Job-Readiness and Self-Management Manual for Youth With Vision Loss

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The procedures in this resource manual are meant to be used by agency staff, as part of the broader services they provide, or under the supervision of agency staff.
Dedication

To my mom and dad, who have always told me that I can do anything I want to do through hard work, commitment, and perseverance. Thank you for supporting and encouraging me to go above and beyond to achieve my goals, and to never give up no matter what. Most of all, thank you for teaching me not to let my vision loss get in the way of what I want to do.

“The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.” – Helen Keller
Abstract

Youth who are visually impaired are strikingly underrepresented in the work force compared to their same-aged peers (Mohler, 2012). According to the National Coalition for Vision Health (2010), approximately 68% of Canadian adults with visual disabilities are unemployed. Studies have indicated that employment preparation among these youth should begin early to encourage successful transition to the workplace (Duquette, 2013). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to create a psychoeducational program that focused on teaching youth with vision loss job readiness and self-management skills, by developing a facilitator manual with a matched participant manual that focused on these two skill areas. The author hypothesized that provision of the job-readiness and self-management psychoeducation program to agency staff would better equip them to teach relevant skills to youth living with vision loss. The manuals were created to be used with young adults, aged 13-18, who have vision loss and demonstrate a need in the area of employment skills. Furthermore, the manuals included psychoeducational and skill development components focused on teaching youth with vision loss a variety of skills in areas involving job readiness and self-management. The facilitator manual consists of three major parts. The first part is the introduction. The second part is divided into two treatment modules. The first treatment module is employment skills and the second is self-management skills. The third part of the manual is the participant feedback questionnaire and additional resources. Due to time constraints, the manuals were unable to be implemented. However, the facilitator manual was reviewed by one staff member at the agency. Overall, the staff member indicated that she was very pleased with the design and content of the manual. It was noted that the content provided in the manual was meaningful and relevant to the agency staff and its clients. It is hoped that the manual will provide the staff at the agency with an effective resource that can be used to strengthen job readiness and self-management skills of its clients who are youth with vision loss. In conclusion, it is recommended that the manual be implemented and evaluated as part of a pilot study, in order to determine its effectiveness.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Vision health and employment opportunity are inextricably linked (Shaw, Gold, & Wolffe, 2007). For many, vision impairments lead to negative psychosocial, economic, and personal consequences (Rees, Saw, Lamoureux, & Keeffe, 2007). The World Health Organization (2012a, 2012b) has estimated that up to 285 million people worldwide are affected. Within the Canadian context, there are roughly 500,000 individuals living with substantial vision loss (Canadian National Institute for the Blind, 2015).

This is noteworthy because poor visual acuity is associated with diminished functional activity and increased levels of dependency (Braun, 2013; Knudtson, Klein, Klein, Cruickshanks & Lee, 2005) — self-esteem, mental health, relationships with family and friends, community participation, and daily routines are often adversely influenced (Canadian National Institute for the Blind [CNIB], n.d.; Crewe et al., 2011; Kempen, Ballemans, Ranchor, Rens, & Zijlstra, 2012; Knudtson et al., 2005). Therefore, compromised vision can limit opportunities and create barriers to employment, a loss of independence, and decreased quality of life (Knudtson et al., 2005; Lamoureux et al., 2007; Mohler, 2012; National Coalition for Vision Health, 2010; Rees et al., 2007). Various strategies and service models have been proposed to mitigate these problems, but more research is needed to improve outcomes, particularly among youth with visual disabilities.

It has been estimated that about 60% of children in Canada with reading difficulties have vision challenges that remain undiagnosed and uncorrected (National Coalition for Vision Health, 2010). These challenges have a sizable effect later in life as working-age adults attempt to enter the job market. Accordingly, practitioners in education and rehabilitation are deeply concerned about the employment status of youth who are visually impaired (American Foundation for the Blind, 2006); they are strikingly under-represented in the workforce compared to their same-aged peers (Mohler, 2012). The American Foundation for the Blind (2006) demonstrated that only 32% of people between the ages of 18 and 69 years with vision difficulties were working. More recent statistics revealed that approximately 68% of Canadian adults with visual disabilities were unemployed (National Coalition for Vision Health, 2010). This has important implications for those who are affected, because securing gainful employment leads to improved psychological, social, financial and physical well-being (Duquette, 2013; Lindsay, Adams, McDougall, & Sanford, 2012). Furthermore, employment experiences help workers to develop key competencies that allow them to meaningfully integrate into society (Lindsay et al., 2012). These experiences can be dramatically enhanced through effective vocational rehabilitation programming (Duquette, 2013).

Studies have indicated that employment preparation among youth who are visually impaired should begin early to encourage successful transition to the workplace (Duquette, 2013). Shaw and Gold (2007) have established that job success is tied to educational level, greater independence, access to appropriate support services, technological proficiencies, and parents’ expectations. They have further suggested that acquiring satisfying employment is determined by many other factors: communication, advocacy, and compensatory skills; work history; awareness of rights; job searches aligned with credentials; proactive job-seeking techniques; support from employers and co-workers; and accessible employment services.

Likewise, Bigge, Stump, Spagna, and Silberman (1999) have stated that in order for people with disabilities to achieve independence and full participation in their communities, they must adeptly manage their own behaviour. Self-management programs serve a critical purpose...
for supporting individuals who are living with vision loss (Brody et al., 2001); positive self-regulation and career-based skill development are emphasized (Yucesoy Ozkan & Sonmez, 2011). These abilities are conducive to building an emotionally satisfying and active life (Lorig, 1993). For example, Brody et al. (2001) have confirmed, that self-management programs incorporating cognitive-behavioural strategies led to positive gains for those facing vision challenges — the occurrence of depression was reduced and psychological health was improved. The addition of self-management training such as problem solving and goal setting into rehabilitation intervention has also been shown to help in the development of transferrable skills that minimize the impact of visual impairments (Rees et al., 2007). Thus, relevant supports, directed towards vocational competency and preparation, are highly valuable for youth with visual disabilities.

The student completed her fourth year placement at an agency that provided services to people of all ages who are blind or visually impaired. The agency provides individualized rehabilitation support to clients within their homes, communities, and local offices to help promote independence. During the researcher’s time at the agency, she was unable to locate a facilitators’ guidebook that included clearly defined procedures for teaching a combination of employment and self-management skills. To address this need among youth with vision loss, the researcher developed a manual for agency staff, as well as a matching participant manual focused on job-readiness and self-management. More precisely, the purpose of the study was to create a psychoeducational program that focused on teaching youth with vision loss job readiness and self-management skills, by developing a facilitator manual with a matched participant manual that focused on teaching these two skill areas.

Developing two matching accessible, easy-to-use manuals will likely assist staff in teaching essential vocational skills to young adults with vision loss. It is hypothesized that provision of the job-readiness and self-management resource manual to agency staff will better equip them to teach relevant skills to youth living with vision loss.

Chapter Overview

This thesis is comprised of five chapters which include an introduction, literature review, method, results, and discussion. Following the introduction, the literature review provides a critical examination of the research related to employment and self-management centred on individuals with disabilities, with specific emphasis on the needs of those with visual impairments. Next, the method describes the process used to create both manuals and evaluate them, as well as an overview. The results present both manuals, as well as informal feedback elicited from the agency staff regarding the manuals. Lastly, the discussion considers the strengths and limitations of this thesis, and its contribution to the field, as well as directions for continued research.
Chapter II: Literature Review

This examination of the research literature takes a look at individuals with disabilities and employment. More specifically, it identifies the difficulty of obtaining work experience for youth in general, specific challenges of gaining employment for youth with disabilities, potential benefits of employment, and the need for skill development to obtain employment. In addition, it also reviews three studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of employment training programs for individuals with disabilities. Two of the studies focus specifically on employment programs for individuals with vision loss, and the other focuses on an employment program for individuals with physical and mobility disabilities. Finally, the potential benefits of self-management programs are discussed. There are five studies that demonstrate the usefulness of self-management programs for individuals with disabilities. Four of these focused on participants with vision loss, while one focused on youth with disabilities.

Disability and Employment

To participate successfully in the new economy, 21st century workers must possess a wide range of skills that can be flexibly adapted to shifts in market demand (Lindsay, 2011). Research has revealed that acquiring skills and employment experience during high school is essential to employability in the future (Carter & Lunsford, 2005; Giesen & Cavenaugh, 2012; McDonnall, 2010, 2011). However, youth are generally at a disadvantage, as they tend to be hired for jobs that require minimal competency — it is believed that they do not yet have enough experience and training (Green & Brooke, 2001). For many adolescents, the transition into the labour force can be extremely problematic.

Securing gainful employment can be especially challenging for youth with disabilities (Lindsay, 2011). Significantly, Torjman and Makhoul (2016) found that even when a person has acquired a vast amount of employment qualifications that employers are looking for, it is still difficult to get started in the labour market. When compared to their able-bodied peers; youth with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed and lack job-readiness skills (Ball, Morris, Hartnette, & Blanck, 2006; Lindsay, 2011; Statistics Canada, 2008; Till, Leonard, Yeung, & Nicholls, 2015; Turcotte, 2014). This is not because youth with disabilities are reluctant to work (Ali, Schur, & Blanck, 2011). Rather, they frequently confront numerous barriers such as discrimination and have less access to training and accommodation when searching for employment (Barnes, & Mercer, 2005; Coffey, Coufopoulos, & Kinghorn, 2014; Lindstrom, Doren, & Miesch, 2011; Prince, 2016; Roessler, Neath, McMahon, & Rumrill, 2007; Torjman & Makhoul, 2016). Prince (2016) has further stipulated that Canadians with disabilities are deemed to be one of the most disadvantaged populations with regards to employment, as well as education, Toriman and Makhoul (2016) agreed that inequitable employment opportunity is a formidable obstacle for this segment of the population. Accordingly, people with disabilities may be unfairly treated if they are unable to find employment because, in the current labour market, things such as experience and skills are highly valued. Therefore, it is critical to gain employment skills and experience at a young age. In addition, appropriate supports must be put in place for youth to prevent other difficulties in finding work.

