

Empowering Employment for Individuals with Disabilities



EmployAbility Clinic at USU



Emma Eccles Jones College of Education & Human Services
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Getting to know me:

- Started with the clinic in 2022 and became program coordinator in 2024
- Wife & Mom of three boys
- Runs TOP SPORTS, a league for youth and young adults ages 3 and up to participate in sports with their peers

Erica Lundahl
Program Coordinator



Instagram-[Dillon.lundahl_fitness](https://www.instagram.com/Dillon.lundahl_fitness)



USU EmployAbility Clinic works in partnership with the Department of Workforce Services - Vocational Rehabilitation to help and support individuals with disabilities to become working, participating members of their communities.

Work Strategy Assessment

- A work strategy assessment is a organized process designed to carefully evaluate an individual's abilities, needs, and desires in relation to their employment goals and workplace environment. This assessment helps both the individual and the employment specialist make informed decisions that foster growth, satisfaction, and productivity.
- **Key Components of the Assessment**
- **Abilities:** This involves evaluating technical skills, soft skills, problem-solving capacity, and overall competence in relevant areas.
- **Needs:** Understanding what an individual requires to perform their best is essential. This may include resources, training, mentorship, accommodations, or work-life balance considerations.
- **Desires:** Exploring personal aspirations, goals, preferred work culture, and desired growth opportunities helps ensure that individuals are motivated and satisfied in their roles.



Job Development



We provide hands-on support in:

- Resume writing
- Job applications
- Job searching and interview prep
- Attending job interviews with client
- Life skills and Workplace Readiness classes to develop needed life/work skills

Job Coaching

What is a job coach?

- Disability employment specialists who teach, support, and guide clients on the job
- Serve as a coordinator between employees and employers



What that looks like on the jobsite:



- It varies depending on the person's needs and the type of work.
- Provide direct support until clients meet expectations and feel confident
- Continue periodic check-ins with clients and employers to ensure lasting success
- Our main goal is to fade out so our clients can be independent on the job

Sergio's story

Obstacles he faced:

