

1-1-2015

Employment Needs of the Age 21 and Over ID Population in South Florida : An Occupational Therapy Perspective

Ingris Treminio
Nova Southeastern University

This document is a product of extensive research conducted at the Nova Southeastern University [College of Health Care Sciences](#). For more information on research and degree programs at the NSU College of Health Care Sciences, please [click here](#).

Follow this and additional works at: https://nsuworks.nova.edu/hpd_ot_student_dissertations

 Part of the [Occupational Therapy Commons](#)

All rights reserved. This publication is intended for use solely by faculty, students, and staff of Nova Southeastern University. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, now known or later developed, including but not limited to photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author or the publisher.

NSUWorks Citation

Ingris Treminio. 2015. *Employment Needs of the Age 21 and Over ID Population in South Florida : An Occupational Therapy Perspective*. Doctoral dissertation. Nova Southeastern University. Retrieved from NSUWorks, College of Health Care Sciences – Occupational Therapy Department. (56)
https://nsuworks.nova.edu/hpd_ot_student_dissertations/56.

This Dissertation is brought to you by the Department of Occupational Therapy at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Occupational Therapy Program Student Theses, Dissertations and Capstones by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.

Employment Needs of the Age 21 and Over ID Population in South Florida:

An Occupational Therapy Perspective

Ingris Treminio MS, OTR/L

August 2015

Nicole Quint, Dr.OT, OTR/L

Nova Southeastern University

Acknowledgments

Several individuals who willingly gave their time to share their knowledge and true passion for employment and the ID population made studying this topic in depth possible. Both Allison Chase and David Lin put forth several hours to accommodate me and went out of their way to ensure they helped me. I am grateful for their time and efforts. I feel that I was given an advantage by receiving the opportunity to learn from the both of them. The work being done at the High School High Tech programs across the state and the Palm Beach Habilitation Center is exemplary thanks to these leaders.

I am humbled by the existence of individuals like the study participants and employers who did not hesitate to give their time and share their life experiences.

Debra Stewart truly ensured me that I was headed in the right direction and encouraged me to do more. I am grateful for her guidance both through her publications and telephone interview.

Lastly, I am truly grateful for my professors, my leaders. For helping me organize my thoughts, revise countless papers, and keeping me focused on what is really important, our profession, I am thankful. Dr. Quint and Dr. Peirce, I have changed as a person and occupational therapist because of this experience that would never have been possible without your guidance. Dr. Quint, I truly value the extra time you took to meet with me and encourage me. Thank you.

Abstract

A review in the literature makes it evident that employment needs of the age 21 and over ID population are not being met; the employment rate for this population continues to be less than half of the employment rate of the general population (Siperstein et al., 2013). There is evidence that occupational therapy has the potential to meet the employment needs of this population, however, practice guidelines for occupational therapists working with this population are limited. This study recruited seven participants and interviewed them using a needs assessment approach to investigate the employment needs of the age 21 and over ID population in South Florida, from the perspective of all stakeholders, further define occupational therapy intervention and practice guidelines within this matter, and propose a program to meet that need under an occupational therapy scope of practice. After analyzing study transcriptions, summative topics, or codes, were noted to be repeated throughout the data. Topics included tips for: 1) successful employment, 2) barriers towards employment, 3) positive employment outcomes, and 4) proposed solutions. Recorded information is reported as part of study findings using synthesized participant comments.

Key Words: Intellectual Disability, Employment, Occupational Therapy, Transitions, Successful Employment

Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction.....	p.6
Background and Significance	p.6
Purpose and Objectives.....	p.7
Chapter II: Literature Review	p.9
Current Employment Trends.....	p.9
Current community employment trends	p.10
Benefits to Employment	p.11
Facilitators and Barriers	p.13
Proposed Solutions.....	p.15
Conclusion	p.18
Chapter III: Method	p.19
Design	p.19
Participants.....	p.20
Debra Stewart.....	p.20
The Able Trust	p.21
Palm Beach Habilitation Center.....	p.22
Local Employers	p.22
Procedure of Project.....	p.24
Palm Beach Habilitation Center.....	p.24
The Able Trust	p.24
Local Employers	p.24
Occupational Therapist	p.25
Analysis.....	p.25
Chapter IV: Results.....	p.25
Proposed Solutions.....	p.26
Justification for facility-based employment skills training.....	p.29
Using existing state agency resources.....	p.29
Policy	p.30
Occupational therapy	p.30
Summary	p.31
Occupational therapy guidelines.....	p.32
Local employer perceptions.....	p.32
Perceived needs from community programs' perspectives	p.33
The perceived needs of the age 21 and over population.....	p.33
Chapter V: Discussions.....	p.33
Individualized and Holistic Interventions	p.33
Lack of Employment Experience.....	p.35
Contextual barriers to employment experience	p.37
Transportation	p.37
Navigating the system.....	p.37
Chapter VI: Conclusions and Implications	p.38
References.....	p.42

Appendices.....p.48

Employment Needs of the Age 21 and Over ID Population in South Florida:
An Occupational Therapy Perspective

Background and Significance

An intellectual disability (ID) can be defined as below average intellectual functioning and limited adaptive skills (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities [AAIDD], 2013; Cheung, 2013). The AAIDD (2013) further defines intellectual functioning to include the mental capacity required for learning, reasoning, and problem solving. Limited adaptive skills among the ID population include skills in the areas of communication, self-care, home living, social skills, use of community resources, self-direction, functional academic skills, work, leisure, and/or safety (Cheung, 2013). Throughout current literature, ID has also been described using the term Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) and Mild Intellectual Disability (MID).

Employment is a goal for individuals with ID, their families, federal special education, and vocational rehabilitation legislation (Nord, Luecking, Mank, Kiernan, & Wray, 2013). Successful employment can be defined as being employed at a competitive job for 6 months or more, being paid minimum wage with the potential for raises, working at least 20 hours per week, and working in an entry level position with room for advancement (The Able Trust, 2013). Vocational rehabilitation programs across the United States achieved employment outcomes for 51%, on average, of 47,812 people with ID that received services. In the years of 2002 through 2007, out of 5,027 individuals with ID served by vocational rehabilitation services in Florida, 45.30% were successfully employed (Cimera, 2010). These statistics depict the issue. Although successful employment is a goal for individuals with ID, their families, and the government,

current legislation and public programs are not meeting the needs of this population as a whole, because they continue under employed as described below.

Students with ID struggle with success after high school when considering employment (Bouck, 2014). Under-employment persists when considering the employment rate specifically of individuals age 21 and over living with ID in the United States (Siperstein et al., 2013). Siperstein et al. (2013) completed a quantitative study to document employment situations of working age individuals with ID across the United States. The study used a substantial sample size that was representative of different genders and a variety of ages from 21 to 64. A total of 1,017 parents or guardians of young adults with ID above the age of 21 were surveyed. The employment rate, or the percentage of working aged individuals currently employed, was reported to be 34% in the years of 2011 through 2012 as compared to 76% of the population without disabilities (Siperstein et al., 2013). The reasons given for being unemployed included the following: 1. Being fired or laid off, 2. Disability or health interfering with their job, 3. Temporary positions, 4. Moving, Business closing, and/or insufficient wages.

When estimating the employment rate of individuals with ID in the United States, Nord et al. (2013) cites a similar rate in 2011, with 23% of working age Americans with cognitive disabilities being employed. Nord et al. (2013) also cites these numbers to be low when compared to the general population and many other disability groups, such as, visual, hearing, and ambulatory disabilities. Under employment is an evident problem amongst individuals with ID.

