

Perceptions of Individuals With
Disabilities Enrolled in an Office Technology Program

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of individuals with disabilities who are receiving job training about their preparation, their experiences, their job-search strategies, and their job goals. Data gathering consisted of examining school records, classroom artifacts, and conducting in-person interviews and surveys of a convenience sample of three students. The investigator, a vocational training professional, gained valuable information about students' views of their disabilities, self-efficacy, employment outlook, and hopes for the future. Based on the usefulness of the information collected, the researcher recommends that additional perception information should be gathered during training, before graduation, and the period following graduation until employment.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

In today's economic climate, anyone can become unemployed at a moment's notice. While this is devastating, most people generally know what they need to do to secure another job or at least know how to make ends meet until they get one. Yet many individuals with disabilities who want to work have difficulty finding that first job. In the United States, federal and state governments fund vocational rehabilitation programs, but individuals with disabilities remain underrepresented in the workplace and little information is known about their job search experiences. No one is quite sure what really happens during their job searches, and those who are unemployed do not reveal much. If they remain unemployed for a long period, employment experts know that they tend to stop looking and disappear from the statistics. Those who participate in state-sponsored paid internships for individuals with disabilities usually do not get hired right away due to funding. Many of these individuals abandon their search for a job, even when help and guidance are available to them. Those who have supportive family members will fare better than those who do not have them. Other factors that may affect their job search behavior are unknown. Vocational specialists working with these individuals need additional information about such individuals so they can better target their efforts.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study is to gain information about the experiences and self-perceptions of adults with disabilities who have completed vocational training at a state-funded institution and assigned to an employment specialist who provides guidance in the job search process, but who fail to follow through with the search.

Hypothesis

This qualitative study is designed to identify themes and issues associated with the job-search behavior of individuals with disabilities based upon information gained during extensive interviews. Because this is a qualitative study, there is no “hypothesis” as such.

Operational Definitions

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) legislation, a person may be classified with a disability if that person: (1) has a physical or mental impairment that significantly limits a major life activity, (2) has a record of the impairment, or (3) is regarded as having the impairment.

The Workforce and Technology Center (WTC), supported by state, federal, and outside funding, provides vocational evaluation, counseling, training, employment assistance, and other services to individuals with disabilities. The training and experiences provided by the WTC are described below.

The Office Technology program is one of several full-time programs at WTC and is divided into two service tiers. The first tier is the six-week Customer Service (CS) program that includes basic computer skills, customer service theory, keyboarding, basic word processing, and academic subjects like basic math and writing. Upon completion of this program, students without a GED or high school diploma attend the two-week Job Seeking Skills Training (JSST) program, and seek employment. Students who have a high school diploma or GED and who have a desire to further develop their skills begin the six-month Administrative Professional (AP) program. In the AP program, areas of skill development and software training include general business, medical, and financial based on the students’ individualized plan for employment (IPE). At the conclusion of this six-month program, students attend JSST and seek employment.

While in JSST, students receive information from Employment Services staff on employment topics including how to write a resume, fill out a job application, interview for a job, and conduct a job search. Once a student obtains employment, staff conduct follow up in order to support the student's shift to employment. After 90 days the student is considered rehabilitated and eligible for case closure. However, a student may also be considered rehabilitated and eligible for case closure if the student has received DORS services but is unable to work for other reasons including medical, death, unable to locate, and failure to cooperate.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review examines issues faced by individuals with disabilities in the workforce as they seek to live productive and fulfilling lives. Section one provides background about the challenges they face including current statistics related to employment and unemployment. Section two discusses the effects of unemployment as well as poverty risks and psychological impact. Section three contains interventions for vocational rehabilitation, those to increase self-efficacy, and cognitive-behavioral therapy.

Understanding Individuals with Disabilities in the Workforce

Challenges Faced

Individuals with disabilities have always existed, but it wasn't until the 20th century that services to them improved in the United States. Congress passed important legislation in 1918 (Soldiers Rehabilitation Act) to help soldiers returning from war. Other laws were passed including the Social Security Act (1935), the Rehabilitation Act (1973), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1975), the Civil Rights Commission Act (1978), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (1990). In 1999, Congress also enacted the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (Ticket Act) which now includes the Employed Individuals with Disabilities program to provide more choices for employment services (Dalto, 2008).

According to ADA legislation, a person may be classified with a disability if that person: (1) has a physical or mental impairment that significantly limits a major life activity, (2) has a record of the impairment, or (3) is regarded as having the impairment. It is important to note that in the past individuals were evaluated using a "medical model...that disability [was] purely a biological phenomenon, a physical or mental impairment that makes the individual unable to

participate in mainstream social activities including work” (Stapleton, O'Day, Livermore, & Imparato, 2006, pp. 706-707). Instead, the social/environmental model is now used which includes the individuals' social environments and accessibility issues (Stapleton et al., 2006). Once disability has been established, the person deemed eligible would qualify for services including public vocational rehabilitation (VR).

Despite these services, many individuals with disabilities remain at risk for unemployment. Hergenrather, Rhodes, Turner, & Barlow (2008) found that one of the reasons was a “lack of self-efficacy in job-seeking skills” (p. 34). According to Bandura (1977), “self-efficacy pertains to personal action in regard to one's beliefs in their capabilities to organize and execute a course of action to achieve a desired outcome” (Hergenrather et al., 2008, p. 34). Some actions required to get a job include identifying marketable or transferable skills, learning new skills or updating skills, conducting a job search using many sources, researching a company, conducting information interviews, completing applications and submitting them in different formats, preparing a resume and submitting it in different formats, dressing for success, deciding whether or not to disclose disability, completing mock interviews, and completing employment interviews. Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to perform the necessary actions to obtain employment. Conversely, those with low self-efficacy are unable to initiate or complete actions to obtain employment. Hergenrather et al. (2008) felt that if they could measure the amount of self-efficacy, professionals who work with individuals with disabilities could intervene at strategic points in the job search which could improve employment outcomes.

In addition, Hergenrather et al. (2008) effectively described the disclosure dilemma, another possible reason that individuals with disabilities remain at risk for unemployment. If the disability is disclosed, the individual may not get the job or may experience difficulty in

workplace relationships because of perceived preferential treatment. For instance, individuals with HIV/AIDS (human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome) who disclosed their disability have faced discrimination and subsequent unemployment (Hergenrather, Rhodes, and Clark, 2005; Hergenrather et al., 2004; Slack, 2002, all cited in Hergenrather et al., 2008). If the disability is not disclosed, the individual may not receive necessary workplace accommodations which might cause slow work pace, affect reliability, and eventually lead to unemployment.

