

Preparing Children and Adults with Down Syndrome for Employment

July 10, 2024

NDSS Mission

NDSS empowers individuals with Down syndrome and their families by driving policy change, providing resources, engaging with local communities, and shifting public perceptions.

NDSS Core Programs

NDSS supports and advocates for the Down syndrome community by focusing on three key areas of programming:

Resources & Support

- 1-800 Helpline (800-221-4602)
- Resource and information from birth to end of life
- Education, employment, health and wellness, aging, caregiving, and more

Advocacy & Policy

- Federal, State, and Local Advocacy
- Develop and improve laws and policies for individuals with Down syndrome, their families and caregivers
- Legislative agenda spans the life experience of individuals with Down syndrome

Community Engagement

- Scholarships, grants, and awards
- National Buddy Walk®
- Times Square Video
- Athlete Ambassadors
- Virtual Racing for 3/21 for WDS
- Gala, golf, and more!

NDSS Employment Program



- Employment Policy and Advocacy
- Resource Development
- Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment
- Private-Sector Engagement
- Affiliate Support
- Highlighting Success

NDSS Employment Program

Employment Resources

Partnering for Career Success

An employment guide for employers and employees with Down syndrome and other disabilities

Entrepreneurship Guide

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NDSS Employment Program Resume Checklist

Personal Information:

- Name is featured at the top
- Formatted to stand out (could be bolded or in a larger font size)
- Included personal contact information: phone number, email address and address

Professional Experience:

- Professional experience is listed in chronological order
- Each professional achievement includes the following:
 - Name of the employer

Professional Statement (Optional):

- Clear statement of desired profession
- Goal has directly into the position you are applying for
- Reference to value you bring to the company

Education:

- Education experience is listed in chronological order
- Each educational achievement includes the following:
 - The academic institution
 - Location of the academic institution and city
 - Degree attained
 - Year of completion
 - Reference to expected year of completion for any degrees or certificate that have not been completed

Skills (Optional):

- Skills are specific and balance both soft skills
- Each skill is described in a full sentence

NDSS Employment Program Resume Reference Guide

Personal Information

- To make your resume stand out, it can be a great idea to have your name in a large font size at the top of the page.
- Include as much personal contact information (phone number, email address and home address) as possible. This will avoid communication issues.

Candidate's Objective

- The Objective statement is trying to capture a candidate's motivation and interest as they apply for employment.
- It is important to be as specific as possible. Rather than stating generic goals, you should identify why your professional goals relate to that company or position.

Provide the following information:

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Guide Me & Watch Me Succeed

Modeling Task Instruction:

Show & Tell me: Describe the task that needs to be done and then demonstrate it step by step. Repeat at least twice to ensure comprehension of the task.

Guide me: For individuals with fine-motor skills challenges, there are circumstances when hand-over-hand assistance may be beneficial. This is especially true for if it is a physical and/or complex task.

Watch me: Let the employee try the task slowly and follow them along by watching the employee perform the task. It should feel much like they have mastered. Feel free to repeat this as many times as necessary. If an employee is struggling, have the employee perform the task side by side with their trainer and/or refer to an earlier step.

Trust me: Let the employee try to perform and rely on their own! Feel free to repeat any of the previous steps whenever needed.

These steps are critical to supporting an employee in the development of their training at work. There are several factors that should be considered when going through these steps:

- Use a positive and genuine tone at each step - this will foster pride as the employee develops.
- When appropriate, visual guides may be a useful tool to support the learning process.
- Employees with disabilities should be respected like any other staff member. When attempting to train someone, avoid speaking to them as though they were a child as that demeans the employee.
- These steps should be personalized, as each employee has a different need for support in their learning process.