Purpose and Objectives

Occupational Therapy is the therapeutic use of everyday life activities, or occupations,

with individuals “for the purpose of enhancing or enabling participation in roles, habits, and routines in home, school, workplace, community, and other settings” (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2014, S1). Occupational therapy practitioners facilitate participation and performance in occupations, by considering the person, his or her engagement in valuable occupations, and the context as inter-related and central to composition of their interventions (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2014). Employment is a valued occupation for the age 21 and over ID population that is not being fulfilled, as documented by the above statistics. Occupational therapist’s “understanding of work and task analysis, knowledge of the functional limitations of disability, and experience with reasonable accommodations, adaptive equipment, and environmental adaptations place them in a unique position to serve as a resource in ADA-related matters” (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2000, p. 624). Based on their knowledge and training, occupational therapy practitioners have the “unique ability to evaluate individuals’ interactions with their work demands and the work environment through detailed and scientifically based task analysis” (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2012).

A review of the literature makes it evident that employment needs of the age 21 and over ID population are not being met; the employment rate for this population continues to be less than half of the employment rate of the general population (Siperstein et al., 2013). There is evidence that occupational therapy has the potential to meet the employment needs of this population, however, practice guidelines for occupational therapists working with this population are limited. The purpose of this study is to investigate the employment needs of the age 21 and over ID population in South Florida, from the perspective of all stakeholders, further define occupational therapy intervention and practice guidelines within this matter, and propose a program to meet that need under an occupational therapy scope of practice. This study will use a

needs assessment approach to investigate the following contexts affecting employment in the age 21 and over ID population:

- Occupational Therapy intervention guidelines for school to work transition services.
- Local employer perceptions regarding employing individuals with ID age 21 and over.
- Perspectives of current community programs, in South Florida, that service this population regarding their needs.
- The perceived needs of the age 21 and above population with ID living in South Florida.

Literature Review

Current Employment Trends

Employment trends amongst individuals with ID have changed throughout the years. Facility based employment services “are vocational services provided in settings where the majority of people have a disability and receive continuous job-related supports and supervision” (Winsor & Migliore, 2011). Siperstein, Parker, & Drascher (2013) conducted a survey of 1017 parents or guardians of adult children with ID age 21 and over. Study findings indicate facility based employment to provide job stability for individuals with ID, although wages are typically lower and there is a decreased likelihood of transitioning into competitive employment (Siperstein et al., 2013). Competitive, or community-based employment (inclusion in community work environments) is reported to be more financially beneficial to individuals with IDD (Nord et al., 2013). In the years of 2011-2012, there was a higher percentage of individuals with ID age 21 and above competitively employed (18%) rather than facility based (13%), with others (3%)

being self-employed or not categorized (Siperstein et al., 2013). This trend was supported by surveys of community rehabilitation professionals conducted by Domin and Butterworth (2013), where community based employment was the most frequently reported employment service provided. However, competitive employment has not always been the dominating work placement for individuals with ID, with facility based employment being the primary method of employment from years 2000-2010 (Domin & Butterworth, 2013).

Current community employment trends. Community employment raises concerns regarding an increased need for supportive services and cost efficiency. Studies indicate cost efficiency of community based employment support to be mixed, contingent upon the phase of work support and the state the support is provided in (Nord et al., 2013). Initial support costs for community employment are highest and greater cost efficiencies are met over time (Nord et al., 2013). However, when considering costs of living, taxes, wages, and other factors to be equal across all states in the United States, monetary benefits from working in the community for individuals with ID were proven to be higher than costs (Cimera, 2010). Benefits in this study were described to include earned wages, and costs were stated to include paid taxes and reduced or eliminated reliance on governmental assistance (Cimera, 2010).

When considering jobs being filled in the community by individuals living with ID, part-time skilled labor positions are common (Bouck, 2014). The National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) was started in 1985 to study the in-school, transition, and post school experiences of secondary students with disabilities (Bouck, 2014). Subsequently, the NLTS2 gathered the same information at five different time points within the years 2000-2009. During a secondary analysis of the NLTS2, findings indicated that a proportion of the surveyed population living with MID reported engaging in skilled labor, which includes construction, cleaning, and food

preparation (Bouck, 2014). Bouck (2014) reports that only 58% out of 73% of employed individuals with MID worked fulltime within four years of graduating high school, using a secondary analysis of the NLTS2.

Limited work hours were indicated as a trend in several other studies. Butterworth, Migliore, Nord, and Gelb (2012) stated that individuals with IDD who are employed typically earn lower wages and work only a few hours per week. This is reinforced by Nord et al. (2013), who reported workers with IDD employed in the community typically earn the national minimum wage and work 20 hours per week on average. In the years of 2002 through 2007, individuals with ID served by vocational rehabilitation services in Florida averaged a 21 to 26-hour work week with a monthly gross income of \$610.25 (Cimera, 2010). This is an average of a \$7,323 yearly income which is very low when considering the US poverty level for 2007 at \$10,210 for a one-person household (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2007). This is low when compared to the general population. In 2007, the general population in Florida was reported to work an average of 34 weekly hours at an average monthly income of \$2,960 (Bustamante & Griffin, 2013).

Benefits to Employment

Benefits to employment for individuals living with ID are well documented throughout the literature. According to Bouck (2014), a secondary analysis of the NLTS2 reported the vast majority of individuals with MID surveyed to like their current job “very much” or “fairly well”. Working allows an increase in social status, social integration, and networking for individuals with ID (Andrews & Rose, 2010; Flores, Jenaro, Orgaz, & Martin, 2011; Shaw, Jacobs, Lysaght, Ouellette-Kuntz, & Lin, 2012). A review of literature found that employment provides

individuals with ID pride, satisfaction, new learning experiences, and the ability to stay meaningfully occupied (Shaw et al., 2012).

An additional benefit of employment includes the positive health outcomes for individuals with disabilities as reported by Holwerda, Klink, Groothoff, & Brouwer (2012) in their review of 10 cohort, longitudinal, and/or follow up studies of individuals ages 18-64. Work was recognized as an important goal for increasing quality of life amongst individuals with intellectual disabilities, it was also an indicator for success amongst special education programs (Siperstein et al., 2013). Supported employment was proven to be an indicator for increased quality of life in individuals with intellectual disabilities (Beyer, Brown, Akandi, & Rapley, 2010). Similarly, Flores et al. (2011) cite that more normalized and inclusive jobs increase quality of life for individuals with ID.

When considering community benefits in the competitive employment of individuals with ID, state and federal tax contributions must be considered. Cimera (2010) measured outcomes of 1,042 individuals with ID who received vocational rehabilitation services across the United States within the years of 2002 through 2007, and 62% of these individuals were employed. These findings indicate that 62% of 1,042 individuals became tax contributors, adding efficient contributions to the country economy.

While the benefits of employment are significant, employers can also benefit from hiring individuals with ID. Productivity rates are reported to increase when hiring individuals with ID who reliably perform routine work tasks, thus, freeing up the “skilled tradesman” (Shaw et al., 2012, p. 413). Hiring individuals with ID creates a work culture that humanizes a workplace, increases moral, and contributes to social connectedness (Shaw et al., 2012). Shaw et al. (2012)

cites that businesses that hire individuals living with disabilities have been proven more favorable to consumers.

Facilitators and Barriers

Based on the review of literature, the over 21 ID population is heavily influenced by their temporal and environmental context. In order to better understand transition needs of this population and optimal occupational therapy interventions, the Ecology of Human Performance Model (EHP), an occupational therapy frame of reference, was applied. (Dunn, Brown, & McGuigan, 1994). The EHP focuses on the role of a person's context and how these features of the environment impact a person's ability to perform a task and has been successfully applied to the topic of transitioning in occupational therapy by Myers in 2006 (Cole & Tufano, 2011). Cole & Tufano (2011) describe four constructs that influence the theoretical bases of this model:

- Person: Composed of sensorimotor, cognitive, and psychosocial skills and abilities.
- Tasks: Behaviors required in order complete a goal. Roles shape tasks.
- Context: Conditions that make up a person's surroundings including temporal and environmental aspects.
- Personal-Context-Task transaction: the process of engaging in a task that leads to performance.