Obtaining employment can provide many benefits, including increased physical, social, financial, and psychological health (Forsyth & Jarvis, 2002; Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005). However, people with disabilities do not often realize these benefits because their rate of employment is significantly lower than people without disabilities (Crawford, 2004, 2012; Kaye,
Likewise, during high school, youth with disabilities have fewer opportunities to gain employment experience than their peers. As a result, they are less likely to acquire the same work and life skills as their non-disabled counterparts (Forsyth & Jarvis, 2002; Gall, Kingsnorth, & Healy, 2006; Kingsnorth, Healy, & Macarthur, 2007; Mahoney et al., 2005).

One of the primary factors of transitioning to adulthood and employability is skill development; it can impact a variety of areas in a person’s life (Wolf-Branigin, Schuyler, & White, 2007). Hence, early employment experience is important for youth in terms of exploring career interests and options, further developing crucial skills, and facilitating inclusion into society (Carter, Trainor, Ditchman, Swedeen, & Owens, 2011; Crudden, 2012; Giesen, & Cavenaugh, 2012; Lindsay, 2011; Lindstrom et al. 2011).

Unfortunately, many youth with disabilities do not work after high school or go on to pursue their educational goals (Shandra & Hogan, 2008). In Canada, an estimated 411,600 individuals are not employed despite the fact that they have the potential to work (Till et al., 2015). Till et al. (2015) discovered, for example, that the unemployment rate for people with disabilities was roughly twice that of Canadians without disabilities. Consequently, these youths are unprepared to meet the requirements and expectations of an active workplace (Burgstahler, 2001; Carter et al., 2011). Even though employment-readiness programs have much to offer, adolescents with disabilities are typically not fully included (Flannery, Yovanoff, Benz, & Kato, 2008; Lindsay, 2011; Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009; Till et al., 2015). Therefore, it is critical that they be exposed, as early as possible, to employment and skill-building endeavors to increase their competitiveness in the employment industry (Gall et al., 2006).

The vast amount of research involving job-related experience and skill development of people with disabilities tends to emphasize programming aimed at an adult rather than youth audience (Lindsay et al., 2012). Greater attention needs to be focused on the particular concerns linked to youth with visual impairments. The literature has confirmed that young people should participate in both social and practical work activities to facilitate broader skill development, enhance psychological and physical health, and augment employability (Cruden, 2012; Lindsay et al., 2012; McDonnell, 2011; Newman et al., 2009; Prince, 2016; Rainey, Elsman, Nispen, Leeuwen, & Rens, 2016; Sacks, Wolffe, & Tierney, 1998). However, others have indicated that more studies are necessary to understand the unique employment challenges facing youth with disabilities (Lindsay, 2011).

Employment Programs

A number of researchers have examined the effectiveness of employment programs for individuals with disabilities. One study, undertaken by Lindsay et al. (2012), explored the skills that youth with disabilities developed during an employment program. Interviews were conducted with 18 participants (with mobility or physical disabilities). Researchers engaged in ongoing analysis of participant questionnaires and reviewed staff and self-assessments. Involvement in the program strengthened participants’ social, practical, and communication skills; these skills were viewed as transferrable to other contexts.

Quebec’s MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre (MMRC) also adapted an employment program tailored to people with visual impairments (Wittich, Watanabe, Scully, & Bergevin, 2013). It was based on a model from the University of Texas, which was further refined by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB). This program was created to address the psychosocial and self-awareness skill deficits of individuals with visual impairments. MMRC’s pre-employment program consisted of three main components: exploration, understanding, and
action. Exploration involved self-awareness, training and employment resources; understanding involved learning the process of job searching; and action involved practising interview skills and receiving constructive feedback. In addition, the core elements of the program were 15 training modules focusing on skills tied to finding and maintaining employment. Nine clients, aged 18 to 48 years, participated; all were visually impaired, unemployed, and not attending school. The results were quite promising. Within eight months after program completion, five participants obtained part- or full-time employment. This intervention was deemed successful in meeting clients’ needs and providing them with the requisite resources and skills to locate a job.

Correspondingly, the Maine Employability Skills Program was developed in partnership with Karen Wolfe and staff members at the Maine Division of the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) (McMahon, Wolfe, Wolfe, & Brooker, 2013). The program supported unemployed and underemployed clients, who considered themselves either ready for work or not yet ready for work. Before beginning, a two-day orientation was offered for DBVI staff to learn about their roles. The one-week program included structured activities (individual, group) that were designed to help clients identify employment barriers, recognize their own abilities, set career goals, explore employment options, increase job-search skills, and practise interviewing techniques. The training also provided strategies for disclosing a disability to employers and using specialized technology at work. Participants were placed in an unfamiliar environment without the support of friends and family; joined a job club, and participated in telephone meetings every two to three weeks for six months after the employment program ended. A total of 14 participants took part, seven in the first session and seven in the second session. In the first group, 18 months after the training program, six of the seven participants were working either full-time or part-time. In the second group, within a year of participating in the program, only two people were working of the seven. The remaining five participants were actively engaging in other training or employment ventures and activities.

The three studies described above provide clear evidence to support the merits of employment-training programs, specific to individuals with disabilities. All of the programs taught skills that were needed to search for and obtain a job. These studies provide promising results of the benefits of employment-training programs intended for individuals with disabilities in particular. The literature has also demonstrated that other types of support programs can generate equally beneficial outcomes.

**Self-Management Programs**

Self-management procedures can be employed in multiple education settings; they typically incorporate several forms of personal goal setting, problem solving, self-evaluation and recording, and self-reinforcement (Briesch & Chafouleas, 2009; Dalton, Martella, & Marchand-Martella, 1999; Schulze, 2016). Self-management programs are conducive to enriching competence, self-reliance, and self-awareness (Dalton et al., 1999). Indeed, service providers are using these programmatic tools with increasing frequency to support the complex needs of clients with visual disabilities (Binns et al., 2012). Importantly, these tools have been shown to be helpful in decreasing health issues, while increasing independence and quality of life (Tay, Drury, & Mackey, 2014). Nevertheless, Lindsay, Kingsnorth, McDougall, and Keating (2014) stated that the influence of self-management interventions is not fully understood. More clarity is needed to determine how these interventions help people to manage their symptoms, the psychological and physical consequences, and potential for positive change in health for affected individuals.
Programs involving self-management have also been used to assist patients in dealing with and managing lifelong diseases, minimizing health issues, and amplifying their independence, well-being, and quality of life (Bodenheimer, Lorig, Holman, & Grumbach, 2002; Lorig et al., 1999). This is relevant because the consequences of vision loss have been found to negatively impact an individual’s functionality and overall quality of life (Scott, Smiddy, Schiffman, Feuer, & Pappas, 1999). In this sense, “quality of life is [understood as] the combination of objectively and subjectively indicated well-being in multiple domains of life considered salient in one’s culture and time ..” (Wallender, Schmitt, & Koot, 2001, p. 574). To encourage optimal client functionality, Tay, Drury, and Mackey (2014) have urged practitioners to develop and create meaningful psychoeducational interventions, organized around self-management. These should be matched to pre-existing medical care and ensure that individuals with low vision sustain functionality. More recently, the key components of self-management programs have been successfully utilized in low vision projects (Packer, Girdler, Boldy, Dhaliwal, & Crowley, 2009; Rees et al., 2007). Similarly, self-management programs have been shown to be beneficial in assisting people to cope with social, practical and emotional problems associated with vision loss (Rees et al., 2007). For example, Rees, Keffe, Hassell, Larizza, and Lamoureux (2010) conducted a program evaluation of two small-scale pilot studies to determine the efficacy of a self-management intervention for adults with vision impairments. There were 15 participants between the ages of 60 and 89 years old. All participants had moderate to severe vision loss. The program was offered over a period of eight weeks, with each session lasting three hours. The goal was to increase participants’ skills in managing the emotional and practical costs of vision loss. Interviews were conducted to elicit participant feedback about program format, content, and delivery. Following their analysis of the data, researchers concluded that there was a favourable impact on participants’ mood, comprehension of low-vision services, and management of the challenges of living with their disability. Thus, the intervention was found to be worthwhile for older adults with visual impairments.

Likewise, Brody, Roch-Levecq, Kaplan, Moutier, and Brown (2006) sought to determine the efficacy of a self-management program on lessening depressive symptoms for older adults with age-related macular degeneration (AMD). The study involved 32 people in the advanced stages of AMD, who were also deemed clinically depressed. It emphasized cognitive and behavioural strategies, problem-solving skills, and health education. A follow-up six months later, after program completion, showed a measurable reduction in depressive symptoms in the intervention group as compared to the control group. In brief, the findings have suggested that self-management interventions can be helpful in diminishing depressive symptoms in older adults with AMD.

Alma, Groothoff, Melis-Dankers, Suurmeijer, and van der Mei (2013) also conducted a pilot study to underline the effectiveness of a group-based multidisciplinary program on psychosocial functioning for elderly people with vision loss. There were 29 participants who took part; all were visually impaired and over the age of 55. The intervention included 20 weekly meetings and four learning components: training in practical skills; education, counselling, problem-solving skills, and social collaboration; an exercise program; and goal setting for groups and individuals. To determine psychosocial functioning, the researchers looked at indicators linked to helplessness, adaptation to loss of vision, mental health, fear of falling, and self-efficacy. These indicators were assessed before, during, and immediately following the intervention, as well as 6 months after the study ended. The authors found that the participants’ mental health, self-efficacy, and adaptation to vision loss improved when compared to baseline
levels; helplessness and fear of falling also declined. In addition, enhanced adaptation to loss of vision and mental health, along with decreased feelings of helplessness, were evident at the six-month follow up. Taken together, the results indicated that the intervention had a positive impact on psychosocial functioning in both the short- and long-term.

A study by Rees et al. (2007) further explored the needs of people with low vision to highlight the effects of a self-management program focused on low vision and participation barriers. All of the 48 study participants displayed varying eye conditions. They took part in interviews; qualitative analysis of the transcript material was employed to uncover major themes. All participants described the consequences resulting from their vision loss such as difficulty with social interactions, emotional distress, and practical activities. Overall, it was determined that self-management programs could be a helpful way to overcome multiple challenges that people living with low vision face, if barriers to participation are appropriately addressed. Furthermore, they revealed that these programs should include precise strategies tailored to vision, as well as education in generic skills such as problem solving, goal setting, and coping with emotional fluctuations.