Employment/Unemployment Characteristics of Individuals With Disabilities

In the United States, individuals with disabilities have high unemployment rates. Hergenrather et al. (2008) reported that there are 51.2 million persons in the United States who have disabilities. Of this number, 21.3 million have disabilities that affect their ability to work. Only 35% of them work part- or full-time jobs compared to 78% of those without disabilities. In a population of those aged 21 to 64, 56% were employed and only 13% were employed full time.

In addition to this, the 2004 National Organization on Disability/Harris Survey revealed that

Three times as many live in poverty with annual household incomes below \$15,000 (26 percent versus 9 percent). [It is also important to note that they] are twice as likely to have inadequate transportation (31 percent versus 13 percent), and a much higher percentage go without needed health care (18 percent versus 7 percent). (National Organization on Disability, 2004, p. 14, 18-19)

Many individuals with disabilities also receive government assistance in the form of Social Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Stapleton et al. (2006) reported that “the basic SSI monthly benefit [was] not sufficient to pay for housing; for example in 2002, the average national rent for a modest one-bedroom apartment was 105 percent of the SSI monthly benefit

amount” (p. 704). After paying this major expense, there is not much left for the other necessities of life like food and clothing. To add to this, any unplanned expense or family emergency can easily deplete the balance of these funds.

In some disability populations, it might be preferable to remain unemployed. Among some chronically unemployed substance abusers, Coviello, Zanis, and Lynch (2004) found that “taxable employment with little flexibility may not be a desired or attainable outcome due to the complexity of client lifestyle and the unavailability of private health insurance to pay for methadone treatment” (p. 2321). Living day to day, these individuals will remain in a near poverty state, yet feel free to take an occasional job to meet extra expenses.

For those who want to work, they must first secure accessible transportation to manage disability-related medical conditions. In Maryland, many individuals may apply for free or reduced-fare transportation through the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) or other transportation carrier. Individuals who use these services report that they have to inflate their arrival time to avoid lateness or have to wait too long for their return trips. Sometimes, they are late for work or appointments. This presents a difficulty for employers as well as increases the wait time for individuals with fragile health.

Even accessible healthcare may be in jeopardy as federal spending for Medicare and Medicaid continues to increase to cover individuals with disabilities. “From FY1986 to FY2002, federal disability expenditures grew 85 percent more than total federal outlays and 57 percent more than the growth rate of the [gross domestic product]” (Stapleton et al., 2006, p. 705). There are those who blame expenses for individuals with disabilities and the aged (groups with increasing populations) for our current economic crisis. They also feel that the Social Security

System will soon face bankruptcy. Despite these negative viewpoints, many individuals with disabilities would rather work, but require more assistance to do so.

As Coviello et al. (2004) reported, “Most research on employment interventions focuse[d] on job acquisition as the sole outcome measure, despite the fact that there are many intermediate steps to obtaining work” (p. 2309). Many individuals perceive too many steps and have too many barriers to manage or overcome. Some of these barriers to employment, as identified by the Baltimore Workforce Investment Board (2002), are health, transportation, family concerns, criminal background and substance abuse. Eliminating or managing these barriers is not an easy task for helping professionals because many barriers require multiple steps, tenacity, and careful planning. Nevertheless, this is essential in order to support individuals with disabilities in their quest for employment, economic sufficiency, and independence. Laying aside these obstacles, individuals with disabilities face a tough job market where those without disabilities are finding it difficult to find a job.

Effects of Unemployment

According to economist Slavin (2002), there are four types of unemployment—frictional, cyclical, seasonal, and structural. Those who are frictionally unemployed are in between jobs or are looking for a job for the first time. Those who are cyclically unemployed are not working because of the lags in the business cycle. Those who are seasonally unemployed are not working because they depend on seasonal demand for their product. Those who are structurally unemployed are not working because they have been misplaced. Individuals with disabilities may fall in all of these categories at one or more times in their life. Slavin also stated

One of the most devastating experiences a person can have is to be out of work for a prolonged period...only those who have been unable to find work after looking for six to eight months, or even longer, really know that feeling of

hopelessness and self doubt, not to mention a depressed standard of living (p. 251).

Poverty Risks

Unemployment prevents individuals with disabilities from reaching one of the most important adulthood tasks—finding a way to support oneself through meaningful employment. Due to prolonged unemployment (no matter the cause), many become discouraged and stop looking. They will find themselves permanently unemployed and at risk for poverty. To assess their financial liability, Batavia and Beaulaurier (2001) developed a framework that outlined three basic predictive aspects—environmental, social, and personal factors as they relate to income and expenses. They concluded that individuals with disabilities were the “most financially vulnerable Americans due to their low levels of education, employment, income, and assets. They are also among the people most in need of financial security due to often extraordinary and unstable expenses” (p. 158).

Stapleton et al. (2006) also studied poverty risks of individuals with disabilities and found that “working age people with disabilities [were] much more likely than people without disabilities to live in poverty and not be employed or have shared in the economic prosperity of the late 1990s” (p. 701). They also studied the role of entitlement programs and found the inadequate to cover living expenses.

Psychological Impact

As individuals remain unemployed, they are certain to experience its negative psychological affects. “Borgen and Amundson (1987) suggest that individuals progress through four stages during the job-search process—enthusiasm, stagnation, frustration, and apathy” (Strauser & Berven, 2006, p. 207). The latter three emotions are averted if individuals achieve early success during their job search. But, as anyone searching for a

job in today's economy knows, it takes time and effort to secure employment. In addition, those who even go on many interviews may hear many several rejections before getting hired. These rejections may compound negative feelings already experienced by individuals with disabilities. In fact, Barlow, Wright, and Cullen (2002) found that "Given that unemployment itself is associated with increased vulnerability to depression and low self-esteem (MacKay Lynd-Stevenson, 1996; Sheeran et al., 1995; Vinokur et al., 1995), the combined impact of being unemployed and living with a disability warrants investigation" (p. 38). They further suggested that some individuals with disabilities and low self-efficacy just stop looking because it is emotionally painful to repeatedly hear that "you aren't good enough" or to be told that "you don't have what it takes."