The review of current literature is presented in Table 1 using these constructs. The information presents facilitators and barriers as they pertain to the person, tasks, and context.

Table 1

<i>Facilitators and Barriers to Employment in the age 21 and above ID Population Based on Literature</i>		
	Facilitators	Barriers
Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher IQ facilitates positive work outcome (Holwerda et al., 2012). • Better linguistic abilities support better work outcomes (Holwerda et al., 2012). • Shaw et al. (2012) cite that workers with ID are dependable and competent, which are virtues needed in entry-level positions in the workforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underactivity, lack of drive, and initiative hinder competitive employment abilities (Holwerda et al., 2012; Riesen, Schultz, Morgan, & Kupferman, 2014). Decreased self-advocacy, social skills, and knowledge of how to access community resources (Riesen et al., 2014). Decreased perceived ability to complete a job task (Andrews & Rose, 2010). • The more severe the disorder, the lower the chance of a good work outcome (Holwerda et al., 2012). • Comorbidities to include psychiatric disorders, oppositional personality, or epilepsy, negatively impact work outcome (Holwerda et al., 2012).
Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An existent employment history prior to exiting high school (Certo & Luecking, 2011; Nord et al., 2013). • Employment history (Burke-Miller, Razzano, Grey, Blyler, & Cook, 2012; Nord et al., 2013) • Interventions to include person-centered career planning and self-management strategies that apply to employment (Nord et al., 2013). • High future work expectations (Burke-Miller et al., 2012). 	
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents assisting in seeking job opportunities or 	Public Misconceptions:

providing opportunities within a family business (Holwerda et al., 2012; Riesen et al., 2014).

- Social aspects deterred individuals with ID from work participation due to negative attitudes like bullying and feeling judged at interviews (Andrews & Rose, 2010).
- Lack of knowledge and will to make accommodations from the employer's standpoint (Shaw et al., 2012).
- Employer's perception of reduced productivity rates and lack of ability to learn skills when hiring individuals with ID (Shaw et al., 2012).

Environment:

- Corporate downsizing trend that includes job rotation and responsibility sharing which is not a typical skill level/ability found in the ID population (Shaw et al., 2012).
- Threat of losing Medicaid and Social Security Income due to increased income (Burke-Miller et al., 2012; Certo & Luecking, 2011; Shaw et al., 2012).
- Institutionalization (Holwerda et al., 2012).
- Legislation typically not enforced and not making a huge difference (Shaw et al., 2012).
- Lack of interagency collaboration (Riesen et al., 2014; Stewart, 2009).
- Lack of secondary educator training to effectively provide transition services (Riesen et al., 2014; Stewart, 2009). Students with ID are not adequately prepared after high school to enter the workforce (Shaw et al., 2012).
- Transportation (Riesen et al., 2014).
- Lack of funding of employment programs (Riesen et al., 2014).
- Decreased training of community employment service providers (Butterworth et al., 2012; Nord et al., 2013; Riesen et al., 2014; Stewart, 2009).

Temporal:

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, (IDEA) contributes to funding for vocational and transitional programs until the age of 21 (Jackson, 2007).
-

Proposed Solutions

When considering the context influencing individuals living with ID and their ability to become successfully employed, legislation can be a significant barrier. According to Jackson (2007), IDEA mandates that special education and related services prepare students for furthering their “education, employment, and independent living” (p.187). Jackson (2007) also mentions transitioning to be a longitudinal process. Unfortunately, although it is considered longitudinal, IDEA does not continue to support this population after twenty-one. Policies to aid the transition process are necessary for success, as stated by Stewart (2009) and Certo & Luecking (2011). It is believed that a possible solution lies in providing rights parallel to those provided to school aged individuals by IDEA be provided to those age 21 and above using amendments to the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (Certo & Luecking, 2011). These amendments will allow for equal access to long term employment and living support for adults with ID (Certo & Luecking, 2011).

An additional barrier of legislation is that it is not consistently enforced, thus serving as a contributing factor to low employment rates amongst the ID population (Shaw et al., 2012). Policies must be clear and applicable in order to be enforced. Shaw et al. (2012) mentions the Americans with Disabilities act of 1990 (ADA) to have several loopholes, not fully protecting individuals against indirect discrimination. Nord et al. (2013) delineate characteristics of high performing state systems in regards to integrated employment services to include the use of flexible policies and funding that allow service providers to innovate, keeping employment as the preferred outcome. These systems also used incentives to guide the service delivery as well as data to evaluate and monitor progress (Nord et al., 2013).

One of the legislative changes proposed in the literature includes the creation of a non-profit agency contracted with schools to service students with ID entering their final year(s) of

high school (Certo & Luecking, 2011). This non-profit agency would ideally meet on a regular basis along with all the agencies currently responsible for the school to work transition, including public schools, state rehabilitation systems, and state developmental disabilities systems, and decide on the community jobs and employment skills to be developed during each student's last year of high school. Prior to exiting high school, both state rehabilitation systems and state developmental disabilities systems will grant the private community agency authorization to continue to work with the student after graduation. This method was implemented in three different states resulting in 60% employment rate for students with ID upon high school exit (Certo & Luecking, 2011).

Similar to the solution proposed by Certo and Luecking (2011), the role of a community facilitator was mentioned in practice guidelines for transitions to adulthood that were delineated by Stewart (2009). The facilitator was suggested to be a neutral agency that aids collaboration of service agencies involved with transitions and guides families through the transition process (Stewart, 2009). This agency should be a community entity and not involved with any agency. This process would aid interagency collaboration. Certo and Luecking (2011) recommend service integration across all systems that service the ID population to transition from high school to work. Riesen et al. (2014) mention the lack of interagency collaboration to be a contributing barrier to employment amongst young adults with disabilities. Thus, facilitating interagency collaboration through community facilitator would support the transition process.

Another recommendation is for the The Social Security Administration to simplify their application of work incentives and provide benefit advising so that individuals with ID who are interested in working can do so more easily without the fear of losing benefits (Certo & Luecking, 2011). Benefit advising, or counseling, has been identified as an effective strategy to

increase employment outcomes (Nord et al., 2013). In order to achieve this, professionals that service this population must be adequately trained.

An emphasis has been placed on the importance of employment professional training (Nord et al., 2013). It is important that these individuals receive state of the art supports from community employment consultants to include understanding their preferences, finding jobs, negotiating customized job descriptions, facilitating transitions, and providing follow-up supports (Butterworth et al., 2012). According to an experimental study conducted by Butterworth et al. (2012), mentorship and training of 19 employment consultants led to better employment outcomes averaging of an increase in 3.4 more job seekers with IDD being employed, when compared to the performance of 14 employment consultants in a control group. These employment outcomes also included placements of higher pay at a rate of an average of .99 cents more per hour, and increase in an average of 6.7 more hours per week, findings were statistically significant (Butterworth et al., 2012).

Decreased professional training amongst educators was also identified by Riesen et al. (2014) as a contributing barrier to employment amongst young adults with disabilities. Training should include topics involving: 1) how to establish employment networks and relationships with community businesses, 2) how to perform a job analysis, 3) how to develop a task analysis, and 4) how to develop ongoing and extended supports (Riesen et al., 2014). A review of literature set out to outline evidence for best practice guidelines for transitions to adulthood for young people with physical and developmental disabilities and mentioned education of community professionals as one of the necessary measures (Stewart, 2009).

