

Looking for Work

Some Tips for Parents

Looking for work is difficult for everyone, especially when high unemployment makes it difficult for qualified adults to find employment. Chances are strong that your child will face this challenge while living at your home. How can you make your home a supportive place for job hunting? Here are some ideas:

1. *Insist your child actively look for work.* Do not let him spend extensive time watching TV, reading, shopping, or entertaining friends. If necessary, tell him that looking for work is full-time job, which he must do in order to earn your financial support. Help him by not overloading him with chores during working hours on the weekdays when employers are in. Help him overcome his failures, but do not accept lack of effort.
2. *Help him to organize himself.* Some people with disabilities do not know how to look for work. There are many books about job-hunting, each with a slightly different approach. Together, you might decide on a plan of action. Or help might be needed with the fine points of planning and scheduling. You could remind him of necessary follow-up telephone calls or letters.
3. *Be a good listener.* Ask him how the day went. Listen carefully to his adventures. Let him express his feelings of frustration, anger, and nervousness. Emphasize his actions and behavior, rather than the results. If he is actively seeking work, he deserves your respect and praise, even if he does not succeed in finding work. For example, praise your child if he does a good job of describing his qualifications at an interview, even if he is not selected for the opening.
4. *Help with reading and writing.* You may have to read classified ads for her and check addresses of her letters. Some job banks have computer printouts on a screen, which are especially difficult for reluctant readers. It might be helpful if the parent types or handwrites job applications since childish handwriting and misspellings tend to disturb employers. If the employer uses online job kiosks, a new barrier for people with reading and writing difficulty, you may have to sit with them and key in the words of the application.
5. *Help with transportation, if necessary.*
6. *Grooming is important.* Students with disabilities are sometimes unaware of tears and stains on their clothing, sloppy hair, or dirt on their hands. It helps if someone looks them over before an interview.
7. *Use your social network to help your child find work.* Talk to your friends, co-workers, and other parents of children with disabilities. Tell them about your child. Stress your child's positive qualities and describe her as a capable worker. Don't spend a lot of time describing her disability. Ask her to follow up any leads that you discover.
8. *Be aware of community resources.* Know the applicable civil rights laws. Consider government programs such as vocational rehabilitation and job service. If you know of other parents whose children are job hunting, you may want to form a support group for yourselves and/or your children.

With your help, your child will have a better chance of locating a satisfying job. However, this is only half the battle. Your child will have to work hard in order to keep that work. Be sure your child gets a complete job description and check for problem areas. Equipment such as calculators, tape recorders, and self-correcting typewriters can solve problems. A learning disabled person should not accept a job that includes many tasks in his area of disability.