Rejected by employers due to his blindness and lack of assistive technology

Dismissed in interviews before being given a chance to demonstrate skills

No previous work experience to put on resume

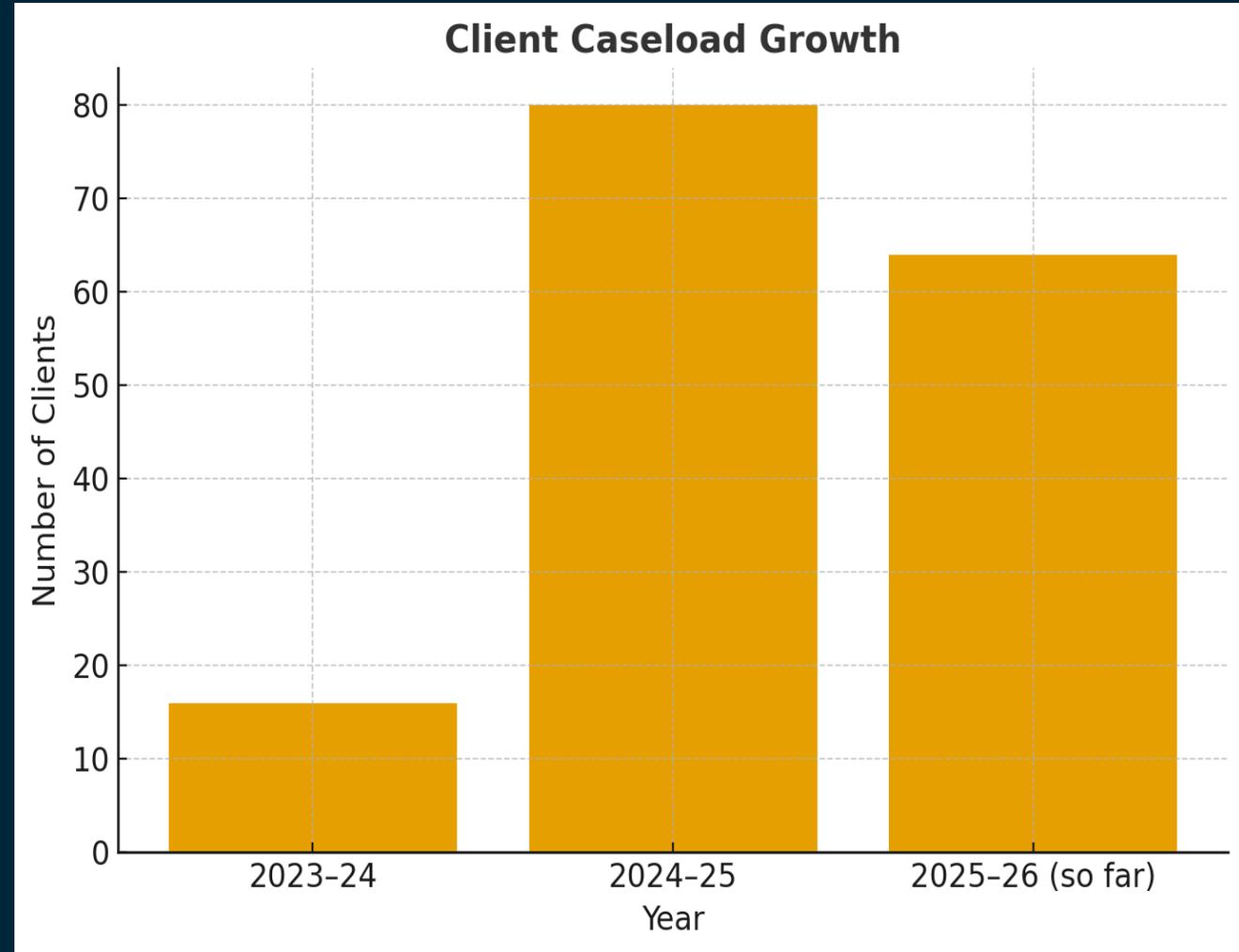


Sergio and the EmployAbility Clinic

- Sergio worked with Erica and the clinic to refine his resume and highlight his strengths.
- We coached him to advocate for himself, built his confidence.
- **NETWORKING!** Introduced him to other program coordinators at the IDRPP, handed out resumes and told them about his skills.
- Throughout the process Sergio's talents began to shine. Fluent in both English and Spanish, Sergio was hired in March of 2024 by the IDRPP Utah Pyramid Project as a translation specialist.
- In his role, he uses assistive technology to read documents and translate materials from English to Spanish

Overview of Clinic Growth

- Over the past two years, the clinic has experienced tremendous growth, reflecting our expanding reach and impact in the community.
- We've grown from 16 clients in 2023–24 to 80 in 2024–25, and we're already serving 64 clients this year.
- Since taking over as Program Coordinator, I implemented a new service model—shifting from individual caseloads to a collaborative, team-based approach.
- In this model, all staff work together to support every client, helping them refine résumés, practice mock interviews, and build workplace skills through on-the-job coaching.
- Our team focuses on advocacy and empowerment—not only advocating for clients, but also teaching them to advocate for themselves to foster lasting independence.



Paid Internship Program

At USU EmployAbility Clinic in partnership with Dept. Of Workforce Services, Vocational Rehabilitation



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The Paid Internship Program



Designed for transition-aged youth (ages 16–22) to gain **real-world job experience** and develop valuable work skills that increase their chances of long-term employment.

Offers **paid, supported internships** for students with disabilities. Along with a job coach working alongside them

Focuses on building **employability skills** such as teamwork, responsibility, and professionalism.

Encourages **career exploration** and provides insights into potential long-term career paths.

Promotes **independence and confidence** through hands-on work experience.

Aims to increase **long-term employment success** for participants.

Internships



Fall & Spring
Summer

10 weeks

8 weeks

To
participate

Students must be clients with Vocational Rehabilitation to participate.

Challenges

Finding job coaches to support the growing number of interns
Increasing Employer Participation. More departments that would be willing to host an intern would enhance the program with providing students with a wider range of career exploration opportunities.

INTERNSHIPS:

The continued growth in internship participation — along with ongoing placement challenges and waiting lists — highlights the need to expand partnerships and develop new community connections.

By increasing the number of active placement sites, the program can meet growing demand and ensure that more students gain meaningful, hands-on work experience that prepares them for long-term employment success.



The Value of Work for Individuals with Disabilities

Employment is more than just a source of income; it provides individuals with a sense of purpose, independence, and belonging. For people with disabilities, meaningful work can be a powerful avenue for personal growth and social integration. Many companies have recognized that a diverse workforce—including people with disabilities—leads to greater creativity and problem-solving.

Individuals with disabilities are essential contributors to the workforce and the broader community. Their achievements and participation remind us of the importance of diversity and inclusion. By continuing to remove barriers and promote acceptance, we can ensure that everyone—regardless of ability—has the opportunity to thrive and make a difference.

At the EmployAbility Clinic, we know that persistence is key. Our Team works hard to break barriers for our clients – often driving them to interviews, connecting them with potential employers, and securing trial placements. This hands-on approach gives clients valuable real-world exposure while allowing employers to see the benefits firsthand.

The Value of Individuals with Disabilities to the Community

Communities thrive when they embrace diversity. People with disabilities play an essential role in creating stronger, more vibrant communities through their unique talents and perspectives.