Finally, Lindsay et al. (2014) conducted a systematic review of the literature surrounding self-management to ascertain the influence of programs for children and adolescents with physical disabilities. Although there were similarities, the interventions differed in terms of length, component parts, and areas of focus. For instance, it was observed that managing emotions, training in skills such as goal setting and problem solving, homework, and education were quite common across most of the interventions. As a whole, the review corroborated that self-management programs can be effective for children and youth with physical disabilities. However, due to the paucity of high-quality studies on self-management directed towards this particular demographic, additional research is recommended.

Findings from the studies described above highlight the benefits of self-management protocols. One visible trend was that the majority of interventions included goal setting and problem solving features. In most cases, the studies involved older adults living with vision loss. Additionally, they all upheld that self-management programs have great potential to tackle concerns expressed by people with disabilities. However, as Lindsay et al.'s (2014) literature review reveals, self-management programs also display some obvious differences among them. There were sizable variations in duration, length, content, and formatting. Each study also measured contrasting variables and employed multiple research designs to determine program effectiveness. Therefore, comparison of findings must be cautious. Moreover, all but one study involved older adults with vision loss (Lindsay et al., 2014). This points to a need for service providers to develop greater knowledge and understanding about the impact of self-management programs aimed at children and youth populations. More specifically, more research is needed to scrutinize the usefulness of self-management intervention for those with visual disabilities. Although there are a limited number of studies on the use of self-management for people with vision impairments, they suggest that self-management strategies such as goal setting and problem solving are vital ingredients of effective programming.

**Summary**

A critical examination of the research literature provides support for the usefulness of employment programs, specifically for people with disabilities which involve skill development in the programming. It also supports the potential effectiveness of self-management programs for people with disabilities. However, more research is needed in the specific area of this kind of
programming for youth with disabilities, as there have been limited studies published on this population. Locally in Kingston, this researcher found that employment and self-management skills were offered by other community agencies. However, none offer both these areas together as a combination. In addition, the agency did not have a facilitator’s manual with clearly defined procedures for teaching these skills.

Accordingly, this thesis will address the development of a psychoeducational program to teach youth with vision loss job readiness and self-management skills, by creating a facilitator manual with a matched participant manual focused on these two skill areas. Furthermore, the development of the manuals will provide facilitators with an effective tool for working with youth experiencing visual impairments. Use of the proposed manuals has the potential to later provide youth with visual disabilities the necessary job-readiness and self-management skills, in order to promote their successful transition to adulthood, independence, and an improved quality of life.
Chapter III: Method

Participants

The manual was created for use with young adults, aged 13-18 who have vision loss and a demonstrated need for employment skills. In order to be considered a candidate for the manual sessions, the participants must be registered clients of the agency. Participants should be referred by other staff members within the agency based on informal information that leads them to believe that they would be a good candidate for the manual and demonstrate a need for employment skills. They will also need to have a minimum reading and comprehension level of grade 6. In addition, they must have no difficulty with hearing.

The agency that the student completed her placement at provided services to people of all ages who are blind or visually impaired. The agency provides individualized rehabilitation support to clients within their homes, communities, and local offices to help promote independence.

Facilitators

The manual was designed for the agency’s service providers who provide support to youth who have visual impairments. There is no specialized training required for facilitators. Having personal experience being a person who is blind or visually impaired would be an asset, but is not mandatory. The facilitator should have some background knowledge and understanding of some of the more common eye conditions that youth typically have, as well as some of the barriers that they may face so that they are able to facilitate sessions using the manual in a way that works for the potential clients. They should also be empathetic and able to establish rapport with the youth, as this will help the youth “buy into” the manual and the content being presented to them.

Methodology

During a 14-week field placement, the researcher created two manuals as part of an applied thesis in the Honour’s Bachelor of Behavioural Psychology program. The facilitator manual was designed for the agency’s service providers to provide support to youth who have visual impairments. The participant manual was designed to match the content of the facilitator manual, and adapted for the youth with vision loss who will participate in the group. The manuals focus on the different perspectives of the two groups of users. In addition, the manuals included psychoeducational and skill development components focused on teaching youth with vision loss a variety of skills in areas such as job readiness and self-management. The researcher’s aim for developing the manuals was to provide the agency’s service providers with a psychoeducational program that they could use that included clearly defined procedures, to teach the youth living with vision loss skills in job readiness and self-management in order to increase their independence and overall quality of life.

The manual was designed to be implemented in the community agency, in a quiet room such as its boardroom. It was designed to be delivered mostly in an oral presentation format, with additional exercises that involve independent or partner activities.

Some of the materials needed include a laptop and a set of speakers for the facilitator. The materials that participants may need, based on individual preferences, may include iPads, laptops, writing implements, and dark lined paper. Both the facilitator and participant manuals
were designed to be accessible by their intended readers, e.g., those who use screen readers, large print, etc., by ensuring they are available electronically or in large print paper format.

The manual was also designed to be implemented in a small group with 2 to 6 participants. However, if there are not enough participants, the manual can also be used one-on-one with a participant if needed. But in order to have a similar impact to when working in a group setting, the facilitator must then take an active role in working with the participant when working on activities involving partners so that the participant can still gain the same benefits from the exercises similar to being in a small group format. There are a total of six sessions that are one hour-long.

Procedure

The facilitator’s manual (Appendix B) is made up of three major parts. The first part is the introduction, which includes the purpose of, and rationale for, the manual, manual contents, participant and facilitator characteristics, required materials for the manual, and how to use the manual.

The second part of the manual consists of the treatment modules, which are made up of two parts. The first part is employment skills and the other is self-management skills. Each part is further broken down into smaller sub-components that provide psychoeducation and teach specific skills in an area that is related to that module’s topic.

There is also a matching participant manual (Appendix C) with corresponding key information and exercises for the group participants to use in the sessions.

The job readiness module consists of job search skills, interview skills, and how to disclose your disability. The self-management module consists of goal-setting, problem-solving, and managing emotions.

Finally, the last part of the manual includes a participant feedback questionnaire which provides the participants with a way of evaluating the modules to provide information on how useful they found the contents of the manual. Furthermore, it also includes additional material, which provides the facilitator with a variety of key clinical resources and relevant articles to learn more about the content presented within the manual.

Evaluation

Due to time constraints, the manuals could not be implemented during the researcher’s time at the agency, so it has not yet been evaluated. However, the researcher obtained feedback from the agency staff during the creation of the manuals, and changes were made based on the input from staff. This supports their face validity.

Furthermore, a participant feedback questionnaire was also included at the end of the facilitator manual (Appendix B) for the youth participating in the training sessions, to assess their perceptions of whether their needs are being met. This will also allow for changes to be made if needed to improve the usefulness of the psychoeducation program and the manuals.
Chapter IV: Results

Final Product

The end result of this project was the creation of a facilitator’s manual (Appendix B), along with a matched participant’s manual (Appendix C). The facilitator’s manual was developed with an emphasis on resources to teach job readiness and self-management skills to youth with vision loss. Job readiness and self-management skills were chosen based on informal interviews with the staff at the agency about which skills youth in this population could benefit from learning. In addition, the literature review provided support for the usefulness of employment programs; specifically designed for people with disabilities, which involve skill development in the programming. Furthermore, it also provided support for the potential effectiveness of self-management programs for people with disabilities.

The participant manual was developed to match the content in the facilitator manual. In order to provide the participants the opportunity to actively follow along with the content being presented to them in a format that was accessible. It was also created so that the participants could use the content within the manual to actively participate in the activities in the manual.

Feedback Received

In order to receive feedback, the facilitator manual was reviewed by one staff member at the agency, who indicated that she was very pleased with the overall design and content of the manual. It was noted that the content provided in the manual was meaningful and relevant to the agency, and the population of clients that it was designed to be used with. It was also indicated that the manual would be an asset to the agency.

Changes to the Manual

Based on the feedback provided by the agency, there were minor surface edits made to the facilitator’s manual. Also, in order to meet print accessibility standards, the font of the manual was changed from Times New Roman to Verdana size 12 font. There were no changes made to the participant manual, as the content used already had been revised based on the revisions to the facilitator’s manual.
Chapter V: Discussion

Thesis Summary

This project was developed to aid agency staff by providing them with a psychoeducational program that could be used in teaching youth with vision loss in the areas of job readiness and self-management skills. These skills were chosen to target within the creation of the manual based on research from the literature review, which indicated that one of the primary factors of transitioning to adulthood and employability is skill development; as it can impact a variety of areas in a person’s life (Wolf-Branigin, Schuyler, & White, 2007). In addition, it was very difficult to find studies in these areas that were relevant to the population of youth with vision loss.

One important gap was identified at the beginning of this project. The researcher was unable to locate a manual with clearly defined procedures for teaching a combination of employment and self-management skills to youth with vision loss. Therefore, the purpose of this project was to develop a psychoeducation program to teach youth with vision loss job readiness and self-management skills. This was done through the creation on a facilitator’s manual, along with a matched participant manual. It was decided that a manual developed for facilitators to teach skills in job readiness and self-management to youth with vision loss would provide an effective way of meeting these goals. It was assumed that the manual would assist the agency staff in the future to teach employment and self-management skills to youth with vision loss, which could better equip staff to teach the relevant skills in these areas. The ultimate purpose of this thesis was to enable the agency to help its clients be successful in getting and keeping job and making a successful transition to adulthood, independence, and an improved quality of life.

Strengths

A strength of this project is the review of the research literature on job readiness and self-management programs for people with disabilities prior to creating the manuals. This was essential as it helped to determine what content would be useful to include in the manual.

Another strength of this project was that it was developed using information that was gathered from a variety of sources. A number of professionals, working within the agency and outside of the agency, were consulted during the development of the manual in order to ensure that what was being included would be relevant and useful for the participants and facilitators. Furthermore, changes to the manual were made based on feedback from one staff member at the agency, which was helpful in providing support for the potential usefulness of the manual within the agency. An additional strength that supported the potential usefulness of the manual was that it was designed in a straightforward and practical manner so that it was easy for facilitators to understand and use. It was also designed in an accessible format, so that it could be used as an electronic copy or large print copy to accommodate accessibility of the user.

