

Assessing the Impact of a Person Centered Behavioral Support Program on the Employment of People With Disabilities in the U.S. Virgin Islands

Kimberly R. Mills, Ph.D., BCBA-D, Christopher Smith, Ph.D., Jennifer Zarcone, Ph.D., BCBA-D

Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD), Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities (MCDD) & Kennedy Krieger Institute (KKI), Virgin islands
Department of Labor, Disabilities & Rehabilitation Services Department of Human Services, U.S. Virgin Islands

Abstract

VIUCEDD has been engaged in ongoing efforts to improve the lives of people with disabilities and to facilitate their maximal inclusion and independence in the larger Virgin Islands community. The employment of people with disabilities has been and remains a top priority for VIUCEDD. Members of VIUCEDD partnered with disability employment experts at MCDD and behavioral support experts at KKI to develop a pilot program that would merge best practices in disability employment supports, best practices in behavioral supports and best practices in transition planning for people with disabilities to develop a comprehensive plan to support the employment needs of people with disabilities. The data presented in this poster indicate a mean increase in knowledge of employers and job coaches in relation to disability knowledge and initial favorable trends in relation to decreases in maladaptive behaviors for one candidate associated with this study.

Introduction

According to data from Cornell University's disability statistics data base, in 2014, there are approximately 36% of people with disabilities aged 21-64 were employed. More recent data from the United States Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment policy indicates that 20.6% of people with disabilities are employed when compared to nearly 70% for non-disabled persons. This number represents a disproportionately low number when compared to the numbers of peers who are typically developing who are employed and in the workforce. College students with disabilities fare slightly better. Erickson, Lee and von Schrader (2014) found that college students with disabilities were employed at a rate of 52.7% when compared to their peers without disabilities who were employed at a rate of nearly 84%. Despite the seemingly high numbers of college students with disabilities who find employment, a closer look at these statistics tell a different story when it comes to those with more cognitive disabilities and mental health challenges. Individuals with when these statistics are analyzed These numbers actually appear quite high when one considers that overall disability employment statistics for people with physical and mental impairments tops out at 16% and 7% respectively (Dutta, Gervey, Chan, Chou and Ditchman, 2008).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Mental Health Services cites supported employment as an evidenced based practice in support of the employment needs of people with disabilities. Several of the aspects related to successful supported employment program characteristics are included in this research study such as commitment by collaborating agencies, Minimal pre-employment assessment, client preference and ongoing support delivered through a system of mediated scaffolding. This research intervention will employ aspects of these models and for the first time employ a Person Centered approach to the pursuit of employment.

Person Centered Planning for people with disabilities has been a cornerstone of good disability service when planning the transition of students with disabilities into post-secondary setting (Menchetti & Garcia, 2003). Person-centered planning for employment purposes now underpins many of Federal disability employment programs and is required for programs such as such as the Commission for the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) (Menchetti & Garcia). Each employee candidate will undergo a person-centered planning process at the beginning of this disability employment intervention. Additionally, characteristic of the Person Centered approach to disability planning are inherent in the science of Applied Behavior Analysis. Applied Behavior Analysis is the science of changing socially significant behaviors through the manipulation of antecedent and consequent stimuli (Cooper, Heron & Heward, 2007). School systems are now required to employ instructional modalities that are behavior analytic in nature and have been at the foundation of ABA since its inception. This is for students with disabilities and those who are typically developing (Bloh & Axelrod, 2008). The assessment from multiple sources and multiple settings implicit in a behavior analytic intervention combined with the focus on socially significant behavior change makes this type of treatment a natural fit and companion for a person centered approach to disability services. Despite the long history and extensive literature surrounding the effectiveness of behavior analytic approaches, the literature is scant of references of ABA supports in the service of disability employment.

This intervention will serve as a pilot program to marry three effective treatment modalities into an innovative approach to help meet the employment needs of people with disabilities.

Materials & Methods

Methods

The pre/post test assessment is a 15-item multiple choice instrument that included questions about disability knowledge. Employer and Job Coaches took the inventory prior to a two hour training on disabilities and immediately afterwards.

Job Coach candidates also engaged in a two hour training on Applied Behavior Analytic methodologies and data collection techniques. They were trained on the individual protocols and date collection techniques in relation to their individual candidate.

