

Short-Term Effects of Job Search Skills Training and a Summer Work Experience Program for Youth

What Were We Trying to Learn?

Studies of work experience programs for youth have yielded mixed results, but programs with strong impacts tend to include added components, like job search assistance. We know little about the effectiveness of work experience programs for youth with visual impairments or about strategies for teaching job search skills to this population.

We wanted to find out if participating in a job search skills training program leads to improved short-term outcomes for youth with visual impairments. We also explored whether outcomes differed for youth who participated in a vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency-sponsored summer work experience (SWE) program. In particular, we wanted to know if youth who participated in these programs had increases in the following:

- Job search knowledge (knowledge about searching for jobs)
- Job search behavior (e.g., filling out applications, sending resumes to employers, contacting employers for job leads)
- Job search behavior self-efficacy (confidence in performing different job search behaviors)
- Job search outcomes self-efficacy (confidence in successfully finding a job).

Research Takeaway

We evaluated the effects of job search skills training and summer work experience (SWE) program participation on short-term outcomes for youth with visual impairments. Our results indicate that job search skills training and SWE programs may have differing effects on youths' job search knowledge, behavior, and self-efficacy.

How Was This Project Carried Out?

NRTC researchers compared the effects of a SWE program for youth with visual impairments and a job search skills training program titled Putting Your Best Foot Forward (PYBFF). The SWE program included about six weeks of work with an employer in the community, for which the VR agency paid youths' salaries. PYBFF is a 35- to 40-hour program that teaches youth to:

- Identify and present their strengths and skills
- Understand the employer's perspective
- Find job openings
- Develop an effective resume
- Use disability disclosure strategies
- Identify job accommodations
- Prepare for job interviews

The participants in this study were 92 youth (ages 15-22) with visual impairments. Youth participated in PYBFF, the SWE program, both PYBFF and the SWE program, or neither of these programs. Phone interviews were conducted with youth to collect data about their job search knowledge, behavior, and self-efficacy.

What Are the Most Important Things We Learned?

Both the job search skills program (PYBFF) and the SWE program contributed to positive outcomes for youth.

- Youth who participated in PYBFF had significant increases in knowledge about searching for jobs, job search behavior, and confidence in performing different job search behaviors.

- Youth who completed the SWE program increased their confidence in performing different job search behaviors and confidence in successfully finding a job. They did not increase their knowledge about searching for jobs or job search behavior.
- Participants who did both PYBFF and the SWE had larger increases in confidence in performing different job search behaviors than those who only did PYBFF.

How Do These Findings Relate to Me?

- **Consider registering for our PYBFF trainer workshop.** This free workshop focuses on how to implement PYBFF. It includes interactive activities, content on group training techniques, and an introduction to the PYBFF materials. You can use what you learn to implement the PYBFF training.
- **Teach and support youth to find their own jobs or sponsored work placements.** The experience of looking for a job helps young people build independence and prepare for their future. You may need to offer encouragement if a young person is faced with rejection or other obstacles.

Learn More

Findings were taken from the following article:

Cmar, J. L., & McDonnall, M. C. (2021). Short-term effectiveness of job search skills training: Comparisons by summer work experience participation. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*. 64(2), 86-96.

For more information about this project, visit the project overview page.

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