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NDSS Events



**Times Square Video and
New York City Buddy Walk®**
September 7, 2024
New York, NY



Racing For 3.21
March 21, 2025
Virtual



NDSS DC Golf Outing
September 30, 2024
Washington, DC



**Down Syndrome
Advocacy Conference**
April 28 - 30, 2025
Washington, D.C.



2024 Adult Summit
November 14-16, 2024
Costa Mesa, CA



NDSS Gala & Auction
TBA
New York, NY

Speaker Bio

Amanda Myers

- Amanda is a Certified Employment Support Professional who joined Down Syndrome Innovations in April 2021.
- She has more than a decade of experience supporting individuals with diverse abilities.
- Amanda began her career working with children at a community mental health center where she was awarded Employee of the Year.
- In Vancouver, British Columbia she worked as an Employment Specialist for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Employment Coordinator

B.S. – Family Studies and Counseling, Manhattan Christian College
CESP - Certified Employment Support Professional

Preparing Children and Adults with Down Syndrome for Employment

Amanda Myers, Certified Employment Support Professional, CESP
Employment Coordinator, Down Syndrome Innovations



Why Employment Matters

Employment provides a sense of purpose and meaning to our lives, but it's important to remember:

- Work can look different for everyone
- There are a variety of ways individuals can contribute to their community
- People can experience very fulfilling lives outside of employment

It's totally okay if your child:

- Isn't motivated to work
- Is experiencing barriers to employment
- Is prompt dependent
- Is older and you feel like they're not prepared



They still have time to develop their skills if employment is a goal of theirs!

Presentation Goals

- Not intended to add more to your plate, but shine light into what you're doing and get you thinking about new ways to incorporate skill-building
- Answer the question, “Where do I start?”
- Train you on what an Employment Specialist does, so you feel equipped with the tools needed to prepare your loved one for the workforce
- Learn how to access support services through community providers and online resources available
- Leave here feeling inspired no matter how old your child is or where they're at on their employment journey

Where To Start

Developing Skills at Home

Many skills completed at home are the base of skills used in future jobs.

Use choice boards and task lists.

Working from Home Choice Board 5



Practice Using Visuals

- **Task List**

- Notes App/Password App
 - Employee ID/Passwords
- Pocket-sized cards
 - Assists with routines
 - Make multiple copies

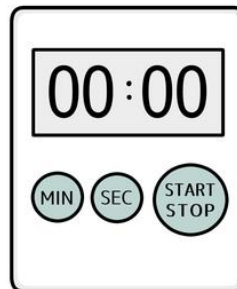
Task List

- Put clean dishes away
- Sweep kitchen
- Vacuum bedroom
- Pack lunch

- **Social Stories**

- Professional behaviors, learning expectations

- **Timers and Alarms**



Hang Coat



Clock In



Wash Hands



Visual Reminders

Written and visual reminders are environmental cues that help support an individual's success and independence in the least intrusive way.

- Wipe tables and chairs
- Refill beverages
- Sweep floors
- Stock condiment carts

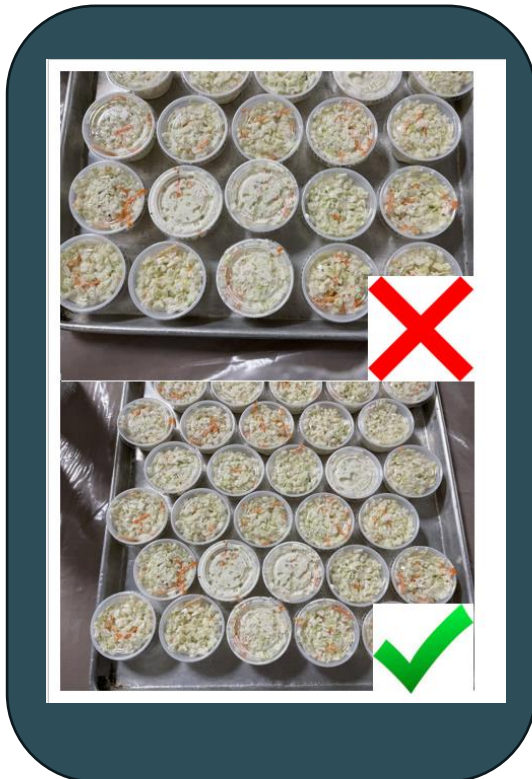
Other:



