

delAware – Summer 2010 – Transition

Skills, Desires, and Goals Guide Individualized Employment Plans

Doug Dallabrida loves his job at the Marriott Courtyard Newark-University of Delaware. His success is one example of how TEEM Employment Services is achieving its goal: ensuring that all participants work in jobs they enjoy that are of their own choosing. Employment Services, one component of the CDS Transition Education Employment Model (TEEM), uses a person-centered approach to help young adults and adults with disabilities develop an individualized plan for employment based on their skills, desires, and goals.

The program includes vocational evaluations, vocational and job skills training, real work experiences, career exploration, job site accommodations, job coaching/support, and 13-week internships. Doug, who was referred to CDS for competitive employment, was part of the Center's original CBEA (Community-based Education Alliance) program. An aspiring hotel worker, Doug and another student enrolled in and completed a 90-day training program offered by the Marriott to certify students in hotel hospitality services.

In addition to learning job skills during his internship, Doug gained independence and began to take more initiative. "I don't expect other people to do things for me. I do things myself," he explained. Doug was subsequently hired by Marriott to work three days a week in the housekeeping department. Whether he's doing laundry, cleaning, vacuuming, or operating the machine that folds sheets, Doug likes everything about his job.

CDS served as the provider of Doug's employment services through one of the partnerships the Center has established with three Delaware state agencies: Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS), and Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI). These agencies support a variety of programs for people with disabilities who qualify for services leading to employment.

One program is Early Start to Supported Employment (ESSE), which was developed by DVR, DDDS and other state agencies to provide a more seamless transition for students who need supported employment services for job success. ESSE targets young adults – students in 18- to 21-year-old school programs – and helps them choose an adult service provider. If the student and his/her family choose CDS as their provider, TEEM Employment Services staff members immediately begin working with the student on the transition from school to work.

The young adult begins by completing three community-based work assessments, which determine the individual's interests and how his/her skills match with various occupations. TEEM Employment Services staff members also conduct vocational evaluations and job skills training and engage in career exploration with the student. When this process is completed, the next step is for the student to be hired as a paid employee before graduating or exiting from school. Once the student is hired, CDS provides a coach for 90 days to provide for a smooth transition and to help establish natural supports in the workplace. After this period of time, the

coach gradually withdraws support until the employer or individual determines support is no longer necessary.

Other DVR clients in need of competitive or supportive employment services may choose CDS as their provider, depending on their particular needs. Individuals in competitive employment are provided with job coaching and support for the first 90 days after being hired into an integrated work setting. Supported employment is for young adults and adults who need job supports in an integrated work setting for an indefinite period of time.

The foundation for the Center's employment initiative was laid in 2008 with funding from a generous three-year grant from the Howard W. Swank, Alma K. Swank, and Richard Kemper Swank Foundation. During its first year, TEEM Employment Services has supported more than 45 clients. The program has been successful in helping to employ numerous people with disabilities in meaningful jobs.

For more information about TEEM Employment Services, contact Wendy Claiser at 302.831.8103.