Interventions

Vocational Rehabilitation

After Congress passed the Soldiers Rehabilitation Act in 1918, many types of professionals with a psychology or social work background rendered services to individuals with disabilities. Nonetheless, intensive vocational rehabilitation began with passage of the Rehabilitation Act (1973). After this, the professional field of vocational rehabilitation grew as did the role of the rehabilitation counselor. In Maryland's Division of Rehabilitation Services, this person is referred to as a field counselor because that person is located in several fields or areas throughout the state. A field counselor can gain entry with a four year degree in rehabilitation services or a related field, but certification by examination through the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) is required in some states. According to the Commission, certification creates professional affiliation, standardizes

education and supports its continuation, promotes quality practice, sponsors studies to authenticate practice, and fosters professional advancement. To maintain certification, individuals must retake the examination every five years or obtain Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credits through continuing education (Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification, 2008). The Rehabilitation Act also required VR facilities to report targets served, effectiveness, outcomes (placement and retention), and client satisfaction (Rubin & Roessler, 1987).

The process of rehabilitation begins with referral to a public VR agency where a VR counselor conducts an intake interview. “The vocational rehabilitation process can be divided into four phases: (a) the evaluation phase, (b) the planning phase, (c) the treatment phase, and (d) the termination phase” (Rubin & Roessler, 1987). It should be noted that after the evaluation phase, the VR counselor and the client develop an individualized plan for employment (IPE). They next agree on the treatment or vocational training with the goal of securing employment. After WTC training, clients usually attend JSST. JSST, according to Rubin and Roessler (1987), should include information on how to develop job leads, what employers want, organizing and conducting a job search, how to fill out a job application, how to give an interview, and guided practice on finding a job. After a client obtains successful employment, usually for 90 days, the case is referred for closure or termination.

Public VR programs have a considerable impact on the lives of individuals with disabilities. In February of 2004, the Rehabilitation Services Administration reported the findings of a longitudinal study of the VR Services Program (National Rehabilitation Association, 2004). This study included 8,500 VR consumers at 37 locations for at least three years to learn about those served, services received, service locations, and outcomes achieved.

Of persons served, researchers found that services were provided to individuals with disabilities regardless of their ability, but individuals with perceived confidence who had higher gross motor function and personal care function were more likely to receive services and obtain employment. However, those who had never worked and those who received SSI or SSDI were less likely to achieve this outcome without benefits counseling and peer testimonials. Individuals served reported approval of VR services and were active in the decision-making process. Statistically speaking, 81% of those served felt that they had made the right vocational choice; 79% were very satisfied or satisfied with services received; 83% were very satisfied or mostly satisfied with their service providers; half of them chose their services one fifth of the time; and they collaborated with their VR counselor two thirds of the time. Researchers also cited the quality of the consumer-counselor relationship as a key component to employment outcome and higher wages. From the consumer's point of view, 81% reported receiving sufficient information to form the IPE, and three fourths of them were very satisfied or mostly satisfied with their counselor's support in achieving employment. However, 10% were consistently dissatisfied with their counselor's interactions.

VR service researchers also studied disabilities served and service outcomes. They found that individuals with mental illness received the largest amount of services followed by those with traumatic brain injury and those with cognitive disabilities. On the third annual follow-up, 78% who achieved competitive employment were still working compared to 70% of those who achieved non-competitive employment. Of note, those who achieved competitive employment earned an average of \$7.63 to start but three years later averaged \$10.06. Of those who received benefits, 32% received them from their employers at start but three years later received 50%. Of

those employed, 39% received benefits at the start of VR; three years after case closure 26% received benefits.

Though VR programs were reasonably successful nationwide, FY2007 (October 2006 to September 2007) was a difficult time for the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services and its Workforce and Technology Center. Due to budget cuts, the organization underwent agency restructuring which led to layoffs or staff transfers, delays for consumers, and the elimination of some programs and services. In Workforce Services, the following programs were closed: A+ and Network+, Office Technology/Accounting, and Cosmetology. Office Technology/Word Processing was changed to Office Technology with two service tiers—Customer Service and Administrative Professional training. Other programs were reorganized, condensed, or closed to meet the agency's financial goals. Despite this challenge, the DORS FY2008 (October 2007 to September 2008) Annual Report showed

that we served 6,330 students with various disabilities with the highest categories of Psychiatric Disability (1,512 students) and Cognitive Disability (3,426 students). Persons rehabilitated by Occupation at Case Closure totaled 2,290. Of this number, 514 were in the Clerical, Sales Occupation. The average cost per person rehabilitated was \$4,431.22. This cost to the State is paid back, through taxes and reduced reliance on public benefits, in 2 to 4 years. Of note, the average hourly earning at case record was \$10.69 (DORS, 2008).

Employment outcomes from the Office Technology Program for FY2008 showed 36 cases were closed or rehabilitated; of this number, 26 were employed (DORS, 2009a). Of note, this figure does not necessarily represent students served during FY2008.

Self-Efficacy

An individual's self-efficacy has been noted as an important factor in obtaining employment. In his earlier work on this topic, Bandura (1986) explained that self-efficacy is based on an individual's perception of performance (whether true or false) compared to the

performance of others; performance feedback received from others; and judgments about capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses. Research indicated that individuals must feel confident that they can execute an effective job search in order to get a job (Eden & Aviram, 1993; Proudfoot & Guest, 1997; Wiener, Oei & Creed, 1999; Barlow et al., 2002; Strauser & Berven, 2006; Hergenrather et al., 2008). Hergenrather et al. (2008) further found that “job seeking self-efficacy of persons with disabilities is correlated with independence skills, social skills, and interview management skills” (p. 41). Therefore, strategies aimed at increasing self-efficacy and subsequently increasing employment outcomes are important.

One strategy aimed at increasing self-efficacy used the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) or attitudinal stage model to first assess readiness to start the job-seeking process (Mannock, Levesque, & Prochaska, 2002). Researchers evaluated 169 workers who had been injured on the job using the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment-Vocational Counseling (URICA-VC) which consisted three stage clusters: Reluctant, Reflective, and Participative. Participants found participative were more likely to return to work than those who were reluctant or thinking about it. Of the three stages, they found that those who were reflective would be good candidates for VR services including counseling, career investigation and development, and training. However, researchers warned of participants who remained in the reflective phase too long. They further suggested that “Counselor sensitivity to readiness can help reduce resistance, increase self-efficacy, and increase the likelihood of successful vocational outcomes among clients who have experienced disabling injuries” (p. 27).