Conclusion

This review of current literature indicates the importance of employment for individuals age 21 and over living with ID who are underemployed in comparison to the rest of the general population (Siperstein et al., 2013). Factors contributing to this issue are heavily attributed to context, warranting change in legislature and currently available resources to improve workforce preparation and better provide supported employment services. Although occupational therapists are positioned to contribute to filling this gap in supported employment services, evidence regarding most effective practice guidelines for occupational therapy is scarce and not specific to the ID population. Specifically, little is known about the occupational therapy services and employment related services that exist in South Florida to meet this need as well. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to further explore the current needs of the above age 21 ID population in regards to employment, investigate optimum solutions within occupational therapy practice, and further define currently available services within South Florida.

Method

Design

Beail and Williams (2014) suggest qualitative research plays a significant role in bringing what is unknown about individuals with intellectual disabilities to the known. Completing a needs assessment for a group or community requires engaging in different activities that explore the currently available resources and result in the identification of a specific area of need, or gap in services (Doll, 2010). Fazio (2008) describes a needs assessment to consist of several steps; developing community and service profiles, determining the need from those involved with the population at some level, then determining the perceived need from the population themselves. This can be completed through methods including structured or semi-structured interviews, focus

groups, and/or surveys. In order to investigate the current needs of the age 21 and over population living with ID, information was gathered from different stakeholders. This project investigates different contexts affecting employment of the age 21 and over ID population. The following contexts were investigated:

- Occupational Therapy intervention guidelines for school to work transition services.
- Local employer perceptions regarding employing individuals with ID age 21 and over.
- Perspectives of current community programs, in South Florida, that service this population regarding their needs.
- The perceived needs of the age 21 and above population with ID living in South Florida.

Participants

The study recruited a total of seven participants. They were all representative of the four different contexts investigated. This involved different study locations including the Palm Beach Habilitation Center, employer sites, telephone interviews with the director of youth programs at The Able Trust, and an occupational therapist who is an expert in the field of transitions for individuals with ID. Table 2 delineates inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Debra Stewart. Debra Stewart received her bachelor's degree in occupational therapy from the University of Toronto in 1976 followed by her Master of Science degree in Design, Measurement, and Evaluation from McMaster University in 1998 (Stewart, 2008). Debra currently holds the position of Associate Professor in the School of Rehabilitation Science at

McMaster University. Debra Stewart has both studied and worked with this population successfully. She has published books and articles that have contributed to my knowledge in the subject area.

The Able Trust. The Able Trust is a non-profit public/private partnership created by the Florida Legislature in 1990 with the mission to be a key leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment (“About the Able Trust,” 2014). The focus of The Able Trust is centered on programs and grants that provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. Amongst the different programs and resources available through The Able Trust is the Florida High School High Tech Program; which was selected to participate in a Smithsonian Traveling Exhibit that highlights youth initiatives that promote social change in 2013 (“About the Able Trust,” 2014). The High School High Tech Program (HS/HT) is a network of state and local transition programs that promote careers in science, technology, engineering, and math for youth with disabilities (The Able Trust, 2014). Programs like the HS/HT started in 1983 and later implemented across the country.

Allison Chase is the State Director for HS/HT in Florida. She is also the Vice President overseeing all youth programs in The Able Trust. Allison obtained a Master’s Degree in Rehabilitation Sciences from Florida State University in 1994 (“Allison Chase”, 2014). She has experience in public policy and as a Vocational Rehabilitation Director for the Florida Department of Education (“Allison Chase”, 2014). Given her educational background, previous and current roles, Allison is a key expert in the field of program development and servicing the vocational needs of the ID population for the state of Florida.

Palm Beach Habilitation Center. The Palm Beach Habilitation Center helps adults with developmental, emotional, and physical disabilities reach their highest level of independence using programs for vocational development, job placement, employment, residential service, recreational programs, and retirement services (South Florida Web Advisors, 2014). Their vision is “to assure that all people with disabilities are provided the best environment in which to learn, the best environment in which to live, the best environment in which to work, and the greatest opportunity to have meaningful friendships and access to their community” (South Florida Web Advisors, 2014). Their training programs allow development in the areas of work training, computer specific training, and food service training. They have mobile work crews that are supervised and provide services to businesses in Palm Beach County. They also offer packaging, product assembly, and office services completed inside the center.

David Lin is the Vice President of Programs and Services at The Palm Beach Habilitation Center. Completing residency hours with him allowed observation of a successful community program servicing the employment needs of individuals with ID age 21 and over. Observations lead to identification of program components that contribute to successful employment of the target population. Spending time in the Palm Beach Habilitation Center also provided the opportunity to interview individuals who attend the center regarding their experiences at the center and what they have gained by attending the center.

Local Employers. Interviews with two different local employers investigated the following:

1. Perceived barriers regarding employing individuals with ID.
2. Perceived positive outcomes regarding employing individuals with ID.
3. Experiences with individuals with ID and the hiring/accommodation process.

Table 2

<i>Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria</i>	
Inclusion Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be employed through the Palm Beach Habilitation Center Or • Be age 21 and over and have an Intellectual Disability Or • Be a local employer Or • Be an expert in the field of transitions from school to work for individuals age 21 and over with disabilities.
Exclusion Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not able to understand English • Limited ability to communicate needs • Limited ability to comprehend basic instructions • Limited ability to communicate a choice • Inability to understand the study purpose • Inability to understand and foresee the benefits and risks involved with participation.

Individuals were recruited for the study by the principal investigator. The principal

investigator traveled to the sites where participants were found (Palm Beach Habilitation Center, Able Trust, and Local Businesses). The participants were approached informally using a verbal explanation of the study purpose and their role in providing information for the study. Once recruited, the interview purpose, process, voluntary nature of participation, and confidentiality process were explained to the participant verbally. The consent form was read out loud and discussed, providing the participant time to ask questions and confirm willingness to participate. The participants with ID were told that they could consult with their family member and other individuals prior to enrolling in the study. The Program Director confirmed that none of the participants had legal representatives.

Procedure of the Project

Data was gathered using one-on-one audio-recorded interviews for all seven participants. All interviews were guided by pre-determined questions asked by the principal investigator in a private setting. See appendix 1 for a complete list of study questions. Each participant was interviewed one time throughout the course of the study.

Palm Beach Habilitation Center. Following signing of the consent forms, individuals were interviewed. First, an administrator at the Palm Beach Habilitation Center was interviewed. Then, two participants of the employment program were interviewed one at a time. They were recruited to participate in the study by being asked at random by the administrator. Interviews took place in private rooms and recorded using an audio recorder. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to an hour.

The Able Trust. Following the signing of a consent form, the director of a program related to employment for individuals with disability was interviewed using pre-determined

questions. The interview was conducted via speakerphone in a private room and recorded using an audio recorder. The interview lasted one hour.

Local Employers. Two local employers were asked to participate in this study by the principal investigator. They were approached at their place of work, followed up via telephone conversations about the study and email correspondence. Once the employer agreed to participate, they signed the consent form and were interviewed using a set of pre-determined questions by the principal investigator. The interviews were held in a private room, and recorded using an audio recorder. The interviews lasted 45 minutes each.

Occupational Therapist. The occupational therapist was asked to participate in this study by the principal investigator using an email invitation. She was selected based on her knowledge and expertise in the subject area. Once she agreed to participate, she was interviewed via telephone using a predetermined set of question asked by the principal investigator. The interview was conducted via speakerphone in a private room and recorded using an audio recorder. The interview took 45 minutes to complete.