Enriching Social Fabric- Building empathy, connection and understanding

Driving Innovation- Offering fresh perspectives and creative problem solving

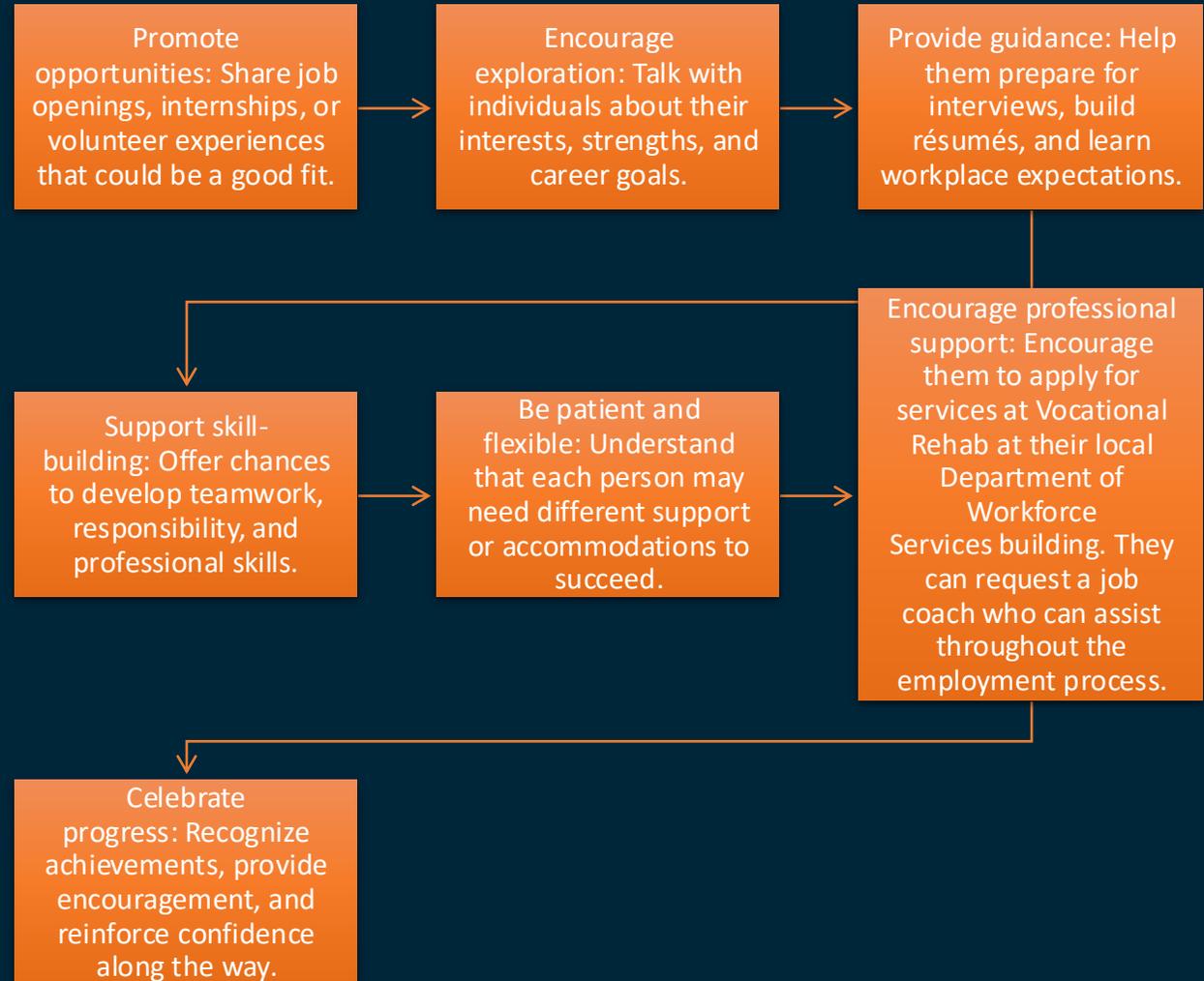
Boosting the economy- Expanding the workforce and consumer base

Promoting Inclusive Education- Encouraging accessible learning for all

Enhancing Community Engagement- Strengthening civic and social participation

Fostering Cultural Enrichment- Celebrating diversity through shared experiences

How You Can Support People with Disabilities looking for Employment



USU EmployAbility Clinic Services

Our dedicated team of professionals is committed to helping transition aged youth and adults with disabilities find and maintain meaningful, long-term employment. We work closely with each of our clients to identify opportunities that align with their strengths, interests, and availability—ensuring every job is a good fit and a step toward independence.

Our employment services include:

Supported Job-Based Training

Supported Employment

On-Site Job Coaching along with Life skills, social skills and Work Readiness Classes

Paid Student Internship Opportunities

Customized Employment (available the first of the year)

In Conclusion- The value of individuals with disabilities to a community cannot be overstated. Their contributions make communities stronger, more innovative, and more compassionate. By embracing inclusion and accessibility, communities unlock the full potential of all of their members, creating a better future for everyone.



*"Helping individuals discover what they can do-
not what they can't"*

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