Barlow et al. (2002) conducted descriptive surveys to measure experiences of individuals with disabilities using a job-seeking efficacy (JSS) scale with a component to measure their ability to manage disability at interview (MDI). Their correlations suggested that “greater job-

seeking efficacy and perceived ability to manage disability at interview were associated with more positive psychological well-being (i.e. less anxious and depressed mood and greater self-esteem” (p. 48). A replication study was later done by Hergenrather et al. (2008) on self-efficacy and the Job-seeking Skills (SJS) scale. They found the SJS scale helpful to assist VR professionals in developing and monitoring clients’ job-seeking behaviors.

Strauser and Berven (2006) also worked on self-efficacy using the Job Seeking Self-Efficacy Scale on a convenience sample with cluster analysis in order to study how confident individuals felt in conducting job-seeking activities. They analyzed results into four subscales: Confidence in Self-Presentation, Confidence in Handling Disability and Other Difficult Employment Issues, Confidence in Handling Unusual Barriers in the Job Seeking Process, and Confidence in Executing the Job Search. They found that those who reported higher scores on self-presentation and self-efficacy would be more likely to persist in their efforts thus increasing the likelihood that they would find a job. They also found that those who could manage their disability at interview elicited positive responses from the interviewer which might eliminate discomfort experienced by employers at the prospect of hiring individuals with disabilities.

One initiative that has been in place in Maryland is the Governor’s QUEST (Quality, Understanding, Excellence, Success, and Training Internship) Program (DORS, 2009b). This program is a collaborative effort between The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) and the Maryland Department of Budget and Management (DBM) that gives students with disabilities the opportunity to get paid work experience that will be added to their resumes and to network with state employers. Students tend to work for three months, but may be extended for up to a year depending on workload requirements. After completing internships, students are placed on a special eligibility list and

given preference, if qualified, for state positions. The program has been in existence since 2000 and statistics show that 84% of students who complete the program find employment with the state (DORS, 2009b).

In retrospect, however, one of the most important methods of improving self-efficacy may be self-advocacy. Self-advocacy may be defined as an individual's capacity to successfully communicate, discuss, or act on his or her own behalf and to make known wants, needs, and rights. It also entails informed choice and accountability for the choice made (VanReusen et al., 1994 as quoted by West et al., 1999). This is evident throughout a student's school career as he or she receives guidance and support through teams in order to form the guiding document, the Individual Education Plan (IEP). Although the student and his or her parents receive information about his or her disability and what services will be provided, the student must be at the center of this process as an active member. As the student gets to the high school level, the team adds transition services to plan for life after graduation. While IEP team members advise the student and parents, the student must advocate for what he or she wants to happen. If the student resides in Maryland, more than likely someone from DORS has already made contact with the school, the IEP team, and the student. Other adults with disabilities refer themselves or receive a referral to DORS and to WTC. At WTC, students receive career assessment and guidance; career training; academic services if necessary; rehabilitation technology services which may include an assistive technology assessment; community living skills if necessary; and employment services (DORS, 2009c). In addition to DORS/WTC, individuals receive information related to their specific disability from many agency and organizational websites. Students also receive encouragement to find out as much as they can about their disability and any workplace accommodations.

One website that assists individuals with disabilities and those who employ them is the Job Accommodations Network. Employers receive valuable information about job accommodations which may take away their reluctance to hire an individual with a disability. Throughout training at DORS, students receive daily and monthly feedback from their instructors and case managers so that they are aware of their training progress toward their employment goal; they can make comments or suggestions about their programs. If they are not pleased with the outcome of their choice or services received, they have the right to seek support from the Client Assistance Program (CAP). When the CAP representative conducts a team meeting, the student states his or her complaint, receives necessary input from team members, and makes a decision based on information received. In this way, students practice self-advocacy and receive encouragement to do this throughout their life as new situations arise.

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

One method of improving one's job-seeking ability is the use of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). Psychotherapists and other professionals use CBT to attempt to correct faulty thinking and behavior. Proudfoot and Guest (1997) found CBT invaluable to reduce the psychological effects of unemployment. They conducted a blind-random experimental study of 289 unemployed volunteers without psychiatric disabilities from various occupational groups. The control group received a social support program that focused on networking. The treatment group received CBT that included methods for uncovering, writing down, and testing the soundness of thought and reasons behind them; examining behavior; and testing. Participants completed surveys before, at the end, and three to four months post treatment. Results showed increased gain for the study group over the control group on several scores rating psychological well being, though the control group also experienced some gain. Almost half of study group

participants exhibited changes in behavior and 34% found full-time jobs although study effects diminished for those who did not find jobs. Researchers also noted that 15% of the study group found part-time jobs which they felt might result in full-time employment. It is important to note that study participants did not have disabilities but experienced prolonged negative effects of unemployment.

In his later work Bandura (1997) stated that “Many human distresses are exacerbated, if not created by failures of thought control. The self-regulation of thought processes, therefore, [plays a significant role in the maintenance of emotional well-being]” (p. 145). He also defined CBT or cognitive restructuring as a practice that directed attention away from troubling thoughts, promoted engagement in absorbing activities, gave strategies to improve coping effectiveness and thought management, and increased one’s ability to protect the inner self. He further asserted the importance of modeling desired behavior and using behavioral assignments. “Bandura (1986) suggested that one’s level of self-efficacy toward a specific behavior can be modified through (1) performance accomplishment, (2) verbal persuasion, (3) vicarious persuasion, and (4) emotional arousal” (Hergenrather et al., 2008, p. 40). In order to serve individuals with disabilities through VR (using WTC as an example), performance accomplishments (1) could be started by the field counselor meeting with the individual to develop the IPE which contains written goals and next steps. The field counselor and case manager make use of verbal persuasion (2) which requires the use of positive reinforcement and other counseling tools to support the individual’s journey toward employment. Vicarious learning (3) could be accomplished through contact with other students who have graduated from WTC who come back to share their experiences. Emotional arousal (4) or controlling feelings of anxiety that accompany job-seeking activities can be

managed through relaxation and stress management techniques given by the field counselor, case manager, or other qualified staff.