Individual interviews were transcribed for accuracy of interpretation of data. Data was de-identified to report study findings by excluding the names of participants. Data is reported using their role as it pertains to the investigation (ex. Individual living with ID age 21 and over, Director of Youth Programs, Employer, Occupational Therapist, or Vice President of Community Employment Program). Study recordings will be stored in a password locked computer where only investigators will have access and destroyed through deletion following 36 Months.

Analysis

Interview recordings were categorized into different topics based on the main points, which were subsequently analyzed for recurring themes amongst all interviews. As stated in *An Introduction to Codes and Coding* summative codes are regularly used again throughout the coding process of large amounts of data (2008). Similarly, when analyzing these ? study transcriptions, summative topics, or codes, were repeated throughout the data. Topics included tips for: 1) successful employment, 2) barriers towards employment, 3) positive employment outcomes, and 4) proposed solutions. Recording information is reported as part of study findings using synthesized participant comments.

Results

Following recording transcriptions, themes were found to pertain primarily to topics that facilitate obtaining successful employment, barriers to successful employment, and proposed solutions. Refer to Table 3 for synthesized participant comments that pertain to facilitators and barriers to successful employment as mentioned in the interviews. Table 3 uses a person, task, and context perspective to report participant comments in order to allow for easier comparison to the literature review.

Table 3

<i>Facilitators and Barriers to Employment in the age 21 and above ID Population Based on Participant Interviews</i>			
	Facilitators		Barriers
Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hiring individuals with special needs improves the company's culture, creates diversity, improves employee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people and families just don't have enough information to make informed decision. The system can be overwhelming for families and they just give up. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> retention, and improves customer satisfaction. An individual living with a mild intellectual disability hired by a local company is currently one of the best employees they have and has received a lot of accolades. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preconceived notions of what a facility based employment program entails limits involvement in something that can foster employment in the long run. The fear of losing benefits like SSI is a barrier to employment. Getting someone to learn and access transportation is difficult and becomes a barrier towards employment.
<p>Tasks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lack of hands on employment experience and awareness of own capabilities can challenge successful employment outcomes.
<p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs should have different levels of training services to meet all training needs. Programs should step away from assuming they know exactly what the solution is because it is different for everyone following assessment. Programs must uncover individual abilities and contributions using non-traditional evaluations. Traditional assessments can be helpful. However, they may overlook the full picture of participation. Programs need to recognize when their services are not needed or wanted. Job developers need to build relationships with and better understand employer needs. Employment specialists should look for staff members who are naturally open and 	<p>Public Misconceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers are fearful of individuals with special needs getting hurt on the job as well as employee moral. A way to remediate that is providing education to employers about what supports will make the individual a productive member of the business. Employers are afraid to hire individuals with special needs because they are afraid of the work required to accommodate them. The misconception that young people with intellectual disabilities need special services has inhibited employers from making an effort to figure things out on their own. Retail employers expect all employees to multitask and the uncertainty about the individual being able to multitask can impede the position being offered to someone with special needs who may not have that skill. Most companies are not prepared to make accommodations, specifically when it deals with changes to their structural facilities, arrangements with scheduling, whether or not they have reliable transportation, and taking into consideration their capabilities and how they compliment the job opening. <p>Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment programs cannot afford to pay

-
- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>willing to help and look out for the individual on the job in order to help build natural supports within the job setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment programs need to provide support to both the employee and employer and build a solid system of support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specialists well, consequently having trouble keeping qualified staff. • Employment specialist do not have enough professional development in getting to know the consumers and feeling comfortable getting to know employers. • One of the main barriers to employment is the inability of employment specialists to reach out to businesses to provide opportunities. • Lack of inter-agency collaboration, communication, and our typical kind of treatment approach are the biggest barriers to employment. We subdivide the human into treatment areas and fail to look at the whole picture. • Entitlement programs disappear after 22. Employers are not required to give someone a job like schools are required to provide education before the age of 22. • Lack of occupational therapy advocacy and leadership within the work related practice area with the ability to help meet the population needs. |
|--|---|
-

Proposed Solutions

Experts interviewed also posed several possible solutions to increasing employment amongst the age 21 and over ID population. One of the solutions proposed by one of the experts included the use of individualized training using facility-based employment as a progression towards community employment. Other experts emphasized the importance of taking advantage of existing resources, primarily Vocational Rehabilitation. Keeping an optimistic perspective, an expert described how policy would also influence successful employment outcomes for the age 21 and over ID population. Lastly, occupational therapy as a solution to the employment problem was described. Below is a description of the commonly mentioned solutions.

Justification for facility-based employment skills training program. The following interview comments were made to support facility-based employment training as a solution:

- Volunteer experience is not always the same as real life work experiences due to the difference in expectations that the business will place on the individual.
- Facility based employment skills training programs enhance skills that prepare individuals for a job.
- Facility based employment skills training programs provide individuals opportunities for social interaction that they wouldn't otherwise receive.
- Facility based employment skills training programs help individuals get on the right track towards employment.
- Facility based employment skills training programs allow individuals to keep busy and make money instead of staying home.
- Making money and keeping busy are positive outcomes reported by participants of facility-based employment training programs.

Using existing state agency resources. The following comments were made throughout interviews regarding the use of existing state agency resources:

- The primary service for employment acquisition in the state of Florida is Vocational Rehabilitation referring to other community resources as necessary. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities is the umbrella organization for the state that services specifically individuals with Intellectual Disabilities.
- One participant from the Facility Based Employment Skills Training Program heard about this community resource through Vocational Rehabilitation.

- Palm Tran Connection and Med-Waiver from the Agency for Persons with Disabilities are all resources being used by clients at the Facility Based Employment Training Program.

Policy. The Federal Workforce Opportunity Investment Act which drives state policy and state funding for Vocational Rehabilitation has rearranged the priority in the kind of funding that goes towards employment services to individuals under 30, requiring that at least 30% of funding go toward employment services for this age group.

Occupational therapy. According to the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (OTPF) (2014), occupational therapists perform interventions to maximize performance in occupations, while considering client factors, performance skills, performance patterns, and contexts (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2014). Work, independent living skills, and self-care skills are included amongst occupations that occupational therapists train in (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2014). Social and environmental are two of the contexts in which occupational therapists provide interventions in (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2014). Therefore, occupational therapists can have a role as a facilitator or community navigator using their ability to evaluate the environment and occupations in order to determine a way for agencies to work together efficiently and effectively.

Although practice guidelines are not delineated clearly in the literature, occupational therapy models, including EHP, can help guide transition practice. The EHP model is considered a frame of reference, which guides interventions for adult learning by considering the following steps: (1) establish/restore the person's ability to perform in context; (2) modify/adapt contextual features and task demands to support performance in context; (3) alter the context to better match

the individual's abilities; (4) prevent problems by anticipating difficulties; and (5) create circumstances that promote more typical or complex performances in context (Dunn, Gilbert, & Parker, 2007). These steps involve consideration of all barriers to employment mentioned in tables 1 and 3 to allow for successful employment intervention. For instance, establishing and restoring the individual's ability to perform in context would require an individualized and holistic assessment, as recommended by participants, in order to help eliminate any misconceptions or challenges present from the person and environment. Also, altering the context to better match the individual's abilities may involve grading down community employment to facility based employment training in order to create more awareness of the person's performance skills and abilities. Occupational therapists are equipped with the education and training necessary to carry out a work intervention for the age 21 and over ID population using the OTPF and the EHP.