Employee subjects all received or will receive a :

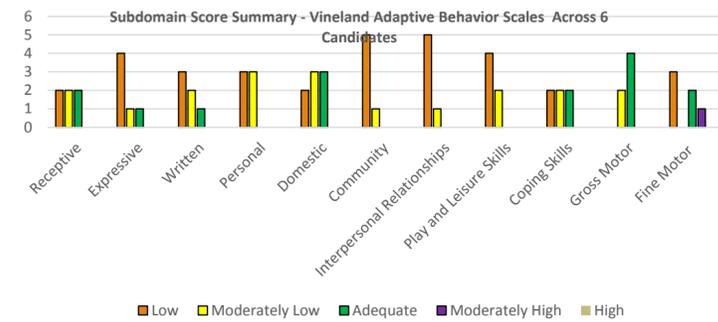
- Person Centered Planning Meeting with a multidisciplinary team
- Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale
- Functional Behavior Assessment
- Behavior Intervention Plan Development when applicable
- A treatment planning guidebook with data collection systems and plans complete with individualized problem behavior protocols, data systems to track skill building along adaptive inventories and behavior reduction along maladaptive behavior domains.
- Other career interest inventories and surveys.
- Ongoing monitoring of data and treatment.

Participants

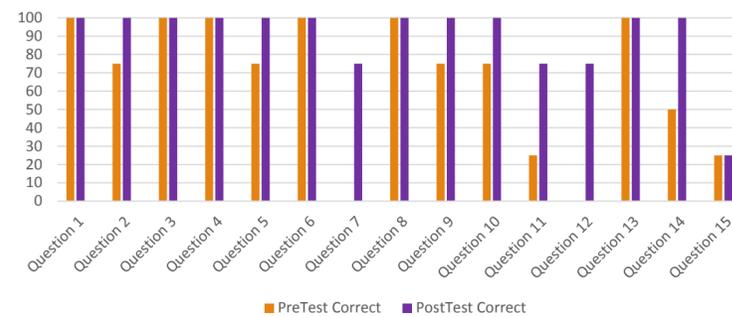
The participants for this study are 8 young adults with disabilities who are registered with Vocational Rehabilitation Services, 8 Employers and 8 Job Coaches residing in the U.S. Virgin Islands on the Islands of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix.

Discussion

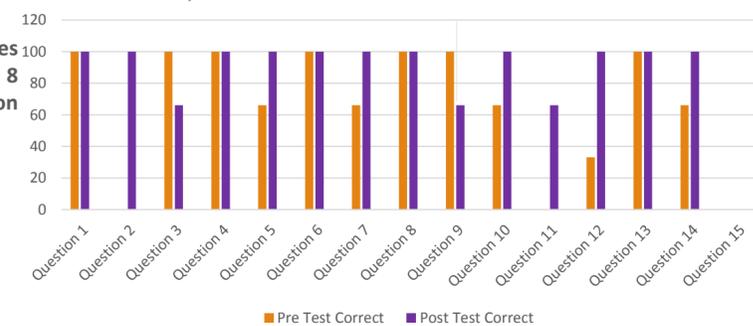
Results



Pre/Post Test Date for Employers - Disability Knowledge - 4 Employers



Pre/Post Test Data for Job Coaches - 3 Candidates



Inappropriate Touching - RA



Conclusion

There was a net gain of knowledge between pre and post test assessments related to content knowledge surrounding disability knowledge. The total correct answers on pretest responses was 40 versus 54 on Posttest assessments for employers. There was a net gain in correct responses for job coaches as well with their pretest data totaling 29 correct responses versus 39 at post test follow up.

Data from the vineland adaptive behavior inventories indicates that all of the candidates are suffering from severe deficits in adaptive behaviors and are in need of the Person Centered adaptive behavior inventories.

Preliminary single subject data indicates reductions in problem behaviors.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE/CONTINUED RESEARCH:

Future analysis of these data will include the administration/re-administration of the Adult Hope Scale to Caregiver participants to see if project has resulted in any changes related to their responses on the inventory. Ongoing and future data collection will include detailed data collection on a number of adaptive and maladaptive behaviors for the employee subject clientele, the graphing of those data and the use of those data for program modifications.

Future iterations of this research will focus on extending those aspects of this study that proved to be effective to a larger group of employee subjects.

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Contact Information

Kimberly R. Mills, PH.D., BCBA-D
D Kimberly.Mills@uvi.edu
340-692-4265