Coviello et al. (2004) also used CBT in descriptive research in an effort to increase motivation and the job-seeking action steps in substance abusers. Researchers used a Vocational Problem-Solving Skills (VPSS) intervention to get participants to think through their problems and to choose appropriate steps in order to reach their goals. Most of the 109 participants received public assistance and did “under the table” work for less than 10 hours per week. Participants were divided into two groups (study and control) and completed baseline measurements which were repeated six months later. After the intervention, researchers found no difference between motivation and job-seeking steps. Although motivation was high through the study for certain activities (networking, speaking with their counselor, reading newspaper ads), motivation decreased for more assertive steps that involved interactions with unfamiliar people, i.e. people at an employment office or workplace. However, at the six-month follow-up, motivation and job-seeking steps did affect employment. As mentioned earlier in this review, these individuals preferred other employment options because they feared loss of benefits for methadone; also, any taxable income would be surrendered to pay outstanding debts like child support.

Summary

Individuals with disabilities face many challenges in their quest for independence, self-sufficiency, and employment. Many researches identified self-efficacy as the leading determinant of employment success. One strategy to increase self-efficacy was to assess individuals’ self-efficacy using self-efficacy and job-seeking skills scales in order to intervene at critical stages in the job search. An important skill identified was the clients’ ability to manage disability at

interview. Another strategy was evaluating individuals' job-seeking readiness stages to identify those in the reflective stage (individuals who would benefit most from VR services). In Maryland, the QUEST internship program has been another successful intervention because it allows individuals with disabilities to gain valuable work experience and to network with employers. While these are excellent approaches, sometimes you have to dig deeper into a client's thoughts. To uncover these, interventions like CBT were used to identify negative thoughts to try to reframe these into positive thoughts that will lead to positive actions and to positive job outcomes.

Public VR remains an effective program to evaluate, plan, treat, and work toward employment success for individuals with disabilities. VR counseling, peer testimony, behavioral assignments, management of disability at interview as well as on the job, and social supports remain important issues. Whether individuals contact VR programs during high school, refer themselves after high school, or receive referrals from someone else, it is important that they take advantage of programs aimed at providing personalized service and training in order reach established goals. VR counselors and others have to contend with budgetary issues which may restrain what they can do, however, they are key resources to deal effectively with barriers to employment to prevent frustration and apathy. Though these professionals are important members of the team, the individual must self-advocate and continue this behavior throughout life.

With one of the toughest recessions in history and an employment rate of approximately 8%, things are pretty tough for individuals with disabilities, as they are for the general population. Regarding the administrative/clerical field, economist Slavin (2002) reported that "the skills of clerical workers, typists, and inventory control clerks who once staffed a corporate

office have been made obsolete by a computer system” (p. 257). Though this signals structural unemployment for many including those with disabilities who seek entry level positions in this area, this may not be entirely true. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook, jobs for secretaries and administrative assistants are expected to be among those with the largest number of new growth, although “they will perform fewer clerical tasks and are increasingly taking on the roles of information and communication managers” (2008-2009). This is good news for those seeking entry into this field. However, individuals with disabilities will face a lot of competition and may need to compete at a much higher level than before. Staff including employment specialists who work with these individuals will need to work harder than before, realizing that individuals with disabilities are at high risk for poverty and for psychological distress due to lengthy periods of unemployment.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

A qualitative design focusing on rich description was chosen to address this topic. This design incorporated data collection from a variety of sources including current and past student records, psychological testing (if available), participant observation, artifacts (classroom work), audio taped interviews, e-mail from participants, e-mail messages from staff to participants, discussions and notes from staff working with participants.

Participants

Participants consisted of a convenience sample of three students, all of whom had participated in the six-week CS program and met the qualifications for transfer to the six-month AP program. All three met the definition of “individuals with disabilities.” Student #1 was a 20-year-old White female with fetal alcohol syndrome, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, learning disabilities, and speech impairment; she lived with family. Student #2 was a 27-year-old Black female with cerebral palsy and a brain shunt who had difficulties in ambulation; she lived with family. Student #3 was a 45-year-old Black female with post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and history of substance abuse; prior to the study, she had lived in a shelter, but lived with family at the time of the study.

Instrument

Information was collected through written surveys, interviews, and a review of documents by the investigator. The surveys included the following: *Attitudes About Work*, *Stages of Change: Work*, and *Job Survey*. All three instruments were developed by Coviello et al. (2004). The first tool, *Attitudes About Work*, consists of a three-page, 28-question form

designed to measure participants' attitudes about work. All items are based on a Likert scale. The second survey, *Stages of Change: Work*, consists of 32 Likert-type scale items designed to measure participants' feelings about employment problems. The third tool, *Job Survey*, was developed using checklists and free responses. *Job Survey* is a 5-page, 74-question measure of participants' actions toward getting a job (part-, full-time, or under-the-table work) during the past two weeks. No validity or reliability information could be located for any of these instruments.

In addition to the surveys, the investigator conducted individual interviews with each student based on questions provided by Nieto (2004). These address ethnicity and culture; hobbies; past and current school experiences; family life; friendships; and future hopes and goals.

Each participant was interviewed either before or after school or during the lunch break. Interviews done before or after class usually took approximately one hour; those done during lunch time took approximately a half hour. Students were interviewed whenever possible, but usually two or three times during the week throughout the study. When that was not possible, they were done using e-mail. The interview questions were used as conversational guidelines that sometimes provoked them to share more information.

Additionally, before a student begins CS training, the case manager conducts a preadmission meeting with the student in person or by phone. During this meeting the case manager completes a preadmission form that is forwarded to the instructor. This provides basic information about the student, but the instructor can use the DORS database for vocational rehabilitation centers, AWARE, to examine notes written by other staff at WTC or in field office. While this information provides guidance to the instructor, it does not contain everything to fully

get to know the student. Therefore, interviews for this study allow the participant to tell the full story and include details that might otherwise remain unknown.

Procedure

At the beginning of this research, the researcher met with participants as a group to describe the research project. Participants reviewed and signed a consent form. Each was asked to complete the three surveys previously described. In addition, the investigator gathered information from the pre-admission conference report and from AWARE. The investigator also reviewed recent research literature for information on job accommodations, post traumatic stress syndrome, learning disabilities, cerebral palsy, and fetal alcohol syndrome. This information became part of a working file on each student. Additionally, time was scheduled by the investigator to review the student records at our Center to add to these files.