Young adults with ID and families lack the necessary information to make informed decisions. Occupational therapists are qualified to provide families with information about different agencies and employment options. One of the biggest barriers is that the general public does not consider occupational therapists for transition service positions. Occupational therapists need to do more advocacy work by applying for transition jobs that don't necessarily advertise for an occupational therapist. This involves taking on a leadership role as an occupational therapist. Occupational therapists are well positioned to take on leadership roles, "as relationship building, communication capacity, professional competency, and vision are integral to the day-to-day clinical practice" (Heard, 2014, p.14).

Summary

Study results indicate facilitators and barriers towards employment as well as proposed solutions posed by the experts interviewed. This study set out to find occupational therapy intervention guidelines for school to work transition services, local employer perceptions, and needs of the population from the perspectives of community programs and the individuals themselves.

Occupational therapy guidelines. Guidelines for occupational therapy intervention remain unclear due to the lack of occupational therapy literature and involvement in this practice area. The occupational therapist interviewed mentioned the need for a more dynamic assessment that focuses on different aspects involved in working. This may include an assessment that documents skills for the job itself, ability to manage time, socialization, personal hygiene, and ability to manage transportation. Another point made by the expert interviewed included the need for occupational therapists to immerse themselves in this practice area despite the fact that therapists are not always solicited for these kinds of positions.

Local employer perceptions. Study interviews were successful at identifying employer perceptions. Local employer perceptions regarding employing individuals with ID age 21 and over were found to be a contextual barrier towards employment for individuals with ID in South Florida based on interview results. Interviews highlighted the existence of misconceptions despite positive experiences employing individuals living with ID. Employers mentioned the uncertainty of skill level and accommodation requirements as a concern. One of the employers justified the existence of hesitation when companies consider hiring individuals with disabilities by mentioning the costs of environmental accommodations. However, the employer also mentioned hiring individuals with special needs improves the company's culture, creates diversity, improves employee retention, and improves customer satisfaction.

Perceived needs from community programs' perspectives. Perspectives of current community programs, in South Florida, that service this population regarding their needs were identified to include the following:

- Individualized intervention
- Programs building relationships with employers
- Assistance navigating the system
- Finding and keeping qualified employment specialists
- Inter-agency collaboration and communication
- Hands on employment experience and awareness of own capabilities
- Defeating misconceptions regarding Social Security benefits and what employment training entails
- More emphasis on getting individuals to learn and access transportation
- Entitlement programs for individuals after age 22

The perceived needs of the age 21 and over population. Participants of a local employment program praised the importance of individualized employment support similar to what is received at their community facility based employment-training program. They mentioned the importance of the training they were receiving and how they had gained skills they otherwise wouldn't have developed. Participants also emphasized the importance of community resources like Vocational Rehabilitation to find resources like the community program they were in. Participants did not mention specific employment needs for themselves and others with ID.

Discussion

Individualized and Holistic Interventions

Interview findings indicated individualized assessment and intervention methods to be the preferred method for employment skills training and employment acquisition of the age 21 and over ID population. Along with individualized assessment and intervention, all experts interviewed suggested considering a holistic view of the person during assessment and intervention. Florida Vocational Rehabilitation has also recently emphasized the importance of using an individualized approach to employment acquisition by partnering with Marc Gold & Associates, Southeast TACE, and the University of South Florida to create a certification process for community providers to use *The Discovery Process*, an individualized approach, for customers who have not been successful via traditional methods (Jorgensen, Dillahunt-Aspillaga, & Kenney, 2015). The Discovery Process “is a person-centered planning process that involves getting to know a person before supporting them in developing a plan for employment” (Florida Center for Inclusive Communities, n.d.). The Discovery process explores the individual’s interests, skills, abilities, and ideal working environments prior to job matching (Florida Center for Inclusive Communities, n.d.).

Similar to the Discovery Process, occupational therapy uses an individualized approach to assessment and intervention. The foundation of occupational therapy’s treatment philosophy is based on a client-centered and holistic approach (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2015; World Federation of Occupational Therapist, 2010). The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (2010) states that occupational therapists partner with clients to understand their experience, values, and knowledge. Occupational therapists “understanding of work and task analysis, knowledge of the functional limitations of disability, and experience with reasonable accommodations, adaptive equipment, and environmental adaptations”(AOTA, 2000, p.624) prepares them to realize the client-centered philosophy embraced by AOTA and the

WFOT and “places them in a unique position to serve as a resource in ADA- related matters” (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2000, p. 624). Occupational therapy frameworks guide interventions in the areas of independent living, employment skills, self-care, money management, problem solving, social skills, environmental modifications, work adaptations, and safety. Occupational therapy utilizes strategies related to remediation of undeveloped and underdeveloped skill areas as well as using modifications and adaptations to ensure performance in situations in which remediation is not appropriate (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2014). These are all essential skills and interventions that are individualized and essential for successful employment.

Lack of Employment Experience

A lack of hands-on employment experience and awareness of own capabilities can challenge successful employment outcomes. This interview theme was consistent with the literature; an existent employment history prior to exiting high school serves as a facilitator towards successful employment outcomes (Certo & Luecking, 2011; Nord et al., 2013). Employment history in general has lead to positive employment outcomes (Burke-Miller, Razzano, Grey, Blyler, & Cook, 2012; Nord et al., 2013).

Facility based employment training was also emphasized in the interviews as a way to receive employment experience while training. Facility based employment has been proven to provide job stability for individuals with ID, although wages are typically lower and there is a decreased likelihood of transitioning into competitive employment (Siperstein et al., 2013). However, using facility based employment as a stepping stone towards community employment is essential due to the fact that community employment is reported to be more financially

beneficial to individuals with IDD (Nord et al., 2013). Facility based employment uses an adaptive approach of breaking down job tasks into different steps in order to better fit the individual skill level. It offers the ability to train in a specific skill and graduate to other tasks once that skill is mastered with the goal to eventually have the ability to meet the demand of a community employment position.

Certo & Luecking (2011) provided an overview of the past 40 years of work in the area of school to work for individuals with severe intellectual disabilities and set forth recommendations looking forward. Recommendations included that transition programs be community based and that students start at the age of sixteen. The researchers also recommended that individuals with severe intellectual disabilities develop work history prior to exiting high school and have a resume to justify this work history. Authors also recommend that legislation should include incentives for schools to partner with community agencies so that continued support exists after high school.

Similar to the solution proposed by Certo and Luecking (2011), the role of a community facilitator was mentioned in practice guidelines for transitions to adulthood that were delineated by Stewart (2009). The facilitator was mentioned to be a neutral agency that aids collaboration of service agencies involved with transitions and guides families through the transition process (Stewart, 2009). This agency was mentioned to be particularly part of the community and not involved with any agency. Occupational therapists have the flexibility to work as the neutral community agency that services individuals throughout their high school years and follows them through adulthood.

Contextual barriers to employment experience. It is evident in the literature and following this study that employment experience is important. However interview themes indicated that opportunities to learn and access transportation, employer misconceptions, lack of employment specialist training, and fear of losing benefits impede access to employment experiences amongst the ID population. Table 1 references these themes as they are mentioned by the literature as barriers to employment as well.

Transportation. Riesen, Schultz, Morgan, and Kupferman (2014) found decreased transportation options to contribute to decreased employment amongst young adults with disabilities. A secondary analyses of the NLTS2 found that the majority of employed individuals with MID relied on family transport to get to and from work (Bouck, 2014). Riding a bike, walking, or public transportation were the transportation methods used with less frequency when considering transportation methods used by employed individuals with MID (Bouck, 2014). Occupational Therapists can address community mobility as it requires development in several areas of occupation included in the practice framework (Precin, Otto, Popalzai, & Samuel, 2012). Occupational therapists can help assess people, organizations, and systems to provide necessary interventions that promote participation in safe transportation (Precin et al., 2012).