- Take out trash
- Sanitize play place
- Sanitize highchairs
- Clean booths/chairs
- Clean windowsills

After These are Finished:

- Cobb salad kits
- Southwest salad
- Market
- Kids bags



Chunking

Give 2-3 tasks
at a time

Once the initial
tasks have
been mastered,
add 2-3 more

“Chunking” allows
complex tasks
to become
simple



Tooth Brushing

- Turn on faucet
- Rinse toothbrush
- Turn off faucet
- Remove cap from tooth paste
- Apply toothpaste to brush
- Replace cap
- Insert brush into mouth
- Brush teeth for 2 minutes
- Turn on faucet
- Spit
- Rinse mouth
- Rinse brush

**This is how people memorize telephone
numbers!**

913-689-5555

We Use Visuals Everyday!

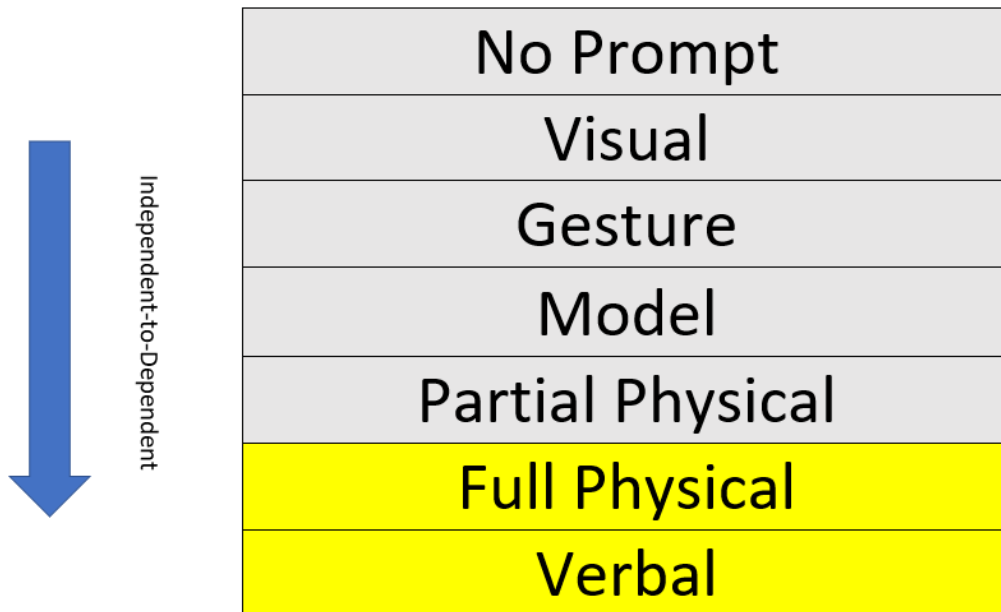


VISUALS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The infographic illustrates various visual aids used in everyday life. It features five categories with corresponding images and labels:

- smart devices:** A smartphone displaying a home screen with various app icons.
- hazard signs:** A yellow A-frame sign with a black silhouette of a person slipping and the text "CAUTION SLIPPERY TRIP HAZARD".
- traffic signs:** A triangular warning sign with a black silhouette of a person walking on a crosswalk.
- elevator buttons:** A panel of elevator buttons with various symbols and numbers.
- menus:** A pizza menu titled "Pizza Deal" listing items like Peppernoni Pizza, Felice Pizza, Capricciosa Pizza, and Prosciutto Pizza with prices and images.

Prompt Fading



- Usually start with Modeling
- Try not to over prompt
- Be patient and let them problem-solve
- Fade as quickly as possible

Employment Skills
Can Be Taught In Everything We Do!

Let's Do An Activity Together!

Cooking Example: Chocolate Chip Cookies

You're teaching pre-vocational skills without even knowing it!
What are they learning in the examples below?