Furthermore, another strength is that the student who created the manual is visually impaired. Due to this, some of the material used to develop the manuals stem from personal experiences in her life. This is an asset to the creation of the manuals because the student has a unique perspective on living life as a young adult who is visually impaired and can truly understand the experiences, barriers, and challenges that a person with vision loss may face.
Limitations

One of the biggest limitations of this project was that due to time constraints, the manuals could not be implemented with participants. Thus, no formal data were able to be collected. In addition, informal interviews were used to gather information about youth with vision loss from staff members within the agency, so the information obtained from the staff can be deemed subjective.

Another limitation was that there was no opportunity to empirically evaluate the program and its manual, so the hypothesis remains untested. Without an empirical method of evaluation, there is no way to determine the usefulness of the manual in teaching youth job readiness and self-management skills, and there is no way to determine the usefulness of the manual for the facilitators.

Furthermore, another limitation due to time constraints was that feedback on the manual could only be obtained from one staff member. How useful the manual will be to agency staff remains unknown. In addition, there was no feedback collected on the participant manual from any potential participants, which makes it impossible to determine if the content of the manual is relevant and easily understood by this population.

Multilevel Challenges to Service Implementation

Client. During the creation of the manual, it was very difficult to know how to structure and design the manual because there were no specific facilitators that the manual was being created for. The manual was created as something new to the agency, so feedback during the development of the manual came from the agency supervisor who did not work directly with the young adult population of clients within the agency. In addition to this, there were no clients that were able to provide feedback on the manual.

Program. Creating the manual for facilitators was very challenging because it was difficult to create a manual for a program that was not currently being offered at that agency location. It was also very difficult to gather information and resources that other agency locations used to teach things such as employment programming. The researcher reached out to other agency locations that provided employment services to try and locate some resources or materials that were commonly used with youth with vision loss, but found no similar specialized programming or resources being used. In addition to the lack of resources, time constraints on staff were also a factor involved in the difficulty of acquiring information and supplemental information.

Organization. During the development of the manual, the organization was undergoing a major structural change. With not knowing what programs would be changed or what new programs might be offered in the agency, it was difficult to know if there would be an opportunity for staff within the agency to use the manual to teach youth with vision loss job readiness and self-management skills. It was also difficult not knowing what to include in the manual with little knowledge of potential services and programming and how it would fit with all the upcoming changes.

Society. The societal level was important to consider when creating the manual to assist facilitators in teaching job readiness and self-management skills to youth with vision loss. Even
in today’s society, youth with vision loss do not experience the same employment opportunities as their able-bodied counterparts because people do not see them as being capable or able to do the same things that people with normal vision can do. In creating this manual, it was important to consider the specific needs of youth with vision loss and how to address those needs in the manual, more specifically involving job readiness and self-management skills, to help give them the strategies they may need to become more successful in finding and getting a job.

Contributions to the Behavioural Psychology Field

This project contributes to the field of Behavioural Psychology because the development of the manuals they provide facilitators with behavioural interventions that work to increase the overall quality of life and functional adaptability of clients in their daily lives. This thesis has the potential to add to this goal, as it provides an intervention approach that uses a combination of psychoeducation and skill building exercises to teach job readiness and self-management skills. The intervention has the potential to improve the employment and coping skills of youth with vision impairments.

Another way in which this thesis contributes to the field is that it adds to the research literature. During the literature review, it was noted that it was very difficult to find research in regards to employment and self-management programs for people with vision loss, especially for the youth population. The manuals provide a unique approach to teaching a combination of employment and self-management skills to youth with vision loss.

Recommendations for Future Research

The hypothesis of this project could not be tested. To address this limitation, it is recommended that the manual be implemented in the form of a pilot program. If used in a pilot program, the program should incorporate empirical means to evaluate the effectiveness of the manual for the participants, as well as the usefulness for the facilitators. This could be achieved by creating consumer satisfaction surveys for the staff to provide feedback, as well as pre and post skill assessments for the youth with vision loss to assess their skill development before and after the program. This would allow the hypothesis in this project to be tested, and by doing so would help determine the efficacy and validity of the manual. In addition, it is suggested that any formal feedback gathered using empirically validated measures be applied to the manuals so that changes in content can be made if needed to improve the usefulness of the manuals. If the manuals are deemed successful in delivering a psychoeducational program to teach job readiness and self-management skills to youth with vision loss, they could be made available to other locations and their use replicated there. This could have the potential of benefitting more members within this population.
References


Appendices

Appendix A:
Summary of Personal Communications

Agency Contacts
J. Maloney\(^1\) – Manager
- Ms. Maloney was consulted to determine the potential of the researcher's idea to create a resource manual for staff to teach skills such as job-readiness and self-management. She identified that she thought a manual that could be used to teach these skills would be very valuable to the agency because these are skills that many youths with vision loss tend to lack. She also indicated that there was not anything like this at the agency currently.

G. Poff – Rehabilitation Staff
- Ms. Poff was consulted to gain a better understanding of current employment issues for youth with vision loss. She directed the researcher to a variety of websites that are designed to help people with vision loss in the area of employment that may be useful when creating the manual.

K. Switzer – Manager
- Ms. Switzer was contacted by email to inquire about a study done by the CNIB looking at pre-employment programming for children. She responded by email providing as much information as she could that they found during the study, but indicated that the study was not completed so they could not provide the researcher with any results.

J. Merrin – Employment Services Staff
- Ms. Merrin was contacted by email to inquire about what employment services they offer for youth and what resources they use to provide services. She indicated a few websites and resources that they pull from to offer services. She directed the researcher to contact her colleague Mr. Jackson. She also noted that the idea of creating a manual was a great idea and much needed for this population.

W. Jackson – Employment Services Staff
- Mr. Jackson was contacted by phone to inquire about the employment services they provide to youth and if there were any structured resources they used to deliver programming. Mr. Jackson indicated that they had no sort of structured manual that they used in their employment training sessions, as basically they just pull resources from the internet. He indicated that it would be good to have something concrete to follow in teaching employment skills during their sessions and thought that the manual was a good idea.

External Contacts
V. Blair – Researcher
- Ms. Blair was contacted by email to inquire about potential resources for the manual. She provided the researcher with a list of resources including books, journal articles, and websites. She also said that she thought the creation of a manual was a great idea to address the employment issues for youth. She has assisted in creating a manual for employment in combination with other professionals.

\(^1\) For reasons of confidentiality all names used in this appendix are fictional.
P. Rogers – Perkins School for the Blind

- Mr. Rogers was contacted by email to inquire about the pre-employment program at the Perkins School for the Blind to see if they could provide any resources that they found helpful in creating their employment program. Mr. Rogers noted that unfortunately because they are working on completing the program, they could not share any of their materials or resources with the researcher at this time.

H. Vendez - MAB Mackay Rehabilitation Centre

- Mr. Vendez was contacted by email to inquire about materials used in the pre-employment program offered by the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre. He responded saying that due to copyright, they were unable to share the material, but did send some general material of the outline and structure of some of the pre-employment sessions. He also noted that they are currently working to modify their pre-employment program to create a more specific version tailored to youth with vision and/or hearing loss.
Appendix B:
Teaching Job-Readiness and Self-Management Skills to Youth With Vision Loss

A Resource Manual for Facilitators

Developed by Caitlin Bruce

Honours Bachelor of Behavioural Psychology
St. Lawrence College
2016

\(^{2}\) Image found on http://www.clker.com/clipart-43499.html on December 5, 2016. This website features free clip art.

\(^{3}\) This manual was designed to be used at the agency it was developed for. Permission must be obtained by the author, Caitlin Bruce, at caitlin.bruce@sympatico.ca if others wish to use it.
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Part I: Introduction
Purpose of the Manual and Rationale

This manual was developed to assist staff, at the agency, in teaching youth with vision loss job readiness and self-management skills. The manual was created to provide staff with a structured resource that uses clearly defined procedures to teach the skills. The manual includes psychoeducational and skill development components which are used to teach and practice the skills. It was assumed that by using this manual to teach youth with vision loss skills in job readiness and self-management, it would increase their independence and overall quality of life.

Description of Contents

- Part II: Treatment Modules:
  - Job Readiness Skills – Provides education and skill development activities in job search strategies, job interview skills, and disclosing your disability to an employer.
  - Self-Management Skills – Provides education and skill development activities in goal setting, problem solving, and managing emotions.
- Part III: Additional Resources:
  - Participant Feedback Survey - Includes a short questionnaire that youth can complete at the end of the sessions to provide feedback on the sessions and their usefulness.
  - Facilitator Resources – Includes a variety of additional key resources for facilitators to learn more about the content presented in the manual.

Participant Characteristics

This manual was created to be used with young adults, aged 13-18, who have vision loss and demonstrate a need in the area of employment skills. Participants should be referred by other staff members within the agency based on informal information that leads them to believe that they would be a good candidate for the manual and demonstrate a need for employment skills. In order to be considered a candidate, participants must:
- Be registered clients of the agency
- Have a minimum reading and comprehension level of grade 6
- Must have no difficulty with hearing

Facilitator Characteristics

This manual was created to be used by agency staff who work with youth with visual impairments. There is no specialized training required for facilitators. Having personal experience being a person who is blind or visually impaired would be an asset, but is not mandatory. The facilitator should:
• Have some background knowledge and understanding of some of the more common eye conditions that youth typically have
• Be aware of the barriers that youth with vision loss face so that they can facilitate sessions in a way that works for the potential participants
• Be understanding and able to establish a rapport with the youth to help the youth “buy into” the manual and the content being presented

Materials Required
The materials needed for the facilitator include:
• A laptop
• A set of speakers

The materials needed for the participants may vary based on individual preference:
• Participant manual (large print copy or electronic)
• iPads
• Laptops
• Writing utensils
• Dark lined paper

Using the Manual
• The manual is designed to be implemented in the community agency, in a quiet room such as the boardroom. The manual was designed to be delivered mostly in an oral presentation format, with additional exercises that involve both independent and partner activities.

