus where he attended college, the career services office and the disability services office occupied spaces in the same set of office suites. During his first semester at college, both the disability services director and the career services director suggested that Chris authorize communication between the two of them. Regular, monthly team meetings were then set up between Chris, the disability services director, and the career services director. These meetings covered Chris’ progress in his classes, appropriate classroom accommodations that helped him master learning, and his career plan for post-graduation.

The career services director learned more about Chris’ specific disability during these meetings, and it helped her understand specific needs Chris might have for a work environment. These regular meetings also provided the career services director a chance to get to know Chris as a person, and to see around his quirky, abrupt communication style.

On three occasions during Chris’ tenure at college, the career services director advocated on his behalf with the state department of vocational rehabilitation. This department, in turn, provided supported employment and financial assistance for Chris. Both of these benefits helped Chris find an internship in his desired field, and helped pay for graphic design software for his computer.

Chris graduated from the small, upper Midwest college and he has since started a company with his grandmother, a successful t-shirt design business.

In closing, the data associated with employment of persons with disabilities may be sobering. But, with understanding, self-awareness and advocacy, career professionals can make a difference.
Persons with a disability have a very much lower participation in the US workforce economy, and when they do so experience a much higher unemployment rate. Of those that are employed, a considerably higher proportion is self employed or working only part time compared to the non-disabled. Disabled individuals have similar educational attainment to the non-disabled population with sixty percent completing at least some college.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics in the US Department of Labor provides annual data on the labor force characteristics of persons with disabilities as part of their ongoing national survey of the American work force. Based on their definition (see sidebar) there were slightly more than 30 million disabled individuals over the age of 16 in the United States in 2018. As expected, nearly half (14.8 million) were age 65 or older, and of those seniors a relatively small one million were in the labor force working or seeking work.

Of these five million officially counted as being in the labor force, 4,600,000 were employed and 445,000 unemployed. Their unemployment rate was 8.7% compared to the overall national rate of 3.9 percent. In addition, slightly over one in four of the employed disabled population is working only part time, much higher than the one in six non-disabled employed.

That leaves about 15.3 million disabled persons in the primary 16-64 working age. Just over five million of these were in the labor force, a third of the total population in that age group. This 33% labor force participation rate for disabled compares to a much higher 77% rate for those without a disability.
Three in five of the total disabled labor force had at least some college education. A third of the disabled labor force are working management or professional occupations with the largest number in educational fields. A quarter work in office or sales occupations and a fifth in service jobs in healthcare, protection, food preparation, personal care, or janitorial. The predominate industries are education and health services and retail trade. One in ten are self-employed, a much higher than the one in six of the non-disabled employed population.

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Jonique R. Childs (jrchilds@umass.edu) is an assistant professor in the College of Education Student Development program. She has completed her Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision from the University of Iowa. Additionally, she has completed a graduate minor in Multicultural Education & Cultural Competency and is a Nationally Certified Counselor (NCC). Jonique has also completed dual Masters degrees MS.Eds in school and clinical mental health counseling with an emphasis in career development. Dr. Childs’ research investigates the psychosocial needs of students that identify as First Generation in K-12 and post-secondary education.

A complete list of references is available upon request from the authors.

The NCDA website is organized around the mission statement: The National Career Development Association (NCDA) provides professional development, publications, standards, and advocacy to practitioners and educators who inspire and empower individuals to achieve their career and life goals.

Career Developments readers will find the following information, pertinent to this issue’s theme, on the NCDA website at www.ncda.org.

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Career practitioners are encouraged to utilize the resources provided by NCDA, particularly the websites linked under “Internet Sites for Career Planning.” Scroll down to “Special Populations: Clients with Disabilities” to view about a dozen links to helpful websites, such as Lime Connect and the Job Accommodation Network.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact the Authors via email.

**GENERAL DISABILITIES:**
- **Disclosing a Hidden Disability in the Employment Setting** - By Trish Thoburn
- **Helping Individuals with Disabilities Find Meaningful Work Through Discovery** - By Lisa Kelley
- **Adjusting the Career Counseling Process for Individuals with Non-Apparent Disabilities** - By Janine Rowe

**SPECIFIC DISABILITIES:**
- **Helping Clients with Right Hemisphere Brain Damage with Post-Stroke Career Development** - By Levette Dames and Jamila Minga
- **Job Searching Considerations For Blind And Visually Impaired Individuals** - By Mason Murphy

**ARTICLES THAT HELP WITH DISABILITIES ISSUES (such as learning soft skills):**
- **Group Career Counseling: An Effective Intervention for Increasing Soft Skills** - By Carra Beam
- **Workforce Counseling: A Conceptual Model to Better Prepare High School Students for the School to Work Transition** - By Brian C. Preble

**Career Convergence** authors offer a variety of thoughtful issues and strategies regarding serving the disabled population. Go to www.careerconvergence.org and search on the following titles or authors to find more information on general disabilities, specific disabilities, and issues related to careers.

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www.ncdacredentialing.org
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