- **Grocery Shopping**

- Spatial awareness pushing cart
- Critical thinking and decision-making to find items
- Learning concept of money
- Identifying staff

- **Baking**

- Hygiene
- Following directions on recipe
- Thinking ahead – measuring tools, preheat oven
- Emotional regulation for spills
- Technical skills – pouring, stirring, scooping
- Time management, safety using oven
- Stay busy with tasks while cookies cool off or oven is pre-heating, don't just wait
- Organizing – wash, dry and put away dishes



Expectations of Employers

How are they developing these employment skills during...

Exercise: Playing at Park/Sports/Workout

Communication

- Communicates appropriately with others
- Understands non-verbal communication - body language, tone of voice
- Asks for help when needed

Stamina/Endurance

- Physical fitness – standing, moving for long periods of time
- Nutrition – eats snack on break to gain energy
- Staying focused

Motivation

- Willingness to work
- Self-starter



Expectations of Employers

How are they developing these employment skills...

Cleaning their Room

Safety and Boundaries

- Follows safety procedures and rules

Task Completion and Work Quality

- Completes tasks in a timely manner
- Meets or exceeds expectations

Hygiene and Appearance

- Clean uniform/clothes
- Washed hair and body
- Clean and trimmed nails



Expectations of Employers

How are they developing these employment skills...

Performing in the School Play

Enthusiasm and Positive Attitude

- Acknowledges feelings
- Learns what's in their control and out of control
- Focuses on positive (only have 30 minutes left, then I get a break)

Teamwork

- Learning to work with others
- Take turns and share

Professionalism/Respectful Behaviors

- What's okay at work compared to what's okay at home
- What do you talk about with different people (friends vs. boss)



Expectations of Employers

How are they developing these employment skills...

Their Evening Routine

Relationships

- Meeting new people
- Managing different kinds of relationships (peers vs. coworkers)
- Appropriate vs. not appropriate

Mental Health

- Take appropriate breaks at work
- Take time off when needed

Technology

- Using phones and iPads appropriately
- Social media safety
- Group texts vs individual texts, not over texting
- Use phone during breaks, not while working



Expectations of Employers

How are they developing these employment skills...

Their Morning Routine

Time Management

- Start/end on time
- Finds additional work if finished early
- Utilizes schedule/calendar
- Uses alarms and timers

Emotional Regulation/Self-Control

- Handles stress
- Practices coping skills

Independence

- Follows routine
- Follows chain of command
- Responsible for belongings – remembers to bring them from one place to the other



Expectations of Employers

How are they developing these employment skills...

Doing Homework

Flexibility

- Able to change tasks as needed
- Able to perform a variety of tasks

Follows Directions

- Follows individual and group instruction
- Accepts feedback appropriately
- Admits when they make mistake

Resilience and Adversity

- Doesn't give up when they fail or when things become difficult and problem solves through it



Expectations of Employers

How are they developing these employment skills...

Playing a Game/Doing a Puzzle

Confidence and Commitment

- Willing to try something new
- Sticking with something when they feel tired or don't like parts of it - always pros and cons to any job

Self-Advocacy

- Saying no when necessary
- Communicating what they need

Problem Solving

- Small problem or big problem
- Knowing how to respond appropriately and who to ask for help



Job coaches help teach a task, create resources, and assist with transitions, but these foundational essential skills are difficult to train in a short amount of time and all of these can affect employment. Each of these is important because they all intertwine and impact each other.

Technical Skills

Simple Locks

1-3 Numbers

Letters

Lock and Key



Assembling Work

Attire

Tying Aprons



Nametags

Magnetic

Clip On

Safety Pin



Setting Up The Environment To Optimize Skill Development

Coloring Example

- Missing Item
 - Requires them to ask you or find crayons themselves
- Let them run out of supplies
 - Requires them to problem-solve and find more or ask you and not just wait around
- Ask them to complete tasks and check in with you

We all want to jump in and help, but when we do this, they get used to having everything done for them and it actually takes away a learning opportunity for them.