• The manual was designed to be implemented in a small group format of 2 to 6 participants. However, if there are not enough participants, the manual can be used one on one with a participant if they demonstrate a more individualized need for this kind of service. But in order to have a similar impact to when working in a group setting, the facilitator then must take an active role in working with the participant when working on activities involving partners so that the participant can still gain the same benefits from the exercises similar to being in a small group format. In addition, the manual should be offered in the sequence that it is set up in. However, if a participant only demonstrates need in the area of job readiness skills, then the self-management modules can be dropped.

• It is recommended that the facilitator read the manual, prior to using it. This way they can ensure that they fully understand the content of the manual and how it is set up.
• The manual contains two treatment modules. In both of the treatment modules there are three sub-modules. With a total of 6 sub-modules lasting between half an hour to 1 hour in length, the facilitator may want to only do one module per session over a period of 6 weeks, or do a one-day workshop to teach the modules which would take approximately 6 hours. The time frame should be based on what the facilitator deems as an appropriate schedule of delivering the manual, and should also be based on how many participants will be involved in the session.

• This facilitator manual has a matched participant manual that goes along with it. The participant manual should be provided to clients when using this manual to provide them with the material needed to participate fully in the treatment modules.
Part II: Treatment Modules
Job-Readiness Skills
Learning Job-Search Strategies

Purpose

• This module is intended to teach clients the process of searching for jobs, and some strategies that can be used to help during this process.

Goals

• Assist the clients in understanding the importance of identifying strategies to determine career interests and personal skills before beginning their job search.
• Assist the clients in creating a self-evaluation profile prior to their job search.
• Teach clients about common job search strategies, which include networking and online job searching.
• Teach clients about the importance of researching jobs as part of the job-search process.
• Assist clients in learning how to find jobs using the internet and how to research job postings.

Content

1. Discuss the importance of identifying strategies to determine interests in careers and personal skills before searching for jobs.

• Searching for jobs can be a very difficult process. Especially when you are just starting out. With so many job postings out there you may not know where to start. You may have difficulty determining what kinds of jobs to search for that would suit you, and have trouble deciding what jobs match your level of skills and abilities. You may also be unsure of where to go in order to look for a job.

• This is why it is so important to take some time to learn about yourself and your personal interests before you begin the process of searching for jobs. Being aware of your own skills, interests, and abilities can have a positive impact on your job search process. Having a strong awareness of yourself and your abilities can:
  o Help you choose jobs that match your personality, interests, skills, knowledge, and abilities
Help you **identify** potential **barriers** that may need to be overcome, so that you can find ways to address those barriers such as obtaining more education, increasing your skill set, or finding **alternative** ways to work around your vision limitations.

Help you search for jobs that you will take an **interest** in and are more likely to **enjoy** doing.

- In order to learn more about yourself, it can be helpful to create a self-evaluation that looks at your abilities, interests, work personality, values, and your liabilities.

**Exercise J1:** Create a self-evaluation profile for yourself. This exercise will help you identify some key things about yourself that are important to know before you start searching for a job. It will help you determine your own personal skills, interests, values, work personalities, and challenges to seeking employment.

**Facilitator Instructions:** Refer the clients to the exercise in the participant’s manual. Ask them to complete the five parts of the self-evaluation profile. Provide assistance to the clients as needed to ensure that any questions about the worksheet are answered and that they fully understand how to complete each part in the worksheet. After the clients are finished ask them to take turns reading out some of their answers that they have listed in the worksheet.

---

### My Self-Evaluation Profile

**Part 1: Interests**

List up to 5 of your top interests. (Don't worry about making your interests career-specific, just list the things that you enjoy doing.)

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

---

4 Adapted from Project Aspiro, n.d.
Part 2: Skills/Abilities

List up to 5 of your skills/abilities. These might involve skills that you are comparable or better at doing than most people and things that other people (such as friends/family) have identified as your strengths.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

Part 3: Values

Identify your top 5 values. These are things that you believe in that are important to you such as family, health, freedom, etc.

Some words that are used to describe people's values might include adventure, athletics, beauty, craftsmanship, creativity, dependability, entertainment, family, flexibility, freedom, friends, happiness, health, honesty, humour, independence, innovativeness, kindness, loyalty, nature, orderliness, privacy, religion, security, structure, wisdom.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

Part 4: Work Personality

Identify your work personality and choose what work environments are most suitable for you. John Holland's Vocation Theory identifies six work personalities and the matching work environments. Read the descriptions and choose the top 3 that you think are most suitable for you.

The six work personalities and typical work environments with jobs being performed that match the traits are listed below.

Investigative people are analytical and tend to have strong mathematical or scientific abilities. They like to experiment, think, observe, and solve problems. The investigative work environment appeals to people who are abstract-thinkers who prefer to work with their minds rather than their
hands. Investigative environments encourage problem-solving and experimentation. Logical, original thinkers, with interests in science, math, medicine, and technical areas, are encouraged in such work sites.

Examples of investigative jobs are: programmer, educational psychologist, mathematician, translator, archaeologist, veterinarian, botanist, technical publications writer, chemist, geographer, statistician, electrical engineer, food tester, surgical technician, astronomer, and inventor.

**Artistic** people are creative and expressive. They like to perform, draw, sing, play musical instruments, or do other things that enable them to demonstrate their artistic talents. Artistic environments encourage perceptive, creative, free-spirited individuals. These work environments demand intuition and imagination. They tend to be unstructured environments with an emphasis on freedom of expression and aesthetics. Artistic personality types gravitate to occupations in the performing and visual arts, as well as in other creative fields.

Examples of artistic jobs include stage technician, actor, musician, acrobat, package designer, fashion artist, singer, conductor, comedian, prose/poetry writer, editor, decorator, illustrator, narrator, music teacher, magician, milliner, photographer, auctioneer, set designer, graphic designer, and critic.

**Social** people like to be with other people. They like to teach, understand, and help others. They are often good communicators who are skilled with words. Social environments attract gregarious people who are interested in people and like to work with others. These environments require strong verbal skills, an interest in people, and a willingness to help others. Careers in teaching, social work, counselling, and other helping professions are in social environments.

Social jobs may include the following: athletic trainer, occupational therapist, teacher, psychologist, respiratory therapist, dental hygienist, probation officer, social worker, nurse, claim examiner, librarian, police officer, bartender, paralegal assistant, cosmetologist, recreation leader, historian, caseworker, hearing officer, and comparison shopper.

**Enterprising** people like to influence or lead other people. They also like to manage, persuade, and sell things and enjoy competitive, moneymaking environments. Enterprising people are assertive and outgoing so they match-up with entrepreneurial or business-like environments that tend to be highly competitive and profit-oriented. Enterprising personalities like to be in control and are often found in leadership roles. They enjoy jobs in sales, politics, and business management.
Enterprising jobs may include laundromat operator, salesperson, contractor, warehouse supervisor, communications consultant, kitchen supervisor, food services director, legislative assistant, housekeeper, barber, umpire, waitress, attorney, lobbyist, interpreter, artist's manager, securities trader, travel guide, and investment manager.

**Conventional** people like structure and order in their lives. They like to work with data, pay attention to detail, and often have good organizational skills. They are good at following through with others’ instructions. People who tend to be practical, neat, and well organized gravitate to conventional work. Conventional work environments are structured, orderly environments. Conventional personality types do well in accounting, business, and clerical professions.

Examples of conventional jobs are accountant, music copyist, clerk, auditor, bookkeeper, food checker, mortgage clerk, dry cleaner, building inspector, bibliographer, editorial assistant, title examiner, court clerk, ticket agent, receptionist, ticket taker, scheduler, cashier-checker, information clerk, credit-card clerk, and data entry clerk.

**Realistic** people are often athletic or have mechanical abilities. They have good manual skills and like to work with tools, objects, equipment, animals, and plants. They often like to work outdoors. The realistic work environment appeals to people who want to work with things (objects, tools, and machines) rather than with other people or ideas. Jobs in this area require attention to the present rather than to the past or future. Frequently, these jobs require mechanical or technical abilities.

Realistic jobs include plumber, cook, electrician, firefighter, engine tester, mechanical engineer, stone carver, automobile mechanic, electrical appliance repairer, piano tuner, baggage handler, assembler, janitor, animal breeder, shoe repair person, bicycle repair person, carpenter, and small maintenance person.

My top 3 work personalities are:

1. 
2. 
3. 

Part 5: List your top 3 challenges when searching for employment. Some things to consider when thinking about your challenges might include:
• Do you have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities for the jobs that you are interested in applying for?

• Do you have enough functional vision to do the tasks required of the workers in the fields that you are looking into?

• Do you have enough experience to compete with other workers?

• Is the experience that you do have current?

• Do you have other transferrable skills, knowledge, and abilities from either life experiences or employment experiences that will qualify you for the job that you want?

My top 3 challenges of searching for employment:

1. 
2. 
3. 

2. Introduce job search strategies, with an emphasis on networking and online job searching.

• Once you have learned more about yourself and have a good sense of your skills, values, interests, challenges, and work personality, then you are ready to begin the job search process.

• You may be wondering, so where exactly do I find these job postings? The answer to this question is that there are several different places that you can look for job postings, some of these might include: employment centres, online job boards, job posting websites, agency/company websites, and networking with people you know in your community.

• In today’s society, getting a job is not necessarily just about what you know but it is also about who you know. This is why networking during your search for a job is so important. Networking is actually considered to be the most effective aspect of searching for a job.
• Networking is defined as simply talking to others, either informally or formally, about your job search.\textsuperscript{5} Networking can involve meeting new people, making yourself known by introducing yourself, making people aware of your job search, and establishing relationships and connections.

• Networking is considered to be one of the best ways to find a job because:\textsuperscript{6}
  
  o People tend to hire people that they know and like. Therefore, if you network and get to know people it is more likely you will be hired for a job through someone you know as it is more personal than being hired because of your resume and cover letter.
  
  o Many people are applying to the same job posting as you, which means you have more competition. Therefore, if you network it may make you a member of a much smaller pool when it comes down to choosing who to call for interviews.
  
  o Many jobs do not get posted. Therefore, networking can lead to information and leads for jobs sometimes before a job is even posted.

