

# 'It's all based on the person's interests'

## Maryland program offers insight into helping young adults get jobs using IPS

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We work with young people, ages 16 to 21. We each help with employment, and if a job goal requires training or education, we provide support for that as well. People in our program have gone to university, community college, dog grooming school, beauty school, trade school, etc.; it is all based on the person's interests.

Some people know what they want to do, but others need time to explore possible careers. We talk to people about their strengths, their interests and what they enjoy. Family members often have helpful ideas about a person's skills and abilities. Sometimes we use a short interest inventory or go with the person to observe workers in different fields. Talking to workers provides opportunities to ask what they like and dislike about their positions. If the job requires training or education, it helps to meet with school advisors to learn about the requirements for degrees and certificates. When we are unsure whether an occupation is expanding or contracting, we help the person learn more by using O\*NET (Occupational Information Network, [www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org)), by looking at job advertisements, talking to counselors at the state Department of Rehabilitation, or school advisors. It is important for the person to make an informed choice.

The process of getting into school can be difficult. We assist with applications and deadlines. For example, people who receive Social Security Income are eligible for a tuition waiver, but to obtain the waiver they must go to the Social Security Administration offices to get verification of their benefits. We also accompany people to meetings with financial aid counselors and we help with Federal Student Aid (FASA) applications. When those options are insufficient, the Department of Rehabilitation has



IPS Supported Employment Specialists at Cornerstone Montgomery, Inc., tailor their adult program to fit the needs of the young people seeking employment.

sometimes been able to help with the costs of vocational training or college.

While someone is in school, we often help with time management skills. Some people benefit from help using a calendar. Others are overwhelmed at first with going to school and working. We help them think about how to fit classes and study time into

ing notes on what she read. Next, she would take a 30-minute break and then review her notes before she resumed reading. We do not provide tutoring, but we help people think about an individualized learning plan. Some students obtain tutoring through Disability Support Services (sometimes called Office for Student Services).

Accommodations for learning can include carrying over an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) from high school to the new educational program. Specific accommodations can consist of help with note-taking, extended deadlines for projects, extra time to take tests, being able to use a calculator during tests, or being provided with a quiet place to take a test. Occasionally, a person may need to take time off during a course. One student was in the hospital but arranged to have assignments brought to her, and she talked to her professor about how she could finish the course. In other situations, people have taken incomplete grades so they could finish courses later.

Supported education is not always as linear as traditional education. Some people find that they need part-time course loads or breaks from school. They may change their minds about their majors or certificates. Employment and education specialists must be flexible and encouraging as plans change.

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their schedules. Family members can also help people remember deadlines for school. Another common support is helping people develop good study skills. An example is of one student who had problems with concentration. Reading a chapter of a textbook was daunting to her. We came up with a plan for her to read for 15 minutes while tak-