Less is better! When you feel like you're doing nothing, that's a good sign they're gaining independence.



Ready for a Job?

Obtaining Employment

Identifying Interests

- **Assess likes, dislikes, and places they like to go**
 - Don't just go off what they say - expand generalizations – picture interest inventories are good, but sometimes misleading
 - Ideas of jobs might be misconstrued
 - Example: Pet store-like animals, but doesn't want to clean up mess; loves KC Chiefs, but doesn't get to watch game
- **Think about the underlying skill or what feels meaningful to them, not just the surface-level activity**
 - Example: Like to be part of a team or feel productive when they work with their hands
- **Is their interest a strength or distraction?**
 - Example: Love fashion but would shop for clothes instead of hang them
- **Areas of employment that might be harder to get into**
 - Example: Actor/Singer-Make a plan on how to achieve the goal or know it's okay to have hobbies or volunteer somewhere – we all have things like this in our lives!

The best way to explore is by going to familiar and unfamiliar places and participating in a variety of tasks with different people!

Environment Conditions

Including:

- Location
- Lighting
- Noise level
- Hours
- People
- Cleanliness
- Work attire



The environment is just as important as the job itself!

Where do I start looking for a job?

- **Start in your neighborhood!** Tour stores and identify jobs people are working
- **Job Shadowing/Informational Interviews** – learn about a job from an experienced employee by observing them and asking questions
- **Volunteering**
- **Work Experience/Internships** – great for Job Discovery!
- **Working Interviews** - work partial shift to try job instead of formal interview, or get tour of company to learn more about tasks and environment

Common Job Sites

- **Grocery Stores**
 - Bagging Groceries
 - Facing and Stocking
- **Retail**
 - Processing Shipment
 - Stocking
- **Assisted Living Homes**
 - Companion/Dining
- **Hotels/Hospitality**
 - Housekeeping
- **Home and Garden**
 - Watering plants
- **Sporting Events**
 - Scanning tickets
- **Hospitals**
 - Administrative Work/Dining
- **Pet Stores**
 - Feeding, walking and cleaning up after animals
- **Banks/Offices**
 - Sort and deliver mail, stuff envelopes
- **Restaurants, Coffee Shops, Bakeries**
 - Bussing tables
 - Food prep
 - Dishwashing

Individuals can work in many other different places! A lot of our own first jobs were in these areas, but we may no longer be in those positions. We want to encourage career development, just like how we have the opportunity to advance in our careers. Your first job does not have to be your last.

How To Access Employment Supports

Meet With Your Local Agency – “One-stop-Shop” – Federal and State Programs Provide Funding

- Community Developmental Disabilities Organization (KS)
- Kansas City Regional Offices (MO)
- Called something different in each state so it can be difficult to search for – talk and learn from other families. There are even county specific agencies with funding to support individuals in employment

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

- Counselors create career plan with goals, assist with job development and supported employment (job coaching)
- Provide prevocational training, assistance with resumes, job applications, job searching/interviews, paying for interview clothing, technology needs, on-the-job support, etc.

How To Access Employment Supports

Developmental Disabilities Association (DDA) – Medicaid, Waivers, Managed Care Organizations

- Coordinators can provide similar supports as VR, but Medicaid & waiver funding typically begin after someone has gone through Vocational Rehabilitation and it's determined they need continued support past 90 days of employment or they did not qualify for VR due to the amount of supports needed
- Benefits Specialists – You can work and not lose your benefits! Meet with a benefits specialist to learn how.

Local Non-Profit Organizations

- Free or Private Pay – Examples: Project Search, Gigi's Playhouse, Best Buddies

Staff that work at these agencies are called, Employment Specialists, Case Coordinators, Counselors, Job Developers, etc. act as a professional liaison between the employer and the individual

Not getting anywhere? Ask for a different counselor or seek out a different provider.

