

Employability Clinic: Linking Adults | CPD Blog

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Marissa Bell began working her first job six weeks ago, and she loved it from her first day. "I feel wonderful!" she told her job coach. "Like Wonder Woman!" She works at a recycling center, where she was hired after attending the Disability Skills Laboratory, part of the Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University. Her family decided to take Marissa there after moving to Logan and talking with a service coordinator from the Division of Services for People with Disabilities. The division recently required supported employment services before new day program services could be added to an individual's plan. "That's how we heard about it [the Disability Skills Laboratory's Employability Clinic] initially," said Kim Jensen, Marissa's mother. "I heard a lot of positive things about Utah State and their work with people with special needs," she said. "They have all the new data on what helps people with disabilities." So Marissa began attending DSL. Vocational Rehabilitation also worked with Marissa, as did Daisha Lopez, the supported employment Coordinator at the Disability Skills Laboratory. Typically, when the DSL's Employment Clinic helps people find employment, it starts with meeting the family to find out more about the client's strengths at home. "Then we meet again with the client and talk to them about different pathways to employment where they could be successful," Lopez said. Her advice to families of adults with disabilities who are seeking employment: Support and encourage your family member. "It can be a scary process. Just interviewing for a job alone can be a scary thing," she said. It's helpful when families support the job seeker, in addition to the providers. The DSL's Employability Clinic guides clients through a process of identifying interests and skills, then working on teaching application and interview techniques. They look at how to build a resume and find an employer to match, Lopez said. "Whether it is an individual with disabilities or not, I think there's a lot of work... finding the perfect job. I don't personally believe that it's necessarily harder for people with disabilities." In Marissa's case, recycling was one of her interests. They contacted an employer and brought her in to explore whether it was something she wanted to do. Sometimes an internship is a good option, but in Marissa's case the employer wanted to hire her right away. "I'm loving it," Marissa said. "I love it because I am sorting papers, cardboard, magazines, all that stuff... I like doing that." While it means less free time, she said it was a good thing. "I'm trying to do my best. The best I can."