By the time the students entered the classroom, the investigator had enough information for effective teaching and learning to take place. For Student #1, information from her file indicated no special accommodations were necessary other than perhaps an environment free of auditory and visual distractions which is also mentioned on the Job Accommodation Network fact sheet (Job Accommodation Network, 2009a). To encourage communication, this researcher used open ended questions with longer response time, one-on-one demonstrations, and a buddy for role plays. The Learning Disabilities website provided strategies that could be used to encourage self-advocacy which other staff would later address. Student #1 also participated in the Community Living Skills Training program to work on independence and personal management before participating in Office Technology and Workplace English concomitant with Office Technology training to facilitate writing was provided.

Student #2's accommodations were a little more complex due to cerebral palsy with orthopedic and mobility impairments. From the Job Accommodation Network fact sheet it was helpful to understand that cerebral palsy was due to damage to the brain during the prenatal, birth, or postnatal period; it could also be due to brain damage during babyhood (Job Accommodation Network, 2009b). Before entry into Office Technology, this researcher met with Occupational Therapy staff to design a workstation within a cubicle that included a special chair, a mini-keyboard and tray, a stenomask for speaking, a trackball, a small inkjet printer for easy access and manageability. The student had prior training on the use of Dragon Naturally Speaking (DNS) voice recognition software. Because of the student's brain shunt, this researcher was alert to any complaint of headache which could signal shunt malfunction. During training this researcher would conduct one-on-one demonstrations showing the student multiple ways to do a certain task so that she could decide what DNS command to speak into the computer. Other than that, the student needed extra time to get to classes and flexibility to allow for travel arrangements through a mobility service. In addition to Office Technology, Student #2 wanted to attend Workplace English because she enjoyed writing.

Flexibility, understanding, and accountability were key tools to accommodate Student #3's disabilities in the classroom. Website information from the Job Accommodation Network was helpful to understand post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but no special accommodations were needed for the student. However, Student #3 required addictions counseling concomitant with training. This counseling would occur off and on, though more frequently as the student required additional supports. This instructor met with the student from time to time when the student seemed overwhelmed or had difficulty grasping classroom information. Student #3 also

required time off for children's appointments and school visits. Although she was a good writer, she wanted to brush up her skills in Workplace English.

Once permission was given to start the study, the investigator met with each participant for face-to-face audio taped interviews. Interviews were scheduled before class, before lunch, or after class was dismissed for the day and occurred over a period of approximately two months. One of 4 original participants was unable to attend class due to multiple hospitalizations and had to be withdrawn from the study, which left 3 students. During their training, students met regularly with their instructor and case manager monthly for progress reports. A monthly progress report used by WTC instructors consists of about three pages that details a student's progress in their training program. Students are rated using the following ratings: Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement, or Unsatisfactory. Standards on the report include Oral and Written Instructions, Work Quality and Quantity, etc. At the time of graduation, the last meeting included a progress report review, review of their Occupational Readiness Record, and discussion of next steps. After participants graduated, they e-mailed the investigator at least once a week to report on their job search or other activities.

Information gained directly from the participants was supplemented by communications with other teachers, the case manager, employment specialist, employment supervisor, and the addictions counselor who worked with one of the students. These encounters were in person, by phone, or by e-mail. Approximately a month or two months after graduation, surveys were mailed again and returned to this investigator..

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The goal of this descriptive research was to enhance understanding of the perceptions and job search behavior of individuals with disabilities who participated in a state-sponsored vocational rehabilitation program. Table 1 summarizes the study participants based on key descriptors.

Table 1: Key Descriptors of Study Participants			
	Student #1	Student #2	Student #3
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Race	White	African-American	African-American
Age Group	20-30	20-30	40-50
Family Status	Single, living with parents and 1 sibling	Single, living with parent and 1 sibling	Single with 3 children, living with 1 parent
Disability	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education	High school	High school and 2 years of college	High school and some college
Technical Skills	Microsoft software and excellent keyboarding skills	Speech recognition and Microsoft software, above average writing skills	Microsoft software, excellent keyboarding skills, above average writing skills
Work Experience/ Transportation	Some recent work experience Drives and owns a car	Recent work experience Relies on public mobility transportation	Recent work experience Uses public transportation well
Soft Skills	Above average personal appearance Pleasant and cooperative	Above average interpersonal skills Pleasant and cooperative	Above average interpersonal skills Pleasant and cooperative
Critical Constraints to Job Success	Cognitive disorder with communication difficulty	Cognitive disorder Mobility Problems Medical care	Disability management May require medical intervention
Job Search Strategies	Somewhat aggressive during training, though dependent upon staff Staff contact maintained	Somewhat aggressive during training, though dependent upon staff Staff contact maintained	Aggressive during and after training Staff contact partially maintained

Of these students, the most challenging circumstances were presented by Student #3, whose need for medical intervention will hinder any attempt to become competitively employed. Each student attempted to locate a position using newspaper want ads, online want ads, flyers of job postings, networking with others, visiting employment agencies, participating in field trips, attending JSST along with a pilot job club, and utilizing DORS' employment staff. However, after training, only one participant (according to self report) conducted a more aggressive job search. At present, one of the three is currently working on an internship and one had been briefly employed. All three expressed during interviews the opinion that their training was helpful and they felt that in time they could be employed. However, physical and psychological conditions are likely to continue to affect them, and they continue to need high levels of support.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to build the researcher's understanding of the perceptions and behaviors of job-seeking individuals with disabilities who had received training in office technology but were struggling to find employment. The researcher began by collecting a large amount of data from each of the three participants (summarized in Chapter 4), interpreting the data, and then attempting to extract common themes and examine the applicability of this knowledge to the researcher's own role as a vocational professional. Whereas the generalizability of this information is greatly limited by the size of the sample, the investigator did learn much about these individuals and their experiences. In the end, it was the perceptions of the investigator that were most affected by this project.

The investigator was surprised by participants' perseverance and motivation to complete all training requirements and to participate in all classroom activities including field trips, notwithstanding their disabilities. Each participant expressed a willingness to work hard and to help the other, had regular follow-up with their employment specialist and DORS field counselor, and attended a WTC pilot job club. In other words, all three students displayed high levels of interest, motivation, and enthusiasm throughout their time at WTC.