• Here are some helpful tips for networking:\textsuperscript{7}
  
  o Tip 1: You have \textbf{more people} in your personal network than you think. People such as your family, friends, neighbours, classmates, acquaintances, etc. are all part of your network. To keep track of your network, go through everyone you know and write down their names so that you can keep adding to the list as you meet new contacts.

  o Tip 2: \textbf{Reach out} to people in your network. Once you have made your networking list then you can start contacting people. Let them know that you are looking for a job and be as specific as you can in terms of what kind of job you are looking for. You should also ask them if they know of any information or anyone in a related field. It is important not to assume that certain contacts won’t be able to help you

\textsuperscript{5} McAuliffe, 2016
\textsuperscript{6} Kobara & Smith, 2016
\textsuperscript{7} Kobara & Smith, 2016
Tip 3: Work on developing **relationships.** Networking involves connecting with others, asking questions, and exchanging information. When networking it is important to:

- **Be authentic** – When searching for a job and networking make sure that you present yourself as your "true self". This means that you should not try to hide yourself by trying to be what you think others like, it is important to be yourself as this will help you be more successful in the long run.

- **Be considerate** – Depending on who you are networking with make sure to use the time appropriately. If you are visiting with an old friend take time to catch up before asking them about potential job opportunities and who they may know. But on the other hand if you are having a coffee with a professional who is quite busy, make sure to get to the point of your request.

- **Ask for advice, not a job** – Don't ask for a job. You want your networking contacts to assist you in your job search, so instead just ask them for information or insight. If they are able to refer you to someone they know or lead you to a job opportunity, they will.

✓ Exercise J2: Create a networking list. This exercise will help you develop your own networking list so that you can begin to keep track of your contacts and add new contacts that you meet along the way. Having a list and updating it is important during the job search process as it can help you stay organized and keep track of who you have met and connected with. Remember that family and friends may also be contacts in your list of networking contacts.

✓ Facilitator Instructions: Refer the clients to the exercise in the participant's manual. Ask them to fill in at least 5 people to their networking list. Ensure that they include the contact's name, contact information (i.e., phone and email address), and job title/position/agency (if possible). Provide assistance to the clients as needed to ensure they understand the exercise.
**My Networking List**

1. Contact Name:
   Phone #/Email Address:
   Job Title/Position/Agency:

2. Contact Name:
   Phone #/Email Address:
   Job Title/Position/Agency:

3. Contact Name:
   Phone #/Email Address:
   Job Title/Position/Agency:

4. Contact Name:
   Phone #/Email Address:
   Job Title/Position/Agency:

5. Contact Name:
   Phone #/Email Address:
   Job Title/Position/Agency:

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- Another common way to search for jobs is using **online resources**. With searching for jobs online you have a number of places that you can look. These might include online job boards, employment centre websites, agency/company websites and more.

- Depending on which online method you choose to search for jobs, it is **important** to note the following tips:
  
  o Be careful about which job websites that you use. There are millions of job postings on the internet, on a variety of different websites. Be selective about which sites you use, it is important to use well-known job posting websites and employment centre job boards such as indeed.com, keys job board, or other reliable resources.
  
  o Make your job search specific. When searching on the internet, use keywords or phrases to make your search more specific. For example, it may be helpful to search using a specific job title, company name, or career field that you are looking for. Also make sure that you are specific in your search about what area you are

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8 Indeed.com, n.d.
searching for jobs. If you are searching for jobs in Kingston, make sure to type Kingston in to the search bar that asks for your location. This will help keep your search in that area so that you are not looking through job postings that are coming up in areas outside of Kingston.

- Sign up for new job posting alerts by email. Some online job search websites allow you to sign up for free emails to let you know about job postings coming up or new job postings in the current area of work that you are interested in based on your past searches in that website.
- Be aware of scam job postings. If you see a job posting that advertises quick and easy money or that asks for personal information such as your social insurance number – do not apply to this. It is more than likely a scam.
- Make sure you look at the date that the job posting closes. Job postings that are posted online are not always removed right after the job posting expires. So, it is important to pay attention to the closing date of the job because there’s no point in applying to an outdated job posting.

3. Introduce the concept of researching jobs as part of the job-search process.

- Once you have taken the time to find some jobs that you are interested in applying for, the **next step** involves doing more in-depth research about your employment opportunities. This means looking more into the jobs that you are interested in applying for. When doing this, you will want to consider things such as:
  - What will I need to do for this job position?
  - What kind of environment will this job require me to work in?
  - What level of education is required?
  - What skills do I need for this job?
  - How much experience is needed for this job?
  - Can this job provide me with skills I can use in other work settings?

- In addition to these questions, being a person who is blind or partially sighted, there are a few more questions you will need to ask yourself when researching potential job opportunities such as:
o Does this job require me to **travel**? If so, what method of transportation would be reasonable for me to use in this position?

o Do I have enough **functional vision** to be able to meet the requirements of this job position?

o Is this job in a **location** that I am able to access using public transportation? If not, how will I get to and from work?

o What **challenges/limitations** might this job position offer me and what is my plan to address these concerns?

- Answering these questions when researching jobs is important because they can **help** you:
  
  o Identify skills, education, experience, and any other requirements for the position.
  
  o Assist you in determining if this job is a good fit for you, and help you to determine if you will be able to meet the requirements of the job with your current level of vision.
  
  o Acknowledge the potential limitations/challenges you may face in this job and have a plan of action as to how these challenges can be addressed.
  
  o Determine if the job will offer transferrable skills that you can use in other work settings that are relevant to your field of work you are interested in.

✓ **Exercise J3: Fill out the Researching Potential Jobs Worksheet.** This exercise will help you identify some key requirements of a job posting when considering if it is a good fit for you or not. It will help you answer questions about the requirements of the job position, as well as level of education and skills needed for the job. It will also help you figure out if you have enough functional vision to be able to apply for the job based on the requirements, as well as identify potential limitations or challenges you may have in the job and think about planning how to deal with those challenges.

✓ **Facilitator Instructions:** Refer the clients to the exercise in the participant’s manual. Ask them to go online and look for a job posting that they are interested in. Once they have found a job posting, then they can fill out the information on the worksheet about that job posting. Be sure to provide assistance to the clients as needed to
ensure they understand what they need to do to complete the worksheet. After the clients are finished, ask them to find a partner and discuss what job posting they found and go through the different aspects of the sheet and present what they found in their pairs.

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**Researching Potential Jobs**

Instructions:

Step 1: Go online and do a job search to find a job that you are interested in.

Step 2: Once you have found a job posting you’re interested in, fill out the information below:

**Job Posting Information:**

Name of Job Posting:
Location of Job:
Date Job was Posted:
Date Job Posting Ends:

**Job Requirements:**

What level of education is needed for this position?

What skills would I need for this position?

Would I need any specialized training to be eligible for this position? If so, what training is required?
**Personal Abilities/Potential Limitations**

Will I be able to meet all the requirements of this job with my current level of functional vision? Why or why not?

Are there any potential limitations/challenges that I may face in being eligible for this job? If so, what is my plan to address these concerns to make sure that I can do this job?

4. Provide a summary of job search strategies.

- Before starting your initial job search, it is important to take some time to learn about yourself to determine your own career interests and personal skills.
- Two of the most common job search strategies used are networking and online job searching.
- Networking is considered one of the most effective ways to find a job. Networking is important because people tend to hire people they know and like, some jobs aren’t always posted online or publicly, and many people are applying to the same jobs, so if that employer has heard of you from someone it is more likely you may be selected for an interview than someone they only know from reading a resume and cover letter.
- Another common way to search for jobs is using online sources such as job boards and job websites. When using these tools to search for jobs it is important to make sure that your job search is specific. It is also a good idea to make sure that you are using reliable job search websites or job boards.
Lastly, it is helpful to do your research when you are searching for jobs. Make sure to take the time to look into the job posting and consider the necessary skills, education, and training required for the job. It is also important to consider whether you think you will be able to do the job with your current level of functional vision and look at potential challenges that the job may offer you so that you can have a plan of action ready as to how you can deal with those challenges and overcome them.
Learning Job Interview Skills

Purpose

• This module is intended to teach clients some of the essential strategies to assist them in preparing for an interview and learning appropriate conduct during an interview.

Goals

• Assist the clients in understanding the process of preparing for a job interview.
• Assist the clients in learning the appropriate conduct during an interview.
• Assist the clients in answering some commonly asked interview questions, as well as using role-plays to practice answering some of the questions in mock interviews.

Content

1. Introduce the process of how to prepare for a job interview.

• Job interviews are a crucial part of the job search. This is because interviews provide an opportunity for your potential employer to decide if you are the right candidate for the job. The outcome of the interview is very dependent on how well you perform in the interview, and how well prepared you are. So in saying this, it is extremely important to be prepared.

• In order to be prepared for the interview ahead of time, it will involve:
  o Doing research to learn more about the agency/organization.
  o Preparing for potential interview questions.
  o Preparing questions for the employer.

• Doing research will help you learn more about the organization/agency. Your research might involve going online to read about the organizations goals and objectives, history of the company, and recent events related to the organization. The following are some questions that can help you when doing your research:
  o What does the organization do?
  o What is the organization’s mission statement or values, goals and objectives, etc.

9 Government of Canada, 2014
• By doing your research about the organization and knowing more about the position you are applying for, it will help you feel more comfortable in the interview.

• Preparing for potential interview questions is one of the best ways to help you prepare for an interview. Doing this will help you anticipate what questions the employer might ask during the interview. This will allow you to provide well thought out answers during your interview. Some questions that you should anticipate answering might include:

  o Why do you want this job?
  o What do you have to offer this organization?
  o What are some of your strengths? Can you provide an example?
  o What are some of your weaknesses? Can you provide an example?
  o Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?

• Here are some suggestions to help you improve your answers to the potential interview questions:
  o Review your experience – in school, work, or volunteering.
  o Think of examples of situations that illustrate your abilities. (good judgment, communication skills, initiative, etc.)
  o Make a list of things that you have accomplished or achieved that you are proud of. You may use this list to refer to during the interview if needed.
  o Think about examples of challenges that you have faced, and be able to describe how you dealt with them, as well as what you learned from them.