Navigating the System

Interview themes point to system challenges as barriers to employment for the age 21 and over ID population. Many times, the system is so vast and can be overwhelming for families so they just give up. Entitlement programs disappear after 22. Employers are not required to give someone a job like schools are required to provide education before the age of 22. These statements further support occupational therapists being the neutral agency that helps the

individual navigate the system past the age of 22 and helps equipped them with the skills needed for successful employment by looking at the whole picture.

Conclusions and Implications

This needs assessment urges occupational therapy involvement in training, community education, and advocacy for employment of the age 21 and over ID population. It shows that although community agencies and state programs exist to aid this transition to adulthood and successful employment after high school, the resources are often vast and individuals frequently do not take advantage of the resources due to misconceptions, or lack of awareness. Although there are limited publications regarding effective occupational therapy intervention techniques, there is evidence to support occupational therapy involvement in employment related training, specifically for the age 21 and over ID population. Occupational therapists can fill in the service gap and play the roll of a community facilitator that guides this population and their families through the transition out of school and towards employment. Besides guiding them through the resources, occupational therapists can provide skilled and individualized employment related skills training, along with training in independent living, and community mobility, or transportation.

Occupational therapists who are already in community practice settings servicing individuals living with ID need to consider employment training, vocational rehabilitation enrollment, and employment related experiences for their clients. This intervention should begin at the age of 16 and continue past the age of 21. Overcoming the barriers of employment for this population, as well as those identified within our profession, with limited advocacy and

guidelines in this practice area, will require leadership from our end. “Leadership is integral to the success and sustainability of any group, organization, or profession” (Heard, 2014, p.1).

It is recommended that occupational therapists use the constructs from Kouzes and Posner’s Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership when implementing community programs to service this population (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Table 4 guides implementation of employment training programs using these leadership constructs. Future studies should continue to investigate occupational therapy assessment and intervention guidelines within the field of employment and employment skills training.

Table 4

Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership for Occupational Therapists Servicing Individuals

Living with ID

	Construct	Application to Employment Training Practice
Model The Way	Instills in the leader the responsibility of delivering and personifying a clear vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for the importance of early implementation of employment skills training amongst co-workers, clients, and families. • Set an example by clarifying the importance with clients and beginning employment interventions.
Inspire a Shared Vision	Looking into the present and future of the organization to envision the possibilities while taking into consideration the goals of your team in order to create a shared vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to AOTA and or state associations to establish consistent policies and guidelines, as well as advocacy for involvement in practice area. • Envision the future for the client by considering current skills, abilities, and meaningful occupations. • Use the upcoming evaluation to discuss employment goals and include them as part of treatment plans once everyone is on the same page. • Make recommendations of employment settings appropriate for the client’s skills,

		meaningful occupations, and abilities best match.
Challenge the Process	Leaders engage in looking for opportunities that allow for new ways to improve, followed by experimenting and taking risks to allow for positive change (Kouzes & Pozner, 2007).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put together a local employment related services binder for clients and staff. • Make phone calls to ensure the community resource matches the client prior to recommending it. • Have a list of local Vocational Rehabilitation office contact information for clients. • Initiate a best practices book, framework, or frame of reference for occupational therapy interventions targeting employment for the age 16 and over ID population. • Engage in research to further identify best practices for this area.
Enable Others to Act	Instilling in others the power needed to perform, and turning “constituents into leaders themselves” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p.21).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with current agencies providing services to the client. • If it pertains to the client, ensure usage of the latest copy of the client’s Individualized Education Plan and awareness of transition efforts in the school setting. • Sharing findings with occupational therapists and other professional organizations involved in this subject matter.
Encourage the Heart	Recognize contributions and acknowledge achievements (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure to celebrate gains and support the client and their family with any new employment related efforts.

Using leadership constructs, occupational therapy frameworks like the EHP, and client centered assessment and intervention can guide employment skills training from an occupational therapy perspective. The results of this investigation indicate that an individualized, graded, intervention that exposes the client to job experiences will facilitate successful employment. Being the community navigator for the client is also a key to success. Occupational therapists can do this by advocating for change in employer perspectives, informing ourselves, and

subsequently clients, of community resources to include Vocational Rehabilitation. Occupational therapists need to do what they do best, become a bridge towards independence in transportation, employment, and living skills in order to improve the individual's quality of life and contribution to their community through successful employment.

References

- Allison Chase*. (2014). Retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/pub/allison-chase/26/300/271>.
- About The Able Trust*. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.abletrust.org/about/>.
- American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. (2013). *Definition of Intellectual Disability*. Retrieved from <http://aidd.org/intellectual-disability/definition#.U7hmxvk2xSI>.
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-336, 104 Stat. 328 (1990).
- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2015). *About Occupational Therapy: What is Occupational Therapy*. Retrieved from <http://www.aota.org/about-occupational-therapy.aspx>.
- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2014). The Occupational Therapy Practice Framework Domain and Process (3rd edition). *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 68, S1-S48.
- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2012). *Fact Sheet: Work Rehabilitation*. Retrieved from <http://www.aota.org/-/media/Corporate/Files/AboutOT/Professionals/WhatIsOT/WI/Facts/Work-rehab.pdf>.
- American Occupational Therapy Association. (2000). Occupational Therapy and The Americans with Disabilities Act. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 54, 622-625.
- Andrews, A., & Rose, J. L. (2010). A Preliminary Investigation of Factors Affecting Employment Motivation in People with Intellectual Disabilities. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, 7(4), 239-244.

An Introduction to Codes and Coding. (2008). Retrieved from

http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/24614_01_Saldana_Ch_01.pdf.

Beail, N., & Williams, K. (2014). Using Qualitative Methods in Research with people Who Have Intellectual Disabilities. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 27(2), 85-96.

Bouck, E. C. (2014). The postschool outcomes of students with mild intellectual disability: does it get better with time? *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 58(6), 534-548. doi: 10.1111/jir.12051

Burke-Miller, J., Razzano, L. A., Grey, D. D., Blyler, C. R., & Cook, J. A. (2012). Supported Employment Outcomes for Transition Age Youth and Young Adults. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 35(3), 171-179.

Bustamante, A.R., & Griffin, J. (2013). State of Working Florida 2013. Retrieved from <http://labor.fiu.edu/news/state-of-working-florida-2013.pdf>.

Certo, N. J., & Luecking, R. G. (2011). Transition and employment: Reflections from a 40 year perspective. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 35(3), 157-161.

Cheung, N. (2013). Defining intellectual disability and establishing a standard of proof: Suggestions for a national model standard. *Health Matrix Clevel*, 23(1), 317-351.

Cimera, R. E. (2010). The national cost-efficiency of supported employees with intellectual disabilities: the worker's perspective. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 33(2), 123-131.

Cole, M. & Tufano, R. (2008). *Applied theories in occupational therapy: A practical approach*. Thorofare, NJ: Slack Incorporated.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). Five Qualitative Approaches to Inquiry *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (3 ed., pp. 69-110). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, 42 U.S.C § 15001
(2000).

Doll, J. (2010). *Program Development and Grant Writing in Occupational Therapy: Making The Connection*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

Domin, D., & Butterworth, J. (2013). The role of community rehabilitation providers in employment for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities: Results of the 2010-2011 national survey. *Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities, 51*(4), 215-225.
doi: 10.1352/1934-9556-51.4.215

Dunn, W., Brown, C., & McGuigan, A. (1994). The ecology of human performance: A framework for considering the effect of context. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 48*, 595-607.