As far as educational environments, state agencies provided another protective asset for these students. During training, supportive staff have included teachers, the case manager, Rehabilitation Technology Services (RTS), occupational therapy, physical therapy, the employment specialist, and the DORS field counselors. All three students have received support in overcoming their barriers to employment from their case manager, employment specialist, and DORS field counselors. For example, one participant received extra assistance from the

employment specialist because her communication disorder might prevent a successful interview.

All three students accepted internship opportunities related to their training. Their behavior in securing, performing, and following up on these internships suggested that all three had sufficient self-efficacy and initiative in the job-seeking process to secure employment while in training with the support of DORS employment staff and field counselors. However, this process slowed down once students graduated and started their internships. Although an internship is certainly a step in the right direction and may open the door to employment, it does not guarantee a job offer. Until a job offer has been accepted and a participant has been employed for 90 days, a successful closure has not been obtained.

Interestingly, all three have been affected by substance abuse. One was diagnosed with fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) with subsequent learning disabilities and related problems. Despite this, Student #1 felt optimistic about the future though her affect was quite flat. Another has cerebral palsy with cognitive impairment and mobility, and a third grew up in a dysfunctional home with a parent engaged in active substance and physical abuse. This student has had the least success and the greatest challenge of managing her disabilities because of the psychological and physical nature of addiction as well as her PTSD. The negative impact of substance abuse on employment and general well-being has been widely documented. For instance, statistics from the National Institute of Health (2008) estimate that “nearly 14 million Americans abuse alcohol or are alcoholic. Several million more adults engage in risky drinking that could lead to alcohol problems. These patterns include binge drinking and heavy drinking on a regular basis” (Job Accommodation Network, 2009c). In addition, results from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) revealed

In 2007, an estimated 19.9 million Americans aged 12 or older were current (past month) illicit drug users, meaning they had used an illicit drug during the month prior to the survey interview. This estimate represents 8.0 percent of the population aged 12 years old or older. Illicit drugs include marijuana/hashish, cocaine (including crack), heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, or prescription-type psychotherapeutics used nonmedically (Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration).

Despite difficulties in their earlier years, all three participants exhibited varying degrees of resiliency shown by experiences such as successful relationships in a foster home, understanding of their own disabilities and their implications, and the ability to articulate personal and job goals. Notwithstanding the substance abuse issues, family and friends have played a supportive role for all three. Additionally, two of the three have established positive interpersonal relationships. One mentioned friends who work and who are moving ahead and a boyfriend who owns his own home. Another noted a community of believers at her church and some friends in her community. Because of their disabilities, they are likely to continue to struggle to become economically independent and will continue to need support and encouragement.

Threats to Validity

This study was limited to a convenience sample of three students who were cooperative, focused, and very motivated. The narrowness of the sample limited the amount of information that could be produced by the study. For example, it would have been helpful to have students with other disabilities such as vision impairments, deafness, and blood disorders. The study's validity may also have been affected by participants' relationship with the investigator, perhaps wanting to impress the investigator or to influence their classroom grades. Another threat to validity was the short time frame during which the study was completed (to avoid graduation). Additional time would have allowed for more "in depth" interviews particularly of those who

have contact with the students and of the students themselves in different environments other than school. The survey instruments administered to participants pose another threat to validity because of their reading level and questionable understanding of the items.

Implications for Future Research

The value of the information received and the insights it provided suggest the usefulness of repeating this research with a larger and more varied sample of students. The researcher could investigate the value added by including CBT within the currently existing two-week JSST at WTC in order to correct faulty thinking and behavior during the job search. The hypothesis could be that individuals with disabilities who participate in two-week JSST with CBT exhibit changed attitudes about working, complete more job-related tasks, and have changed feelings when approaching job-related problems. This type of study would allow researchers to find out more about the self efficacy of individuals with disabilities and its relationship to job-seeking.

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Appendix A

Narrative Summary – Student #1

Background

Student #1 was a 20-year-old White female with fetal alcohol syndrome, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, and subsequent learning disability. Limitations included difficulty holding a conversation, work pace, and in non-verbal reasoning. Her assets included a high school diploma, work experience, computer usage, entitlement payments, supportive parents, three girlfriends, and one boyfriend. Student #1 was aware of her disability and reported that she was adopted. At home she enjoyed baking, shopping, spending time with friends, and traveling.

School

Student #1 received special education throughout her school years and was referred to WTC by her DORS counselor for Community Living Skills Training (CLST) and OT training. As an OT student, she completed CS and AP training. In the AP class, she worked on Microsoft Word, Excel, Outlook, Workplace English, and JSST. Although she liked Excel best, she “did a good job at WTC and got a lot out of the AP class.”

Goals

Finding employment was important to Student #1 in order to start paying her car insurance and cell phone bill. She wanted her own apartment in suburbia (not far from where her parents live), get married, and have a few children. She expressed no interest in college but wanted to focus on a 30-year working career. Success for her was directly linked to goal achievement. “When I accomplish a goal, then I believe that I’m successful.”

Narrative Summary – Student #2

Background

Student #2 was a 27-year-old African-American female with CP and cognitive disorder. Her strengths included high school and college degrees, computer experience, work as a receptionist, SSI, and the ability to use public transportation. She lived in the city with her mother and sister, but also had assets of extended family, neighbors, and church members. Limitations included slow ambulation with a cane, inability to lift heavy objects, and decreased hand strength and mobility. She also had a shunt since birth that drained fluid from her brain. Hobbies included cooking, singing, and listening to Christian music. She also taught Sunday school.

School

Student #2 described difficult childhood years filled with multiple hospitalizations, surgeries, and special education. Her high school counselor referred her to DORS, and she decided to attend a two-year college as a humanities major. After graduation in four years, she realized that she had no marketable skills. After a period of depression, she decided to focus on the OT at WTC. Due to limited hand strength, she received Dragon Naturally Speaking (DNS) training and workstation adjustments. As an OT student, she completed CS, and AP classes. In the AP class, she worked on Microsoft Word, Excel, Outlook, and Workplace English. Her favorite class was Workplace English. She also completed a three-month internship at DORS.

Goals

WTC training was important, and she looked forward to having a career, possibly working for a charitable organization. She felt successful because she was the first one in her

family to graduate from college. She stated, “I think that with hard work and determination along with help from God, family, and friends, I will continue to be successful.”