• Preparing questions for the employer. Typically, at the end of an interview, the employer will ask if you have any questions about the position you are applying for or about the organization itself. This is the time where you get to interview the employer to ask any questions you have.
• This is **important** because if you have well thought out questions to ask the employer, it shows them that you are interested in becoming a part of their organization. Some examples of questions that you may want to ask the employer might include:11
  o What does a typical day look like for a person that works in the position that I am applying for?
  o How will this position offer me opportunity to learn and grow with this organization?
  o When should I expect to hear back about the hiring for this position?

2. Discuss the appropriate conduct during an interview and describe what involves.

• The interview is the **most** important component of the job search process. The interview provides you with an opportunity to show the employer you are a good fit for the position that you are applying for. How you **present** yourself in the interview is essential to your success. The following are some tips for successful job interviews:12
  o **Dress appropriately.** No matter what job position you are applying for, make sure that you dress professionally. A tidy appearance and proper hygiene are important. It is also essential that you do not use strong smelling perfumes or colognes as all workplaces are now scent free.
  o **Be on time.** Plan to arrive at the interview at least 5 or 10 minutes early. Make sure that you plan the route to the interview ahead of time so that you know how long it takes to get there and ensure that you know where you are going. It is also a good idea to have a back-up plan in case something happens last minute or your bus is running late.
  o **Bring a copy of your resume and reference list.** Always bring a copy of your resume to the job interview to refer to if needed. You should also bring your reference list to provide the employer with. This shows that you are organized and well prepared.
  o **Be yourself.** Don’t be afraid to be yourself. It is easier to be yourself than try to be someone you are not. If you are excited about the job, let the employer see that. Just remember to keep it professional.

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11 Government of Canada, 2014

12 Government of Canada, 2014
o **Be confident.** Everyone gets nervous when it comes to interviews. Don’t let your nerves get the best of you. Showing good eye contact and a calm, relaxed voice are good ways to show that you are confident.

o **Pay attention to your body language.** During the interview make sure that you sit in a comfortable position that you can relax in, but don’t get too relaxed. Avoid things such as fidgeting with your hair or clothes, and chewing gum.

o **Be professional at all times.** Start out with a smile and a firm handshake. Remember that you want this introduction to be a good first impression so make sure to be polite to everyone that you meet, before, during and after the interview. Also, make sure that you cell phone is turned off.

o **Listen and ask questions if needed.** Listen carefully to the interview questions so that you understand what you are being asked and can give an appropriate answer. If you do not understand a question, don’t be afraid to ask for clarification. This shows that you are willing to ask for clarification when needed.

o **“Sell” yourself.** When answering questions let the employer know what you have to offer their organization. Do not brag, but make sure to talk about past experiences, accomplishments and achievements, and tie those things to how you can contribute to their organization.

o **Think before you speak.** Make sure that you take time to think about your answers before saying them out loud. Don’t take too much time but use the time in between questions and answers to ensure that you are saying exactly what you want to say.

o **Avoid lingering.** As soon as the interview is done, make sure you don’t linger. Shake the interviewer’s hand, thank them for the interview, and then leave.

3. **Assist the clients in filling out the commonly asked interview questions worksheet.**

   ✓ Exercise J4: Fill out the Commonly Asked Interview Questions Worksheet. This exercise will help you prepare for some of the potential questions you may be asked in a job interview. It will help you answer the questions so that you can practice them and change them if needed to improve your answers.

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13 Harris, 2013
Facilitator Instructions: Refer the clients to the exercise in the participant’s manual. Ask them to fill in their own answers to the questions on the worksheet. Then once they are done filling in their answers, they can partner up in pairs and take turns asking their partners some of the questions and having the other person respond to the questions. Make sure that each partner has a turn both asking the questions and also providing their answers to the questions as well. Be sure to provide assistance to the clients as needed to ensure they understand what they need to do for this exercise. When the clients are practicing interviewing and providing answers go around and listen to each person answer at least one question. Provide them with constructive feedback with something that they did well on and something that they could work on.

Commonly Asked Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

2. Why should we hire you? What special skills or talents do you have that others may not?

3. What are your strengths? Can you give an example?

4. What is your weakness? Can you give an example?

5. How do you handle pressure?
6. What accomplishment do you feel most proud of in your life?

7. Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years?

8. Tell me about a time you experienced a problem and how you solved that problem.

9. What interests/hobbies do you enjoy doing?

10. What are three words that someone close to you would use to describe you?

4. **Provide a summary of job interview skills.**
   - Job interviews are a crucial component of the job search process. Interviews allow you to show employers why you are the best candidate for the job.
   - Preparing for an interview ahead of time will involve doing your research about the company or organization, preparing yourself for potential interview questions that you may be asked, and preparing questions to ask the interviewer.
Knowing how to appropriately act and conduct yourself in an interview is also an important component that can make or break the success of your interview. Some important tips for successful interviews: dress appropriately, be on time, bring a copy of your resume and reference list, be yourself, be confident, pay attention to your body language, be professional, listen and ask questions if needed, sell yourself, think before you speak, and avoid lingering.
Disclosing Your Disability to an Employer

Purpose
- This module is intended to teach clients about deciding if, how, and when to disclose a disability to a potential employer.

Goals
- Assist the clients in learning the difficulty in making a decision whether to disclose or not to disclose their disability to an employer.
- Provide the clients with some questions to consider to help determine when, how, and if to disclose their disability.
- Provide the clients with some helpful tips to use when deciding to disclose their disability.
- Assist the clients in writing a disability statement and practicing rehearsing their disability statement.

Content
1. Introduce the concept of disclosing your disability to an employer.
   - One of the most difficult issues in employment that people with visual impairments face is deciding whether or not to disclose your disability to a potential employer, and when and how to go about doing that. Disclosure is a debatable topic – if you ask people with various degrees of vision loss about their personal views on disclosure, you will more than likely receive different answers based on their own individual and personal experiences.14

   - Deciding to disclose may make more sense for someone who is blind or significantly visually impaired, and depends on a white cane or a guide dog, because it’s physically obvious that they are unable to see. However, for people who have low vision or less obvious visual disabilities, deciding if and when to disclose can be very challenging. This is why it is very important to take some time to think about disclosure so that you have a good understanding of the positives and negatives.

   - Ultimately, it is your decision to disclose, or not to disclose your visual disability to a potential employer. In saying this, it is important to note

14 CNIB, n.d.
that there is no simple answer to how and when to disclose, it simply depends based on your level of vision, the employer, and the situation.

2. Introduce the clients to the questions below to help determine if, how, and when to disclose their disability.

- The following are some questions that you should carefully consider before deciding if, how, and when to disclose your visual disability:\(^{15}\)
  - Is your disability visible?
  - How do most people react when they learn about your disability? How do you deal with their reaction?
  - When do you feel most comfortable and confident disclosing your disability?
  - Does not disclosing put your safety or the safety of others at risk?
  - Will the employer think you’re dishonest? How would you deal with that reaction?
  - What misconceptions might the employer have about your disability?
  - If you disclose, will you be able to reassure your employer that your disability will not affect your ability to do the work?
  - Asking for accommodations will almost certainly require you to disclose. Do you need accommodations for the interview? Or if you get the job?
  - What do you know about this employer's policies and experiences regarding people with disabilities?

3. Assist the clients in learning some tips that can help when disclosing a disability.

- If it is your first time disclosing, or if you have not had success when disclosing in the past, it can be helpful to practice role-playing your disclosure with a supportive family member or close friend.

- The following are some tips that can help when disclosing your disability:\(^{16}\)
  - Be positive and use your disability as a strength. Talk about the positive characteristics that you have, such as good problem solving skills or good communication skills, because of your disability. Don't present your disability as a weakness, focus on your skills and abilities.
  - Be prepared ahead of time to address any concerns that are expressed about your disability.
  - Be knowledgeable about what accommodations that you may need for the job. It is also a good idea to know about funding,

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\(^{15}\) CNIB, n.d.

\(^{16}\) CNIB, n.d.
availability, and cost of programs that employers can access to assist with accommodations.

- Anticipate potential questions that employers may have about your disclosure. Use examples to practice so that you are well prepared in how you will answer their questions.
- Once you have made a decision about deciding to disclose, ask yourself this last question. Will disclosing my disability at this time help me to reach my goal of getting a job?

4. Assist the clients in learning how to write a disability statement.

- Exercise J5: Writing a disability statement. This exercise will assist you in writing a disability statement. This can be very useful when preparing your disclosure to an employer to ensure you can communicate effectively to let them know what your disability is, how you see, and what you are able to do with adaptations and accommodations.

- Facilitator Instructions: Refer the clients to the exercise in the participant’s manual. Read the first part of the worksheet aloud to the group until you reach the heading “my disability statement”. Ask them to complete their own disability statement. Provide assistance to the clients as needed to ensure that they understand the activity. After the clients are finished ask them to get into pairs and practice role-playing how they would disclose their disability statement to a potential employer. Go around the room and listen to the clients’ role-plays. Provide them with feedback as needed, letting them know what they did well and giving them suggestions on what they may consider adding or changing about their disability statement.

Writing a Disability Statement

As a person with a disability, it’s important to be able to express what your disability is and how it affects you. It’s important to not use too many technical terms and to keep your explanation practical. Make sure to be clear about what you can see, and explain how you accommodate limitations. Mentioning how you access computers or other information is usually a good idea.

Putting together a disability statement prepares you for the moment in the job hunting process where you’ll need to both emphasize your skills and...
potential and put an employer's concerns to rest. Using plain language in describing your ability to accomplish job duties or meet general goals in life is important.

You can talk about your disability by explaining how you will perform the job duties in question, or by describing how you have performed similar jobs in the past. It can be helpful to relate possible accommodations to specific job duties, and to think about what the employer will want or need to know. Disclosure during the employment process is not an appropriate time to lecture someone about having a disability. Rather, your disability statement is an opportunity to promote yourself and to help a potential employer see how you will be a valuable member on their team.

Examples of Descriptions of Disabilities

When you describe your disability or impairment, always use positive language, simple terms and phrasing, and include functional implications. Here are some examples:

“I have an eye condition that limits what I can see. It is like looking through a straw. I have to scan or look around more because of this loss of peripheral vision. I can look at you and see your face, but I do not see the rest of you or the surroundings.”

“I use screen reading software called JAWS. It reads information from the screen to me. I use one earphone for listening to my screen reader; I can use the other ear to use the phone or listen to other information.”