Dunn, W., Gilbert, M.P., Parker, K. (1997, March). The Ecology of Human Performance Framework: A Model for Identifying and Designing Appropriate Accommodations for Adult Learners. In Center for Research and Learning *Symposium on Accommodating Adults with Disabilities in Adult Education Programs*. Symposium conducted at the meeting of the NASLN [National Association for Adults with Special Learning Needs].

Fazio, L.S. (Ed.). (2008). *Developing Occupation-Centered Programs for the Community* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc.

- Flores, N., Jenaro, C., Orgaz, B. M., & Martin, V. M. (2011). Understanding Quality of Working Life of Workers with Intellectual Disabilities. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities, 24*(2), 133-141.
- Florida Center for inclusive Communities. (n.d.). *The Discovery Process: A Path To Employment for All*. Retrieved from http://flfcic.fmhi.usf.edu/docs/FCIC_FactSheets/FCIC_FactSheet_Discovery.pdf.
- Heard, C.P. (2014). Choosing the path of Leadership in Occupational Therapy. *The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy, 2*, 1-18.
- Holwerda, A., Klink, J., Groothoff, J., & Brouwer, S. (2012). Predictors for Work Participation in Individuals with an Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation, 22*(3), 333-352. doi: 10.1007/s10926-011-9347-8
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 20 U.S.C § 1400 (2004).
- Jackson, L. (2007). *Occupational therapy services for children and youth under IDEA* (3rd ed.). Bethesda, MD: AOTA Press.
- Jorgensen, S.T., Dillahunt-Aspillaga, C., Kenney, C. (2015). Integrting Customized Employment practices within the Vocational Rehabilitation system. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 42* (3), 201-208.
- Kouzes, J. & Posner, B. (2007). *The leadership challenge (4th Edition)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Myers, C. T. (2006). Exploring occupational therapy and transitions for young children with special needs. *Physical & Occupational Therapy in Pediatrics, 26*(3), 73-88.

- Nord, D., Luecking, R. G., Mank, D., Kiernan, W., & Wray, C. (2013). *The state of the science of employment and economic self-sufficiency for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities* (Vol. 51).
- Precin, P., Otto, M., Popalzai, K., & Samuel, M. (2012). The Role for Occupational Therapists in Community Mobility Training for People With Autism Spectrum Disorders. *Occupational Therapy in Mental Health, 28* (2), 129-146 .
- Riesen, T., Schultz, J., Morgan, R., & Kupferman, S. (2014). School-to-Work Barriers as Identified by Special Educators, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, and Community Rehabilitation Professionals. *Journal of Rehabilitation, 80*(1), 33-44.
- Shaw, L., Jacobs, K., Lysaght, R., Ouellette-Kuntz, H., & Lin, C.-J. (2012). Untapped potential: Perspectives on the employment of people with intellectual disability. *Work, 41*(4), 409-422.
- Siperstein, G. N., Parker, R. C., & Drascher, M. (2013). National snapshot of adults with intellectual disabilities in the labor force. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 39*(3), 157-165. doi: 10.3233/JVR-130658
- Stewart Debra. (2008). Retrieved from <http://www.srs-mcmaster.ca/FacultyStaffnbsp/Faculty/StewartDebra/tabid/659/Default.aspx>.
- Stewart, D. (2009). Transition to adult services for young people with disabilities:current evidence to guide future research. *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology, 51*(Suppl. 4), 169-173.
- South Florida Web Advisors. (2014). *Palm Beach Habilitation Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.pbhab.com/main/about-us/>.

The Able Trust. (2014). *Florida High School High Tech*. Retrieved from

<http://www.abletrust.org/hsht/history/>.

The Able Trust. (2013). Definition of Successful Employment. Retrieved from

http://www.abletrust.org/about/_doc/Definition-of-Successful-Employment.pdf.

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. The 2007 HHS Poverty Guidelines: One Version of the U.S. Federal Poverty Measure. Retrieved from

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/07poverty.shtml>.

Winsor, J. E., & Migliore, A. (2011). *Decline in the Provision of Facility-Based Work Services for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*. Data Note Series, Data Note 35. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.

World Federation of Occupational Therapists. (2010). *Clientcenterdness in OT Position*

Statement. Retrieved from <http://www.wfot.org/ResourceCentre.aspx>.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case Study Research Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Appendix A

Interview Questions: Vice President of Programs and Services

1. Obtaining and sustaining meaningful employment is a challenge specifically for individuals with intellectual disabilities. What do you believe the palm Beach Habilitation Center does that makes this otherwise challenging task obtainable for this population?
2. What are the challenges your facility faces when providing these services?
3. Are there individuals that are seeking employment but unable to benefit from the services of your facility? What are the specific barriers to employment for these individuals?
4. Some of the needs of the age 21 and over ID population identified by previous interviews include awareness of resources and transportation. What do you perceive are the major needs of the age 21 and over ID population in regards to employment?
5. What are the current supports you feel are essential to job acquisition for this population? Some that are available and maybe not readily available.

Interview Questions: Employment Program Participants

1. What is your age and role at the Palm Beach Habilitation Center?
2. What are your work hours?
3. How long have you been working here at the Palm Beach Habilitation Center?
4. Did you work in other places before coming here?
5. How did you here about the Palm Beach Habilitation Center?
6. What do you like about your job?
7. What do you dislike about your job?

8. What have you learned at the Palm Beach Habilitation Center?

Interview Questions: Director of Youth Programs

1. Besides the Highschool High-tech Programs, what other services do you know about that are available for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) to prepare for work?
Specifically, what programs do you know are available for the age 21 and over ID population?
2. What is the different legislative support that the age 21 and over ID population have to help them with employment?
3. What do you feel are the needs of the age 21 and over ID population?
4. In your experience, what individual and system factors most contribute to employment success amongst this population, what individual and system factors most contribute to barriers for success?
5. How does the Able Trust educate the ID population about current resources available to them? Their families? Professionals who work with this population?
6. With your experience, what would you say are different program qualities that make a program successful vs. unsuccessful in obtaining employment for individuals with disabilities?

Interview Questions: Employers

1. Have you hired individuals with special needs in the past?

2. If so, what was the process like? Were you required to make any accommodations? Did you feel the process went smoothly? Why or why not?
3. There are many perceived barriers regarding employing individuals with ID. What do you believe would be a barrier to hiring someone with a special need?
4. There are also many perceived positive outcomes regarding employing individuals with ID. What do you think are the positive outcomes regarding hiring individuals with special needs?

Interview Questions: Occupational Therapist

1. Lack of inter-agency collaboration has been pointed to as one of the contributors to limited employment amongst the age 21 and over ID population, including your publication in 2009. The role of a community facilitator was mentioned in your practice guidelines for transitions to adulthood Stewart (2009). You mentioned it to be a neutral agency that aids collaboration of service agencies involved with transitions and guides families through the transition process (Stewart, 2009). You describe it to be particularly part of the community and not involved with any agency. What steps do you propose occupational therapists should take to become this agency? What kind of services do you think this would entail?

Stewart, D. (2009). Transition to adult services for young people with disabilities: current evidence to guide future research. *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology*, 51(Suppl. 4), 169-173.

2. The existent literature for occupational therapy employment interventions include the use of functional capacity evaluations and job demand analysis. What assessments and treatment tools have you used for interventions specific to transitioning youth?
3. What do you believe to be the biggest need for transitioning youth right now?
4. Are there any other occupational therapists that you know have published about transitions from school to work and the age 21 and over population?
5. What are some occupational therapy programs available to this population that service their employment needs?
6. Have you heard of any sheltered workshops or government agencies that support employment programs? If so, what resources do you know of?
7. What do you perceive to be the barriers that OTs and other professionals experience working with this population to encourage employment?