Narrative Summary – Student #3

Background

Student #3 was a 45-year-old African American female who was the mother of four children. She had a history of substance abuse, depression, and PTSD. She had a high school diploma and needed to complete three courses in order to complete community college. At the time of the study, she had a good relationship with her mother and was trying to build one with her father. She was referred to DORS/WTC by the Department of Social Services for OT training and addictions counseling.

School

She described a troubled home life in the city where she was raised primarily by her mother who moved the family around a lot. She attended high school in the county, but experienced acts of racism that made her drop out and go to the Job Corps for about a year. However, she later returned and graduated at age 19. Since then, she experienced periods of employment along with periods of addiction. As an OT student, she completed CS, and AP classes. In the AP class, she completed Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Workplace English. However, two months into AP training, she relapsed and was placed on a behavioral contract which she adhered to until she graduated.

Goals

Student #3 would have liked to work for the state or federal government but would have liked to eventually go back to complete her degree. Previously, she applied for a job at the Social Security Administration; she was “highly qualified” but did not get it. She was disappointed, but

felt that the right job would come along. However, she stated that she needed to work at a state agency in order to keep her TANF benefits. She also stated, “I will feel successful when I get the job.” At age 45, she often felt depressed because “I am doing things now that I should have done at age 35.” She stated that her present circumstances were difficult because things were always happening just when she was trying to do her best.

Common Themes

This researcher learned that notwithstanding the differences among the participants, some common themes were observable. Guided by Broffebrenner’s theory of human development (Berk, 2004), the researcher noted the persistent effects of a stressful early environment on the three students. Each had experienced unhealthy behavior from those in their microsystems (environment of the immediate family)—substance abuse, physical abuse, and emotional abuse. Although they were removed from active abuse, only one of them moved to a home with two loving adoptive parents with high socioeconomic status (SES). One student stayed in the single-parent low SES home while recovery took place and the other student moved to loving single-parent low SES home. Although away from the abuser, Student #3 (as the oldest child) never had a childhood and had the desire to escape into addiction. Each student must now interact with others outside their microsystem in order to become independent and productive members of society.

At least two of the three students remained vulnerable in the area of interpersonal relationships due to unmet esteem and love needs. Although Student #1 had many protective factors and advantages, her lack of assertiveness could work against her. Student #2 had no close girlfriends and had never dated which may indicate a lack of trust. When considering Erickson’s eight stages of development, Student #2 was in the crisis of young adulthood and must resolve

the conflict of intimacy versus isolation. Student #3 also struggled in this area with many failed relationships and needed professional help to deal with her many stressors. Of the three students, Student #3 was most at risk for unemployment, not because of lack of skills, but because of disability mismanagement.

Future Prospects of Students

Student #1 will more than likely experience a successful employment outcome for several reasons. Her parents actively participated in her life and saw the need for her to acquire independent living skills, vocational training, and transportation. However, due to her lack of assertiveness and her home address, this investigator contacted a state agency near her home to ask if they would be willing to accept her as a student intern for a few months. Student #1 accepted this suggestion in order to get some work experience; her parents supported this idea until she could find a permanent job. While this worked this time, students don't usually want to work unpaid internships. Nevertheless, it might be a good idea to amend our individualized plan for employment to include an internship or employment as the training outcome. In Student #1's case, she successfully completed the internship early because she was offered a full-time job by another state agency. However, after working for a few weeks, she was laid off due to funding; she has high hopes of returning this month. Another positive outcome is that the employer is willing to accept another WTC Office Technology intern. Students such as Student #1 whose lack of assertiveness is a part of the disability will require more individualized assistance and planning than the group training currently offered in our Job Seeking Skills Training program.

In addition to this, Student #1 has advantages due to her parents' high SES and skill level. She had excellent grooming, appropriate clothing, and presentation despite her flat affect. She was polite, prompt, and worked very hard on the internship. Though her disability may preclude

advancement to a more challenging job, Student #1 might be quite satisfied with a job that includes routine tasks and not a lot of public contact. She had excellent keyboarding and adequate software skills and was cooperative though she has limited communication skills. With parental assistance, she had also eliminated a major barrier to employment—transportation. If she is not hired back this month, she will require assistance to engage in her job search again. It is at this point where many students decide to quit and where vocational professionals should quickly intervene. If left alone, she could fall by the wayside because she does receive entitlement payments.

Student #2 is disability aware, accommodations savvy, and had excellent interpersonal skills along with a genuine interest in others. Although she cannot boast a high keyboarding speed, she effectively used DNS to perform a variety of tasks. She is currently still on her second internship with the state with the hope of hire. While she has the support of her immediate and extended family, she receives a small amount of entitlement payments and would have difficulty making it on her own right away. Yet, she exhibits an inner strength due to her personal faith and a willingness to take a chance that she admitted she didn't have before WTC. Because many WTC staff are invested in her success, more than likely she will find a successful outcome. This is certainly not the case for the average WTC student. However, vocational professionals need to be aware of internship and employment opportunities that may exist in other state agencies and discover ways to make the process easier and more accessible.

Student #3 is highly skilled with excellent keyboarding and software skills. However, due to her dual diagnosis of substance abuse and depression with PTSD, she is fragile and in need of the most monetary and emotional support. Strategies like cognitive-behavioral therapy through a mental health specialist would help her root out negative thinking patterns that keep her bound in

the cycle of addiction. She might also require medical treatment in order to get her back on track again. Fortunately, her TANF requirements landed her an internship after graduation; but, unfortunately, she did not show up for her second internship that had an opportunity for hire. Not only does this prevent her from meeting her financial and self-actualization goals, but this somewhat hinders the budding relationship WTC was making with the employer. Staff should attempt to correct this negative situation by sending another qualified applicant. Regrettably, we leave it up to the student to contact us if they need assistance during the job search phase after graduation. At some point, Student #3 had difficulty but the employment specialist did not know what type and what type of assistance she really requires until Student #3 makes the contact. The researcher wonders what else could have been done when she had the relapse during training. The researcher also wonders whether her entitlement payments (TANF) have been discontinued, what has happened with her children, and whether someone loves her enough to give her the tough love she may need right now. Interestingly, she thought that she would have the easiest time finding a job because her disability was hidden.