Finding Employment

- **Networking**
 - Family, Neighbors, Friends, Religious Members
- **Internet Websites**
 - Indeed.com, Glassdoor.com
- **Job Fairs**
- **Work Experiences** – short-term, preferably paid a livable wage

Finding a job takes time, especially if resources are limited, a person is specific on what they're wanting, they're experiencing barriers to employment or there are things outside of the provider's control. Just try to keep things moving by having them in the community as much as possible.

Finding Employment Continued

- **Create or update resume**
 - Video resumes using iMovie, Google templates
 - Use professional language and emphasize skills they developed and what they learned
 - Instead of saying, “Cleaned tables and trays”, you could say, “Ensured business complied with environmental sanitation requirements by performing a variety of cleaning duties in a hospital setting”
 - Change “Chopped vegetables” to “Worked as a team preparing food on the line in fast-paced industrial kitchen”
- **Assist with applications**
 - Some have online assessments
- **Prepare for the interview**
 - Ask common interview questions
 - Have a friend call in and practice a phone interview
- **Have a transportation plan**
 - Paratransit services
 - Rideshare
 - Connect with individuals in your community

They're Hired! Now What?

- Coordinators Assist with Orientation/Onboarding
 - Assist providers with getting them the information they need
 - Direct Deposit
 - 2 Forms of ID
 - Tax information
 - Keep good communication with the provider
 - **PROVIDERS NEED YOU!** They need your buy-in to help with transportation, scheduling, etc.
 - Build good relationships with providers and remember employment takes times and there are things outside of their control
 - Ask the provider to be fully transparent with you – you can help them with strategies that work at home so they can implement them in the workplace
 - Make sure employers feel supported and respect their systems, what they feel comfortable with or can allow, and remember, all businesses are different!

It takes all of us working together!

Maintaining Employment

Helping Your Loved One Keep Their Job

When issues occur at work, it typically has nothing to do with the job itself.

Examples include:

- **Hygiene** – wiping your nose and then touching the food instead of washing hands or wearing gloves
- **Understanding Rules** –taking a candy bar off the shelf and eating it during your shift instead of buying it and eating it on your break
- **Behaviors** – eating food off trays when bussing tables instead of throwing it away

Helping Your Loved One Keep Their Job

How to avoid these issues:

- Choose a different workplace environment where that is not an issue
- Learn the rules of that environment
- Keep good communication with the employer to resolve issues in the beginning before they become a bigger problem, continue doing routine check-ins
- Things can look worse than they really are, usually not intentional behavior -
Example: Coming back from break late consistently looks bad, but can be easily fixed by setting an alarm earlier

Helping Your Loved One Keep Their Job

- Have a transition plan for how to continue relationship with employer if/when provider closes file or fades out
- Can potentially reopen case if support is needed later
- Expect turnover of natural supports, managers/supervisors and try to be as proactive as possible
- Expect their job to change – ex. self-checkouts eliminating need for baggers, restaurants building more drive-thru's instead of having lobbies.
- Always be teaching new skills so they could transfer to another position in company if needed – ex. practice facing items in grocery store or taking orders

Resources

Rehabilitation Services Administration

<https://rsa.ed.gov/about/states>

Job Accommodation Network

<https://askjan.org/>

Pacer Center

<https://www.pacer.org/employment/>

Interest Inventories/Common Interview Questions

Ideal Conditions of Employment

Online Skill Building Tools & Activities

- **Use What You Already Have At Home!**
 - Calendars, Smart Phones or Smart Watches for Timers, Reminders, Alarms, Tasks Lists
- [Boom Cards](#)
- [Teachers Pay Teachers](#)
- [Lessonpix](#)

Action Items:

1. Incorporate vocational skill building into activities they're already doing
2. Get connected with your local agencies, providers, and organizations
3. Start getting out in the community and gaining experiences – social groups, volunteering, have a friend, sibling or care worker go with them if they don't want to go with a parent

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!

Questions or want to learn more about
Down Syndrome Innovations?

Contact info@kcdsi.org

Questions?



Post-Webinar Survey



Thank you for attending!

Questions? Send an email to employment@ndss.org