career pathways for Individuals with Disabilities
DARS | Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services
dbvi Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired

BEST PRACTICES VIRGINIA CAREER PATHWAYS

Assistive Technology for Career Training and at Work

Issue: Career training – generally post-secondary training that prepares an individual for a job in a specific field- includes industry recognized certifications as well as various degrees in higher education. Assistive technology (AT) (any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities) can be used to support an individual's success in the classroom.[1] During the course of the CPID project, the CPID AT/OT specialist used classroom observations at the Wilson Workforce Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) to evaluate individual clients for Assistive Technology needed for credential training success. Post-employment follow up indicated that many individuals had less of a need for assistive technology supports in the workplace.

Strategy: VACPID AT professionals evaluated individual DARS/DBVI CPID clients for AT needs initially. Based on feedback from the individual and AT specialist, VACPID provided and trained the individual on the AT necessary for school / job placement. Within the framework of this grant, the VACPID team developed and purchased equipment for a VACPID AT Lending Library. The Library included an array of AT equipment for demonstration and loan most often needed in targeted career pathways. VACPID staff provided short-term equipment loans to individuals and businesses for evaluation purposes. As a collaborative partner with the project, the Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS), housed and maintained the CPID Loaner Library equipment.

Program implementation

The CPID AT/OT did initial research on AT that would likely be needed in the classroom and at work, by the CPID targeted population (individuals with disabilities that desired and were capable of pursuing career pathways in advanced manufacturing, information technology, health care, and automotive). Two of each item was purchased. The AT/OT was able to loan a device and keep the second one for demonstration. Almost immediately, there was a need for more devices at WWRC and for other career

[1] https://www.atia.org/home/at-resources/what-is-at/

pathway clients throughout the state. Due to the statewide need, all of the DARS AT Labs in the state were added; Richmond, Fairfax, Fishersville and Christiansburg. The OT / AT Specialists cover the entire state and were equipped to provide the evaluations, demonstrations and loan of this equipment.

Sustainability:

VATS will continue to own, maintain and keep data on the equipment. We have a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with partners that will continue to evaluate / loan / recommend this assistive technology. Our partners include the DARS OT/AT Specialist who has been an integral part of choosing and using the AT during this grant.

Lessons Learned:

1. AT was low cost - most under $50 (See list of items acquired through the CPID project), Attachment A).
2. Universal Design for Learning decreased the need for AT in the classroom
3. More AT was used in the classroom / testing then on the job due to Lean manufacturing
4. Sometimes it was not a piece of AT but a therapeutic strategy that was most helpful. (Sleep hygiene, organizational skills, communication skills)
5. Sensory strategies and AT for self-regulation was used the most.

Resources:

See Best Practices: Sensory Kits

Logistics and Manufacturing Assistive Technology