“Because of my visual impairment, I am unable to drive, so I use the bus system to get around. I took the bus here today. If the bus is not working, I have other methods of transportation.”

“I use a device that enlarges paper documents to allow me to see them easily. Other documents can be given to me electronically or I can scan them into my computer.”

“As you can see, I have great technology skills and I am very creative and will be able to meet the duties assigned to me.”
**My Disability Statement:**

1. Briefly describe what your eye condition is and how you see:

   ex. “I have an eye condition called retinitis pigmentosa that limits what I can see. It's like looking through a straw. I have to scan or look around more because of this loss of peripheral vision. I can look at you and see your face, but I do not see the rest of you or the surroundings.”

2. Describe what technology or adaptations you use to do things such as using the computer/ reading and writing:

   ex. “I use screen reading software called JAWS. It reads information from the screen to me. I use one earphone for listening to my screen reader; I can use the other ear to use the phone or listen to other information.”

   ex. “I use a device that enlarges paper documents to allow me to see them easily. Other documents can be given to me electronically or I can scan them into my computer.”

3. What strengths/specific skills do you have to offer?

   ex. “I have great technology skills because I use technology on a daily basis. I am also very creative so I can usually find new ways to adapt things to ensure that I am still able to do them.”
5. Provide a summary of disclosing your disability.

- Deciding to disclose or not to disclose your disability to a potential employer is one of the most debatable issues in the employment process for people with visual impairments.
- If a person is blind, disclosing their disability may make more sense for them because it is physically evident that they are not able to see. But for people with low vision, it may be more challenging whether to disclose or not because their disability may be less obvious.
- Some of the questions that a person can ask themselves when trying to decide if, how, and when to disclose their disability might include: is your disability visible, and when do you feel most comfortable and most confident about disclosing your disability?
- When you decide to disclose your disability there are some tips that you can use to help you with this. These include: practice role-playing your disclosure with a close family member or friend, be positive about your disability and present it as a strength, not a weakness, be prepared ahead of time to address any of the employer's concerns, and be knowledgeable about what accommodations you may need and the programs that are provided to employers to assist with accommodations for employees.
- Lastly, writing a disability statement can help you with your disclosure by being able to practice presenting your disability in a positive and professional manner that highlights your strengths while still addressing potential concerns of the employer.
Self-Management Skills
Learning to Set Goals

Purpose

- This module is intended to teach clients the process of setting goals.

Goals

- Assist the clients in understanding the concept of goals and why they are important.
- Teach clients the steps involved in setting SMART goals.
- Assist clients in creating a SMART goal.

Content

1. Introduce the concept of goals and why they are important.
   - Goals are defined as potential outcomes that a person wants to accomplish or achieve.18
   - Goals are important for a number of reasons.
     - They can be thought of as acting similar to a GPS, in that they give you direction so that you can choose where you want to go.
     - Goals also help you figure out what is most important to you and helps you determine what you need to focus on.
     - In addition, they also help you identify your priorities in life and look at your future.

2. Discuss the concept of SMART goals.
   - Setting goals can be very difficult, especially when you have not had much experience with setting goals for yourself. For instance, you may have a lot of goals that you want to accomplish but you have no idea how you will achieve them. You also may not really know what goals you want to achieve yet, so you will have to do some searching to decide what is important to you.
   - This is why learning a strategy to help you set goals can be very helpful. One of the most commonly used strategies for goal setting is the SMART goals method. This method involves developing goals that follow the SMART framework which stands for:19

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18 Merriam-Webster, n.d.
19 Project Smart, 2016
• Goals need to be **specific**. This means that when you are developing your goals they must be clear and concise; they must state exactly what you want to achieve. This way you can easily identify what your goal is and how you will achieve it.

• When creating your goals, to make sure that they are specific consider the following questions and make sure they are answered:\(^{20}\)
  
  o What do I want to achieve?
  o Where?
  o When?
  o Who?
  o How?

• If goals are not specific, they can become confusing and you may not know what exactly you wanted to accomplish or how you wanted to accomplish that.

• Goals need to be **measurable**. This means that when you are developing your goals they must be designed so that they can be measured. This is important because you need to have a way to measure your goals in order to help you identify the progress you have made on those goals, and also to help you determine whether or not you have accomplished your goals.

• If goals are not measurable, then you will not be able to see how much progress you have made towards your goals. You will also not be able to determine if you have truly reached your goal.

• Goals need to be **attainable**. This means that when you are developing your goals you need to think about setting goals that you are able to achieve. This is important because if you don't set

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\(^{20}\) YourCoach, 2016
goals that are within your ability then you will never achieve them and you will be setting yourself up for failure instead of success.

- If goals are not attainable, then you will never achieve them and will have little to no motivation to work towards them. No one wants to work toward a goal that they know they will never be able to complete.

- When creating goals that are attainable it is important to ask yourself:
  - Is it possible for me to achieve this goal?
  - Is this goal too challenging for me?

- Goals need to be **realistic**. This means that when developing your goals, you must ensure that the goals you set for yourself are things that you are able to do, based on your current knowledge, ability, skills, and experiences.

- When creating goals that are realistic it is important to ask yourself:
  - Am I able to achieve this goal with my current level of knowledge/ability/education/skills/experience?
  - Is this a goal that is important to me?

- Goals need to be **timely**. When developing goals, you need to determine a time-frame for when the goal will be completed or how long it will take to complete. This is important because it provides you with a time frame of how long you expect it will take for you to reach your goal. Having a time-frame or deadline for your goal is also beneficial because it can help you focus on working towards your goal and help you keep track of how much longer you have to reach your goal.

- If goals are not timely, they do not provide the person with a time frame. Without a time frame or deadline, people may find it hard to work towards their goal because they do not feel any pressure of having to complete their goal within a specific period of time. This allows people to put off their goals and say that they can do it later, but then they never end up working on their goal because it is always put off for a later time.
• When creating goals that are timely it is important to ask yourself:\(^\text{21}\)
  o How long will it take for me to reach my goal?
  o What is a reasonable time frame or deadline for my goal?
  o When do I want my goal to be achieved?

• SMART Goal Examples:
  o To raise my science grade from a C to a B on the second semester report card by studying an extra two hours each week.
  o To increase my job-search strategies by handing out at least 10 resumes by December 12, 2016.
  o To increase the amount of money I save by putting away $20 each month in a savings account for one year.

• When you are working on developing your goals there are some other important guidelines to follow:\(^\text{22}\)
  o Write your goals using a positive statement, instead of a negative one. It’s better to focus on the positive and what you can do instead of the negative and what you don’t want to do.
  o If you have several goals, make sure to prioritize them. This will help you determine which goals are the most important to you. It will also help you feel less overwhelmed by the number of goals that you have.
  o Write your goals down. This makes your goals more concrete, and will help you commit to them. It will also allow you to revisit them when you need to.
  o Take the time to review your goals. This will help you keep track of your progress towards your goals. If some of your goals are not working, this gives you the chance to make changes to those goals.
  o When you have reached your goal, make sure to reward yourself. This will help you acknowledge and feel good about accomplishing your goal.

3. Assist the clients in setting a SMART goal.
   ✓ Exercise S1: SMART Goal Worksheet. This exercise will help you in developing SMART goals. Learning how to create SMART goals will

\(^{21}\) Smart Goals Guide, 2016
\(^{22}\) MindTools, 2016
help you to set goals for yourself that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. This worksheet can be used to help you develop any goal in any area of your life including employment, education, health, etc.

✔ Facilitator Instructions: Refer the clients to the exercise in the participant’s manual. Ask the clients to think of at least one goal they want to set for themselves and use the worksheet to develop their goal. Provide assistance to the clients as needed to ensure that their goals match the SMART goal criteria. After the clients are finished, ask them to read their goals out one at a time to the group.

SMART Goal Worksheet

Generic goal Statement:

Specific:

Measurable:

Attainable:

Realistic:

Timely:

SMART Goal Statement:
4. Provide a summary of goal setting.
   - Goals are potential outcomes that a person wants to achieve.
   - Goals are important for a number of reasons. They help give you a sense of direction so that you can choose where you want to go, they help you determine what is important to you and what you need to focus on, and they also help you identify your priorities in life and look at your future.
   - When setting goals, it is helpful to use the SMART goal criteria to ensure that your goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely.
   - Lastly, it is helpful to develop goals using positive statements, prioritize your goals, write your goals down, take time to review your goals, and reward yourself when you have achieved a goal.
Learning to Problem Solve

Purpose

• This module is intended to teach clients the process of problem solving.

Goals

• Assist the clients in understanding the concept of problem solving and why it is important.
• Teach clients the process used to solve a problem using the problem solving model.
• Assist clients in working through a problem using the problem-solving model.

Process

1. Introduce the concept of problem solving and why it is important.
   • A problem is defined as something that is difficult to deal with or understand, that is usually worked out or solved.23

   • Problem solving can be very difficult, especially for people who are not aware of the process that problem solving requires. It may also be difficult if you are unsure of how to deal with a complex problem.

   • It is important to understand that not all problems can be solved in the exact same way. Problem solving is complex and each problem may be unique. However, if you have an effective process that you can use, then you should be able to apply that to each individual situation to find a solution that works best for you.

   • Furthermore, it is essential to learn the process of problem solving because we all encounter problems in our daily lives that we must deal with. Problems can take many different shapes, sizes, and forms, so we need to understand the process of problem solving to ensure that we are fully equipped to deal with problems in an effective manner as they arise.

23 Whitbourne, 2915
2. Describe the process of the problem-solving model.

- The problem-solving model involves a number of steps that are applied to a problem in order to figure out a solution. The following are the steps for the problem-solving model.24

- **Step 1: Identify the Problem**
  - The first stage of problem solving involves recognizing that there is a problem. Once you have realized that there is a problem then you can identify the problem.

- **Step 2: Structure the Problem**
  - The second stage involves structuring the problem. This means gathering more information, such as facts about the problem. For example, this could involve looking at if the problem is something that you are able to solve on your own or do you need help from others? Do you know all the details of the problem and how is it affecting you?

- **Step 3: Brainstorm Possible Solutions**
  - The third stage involves brainstorming possible solutions to the problem. This means thinking of different possibilities that could be used to solve the problem.

- **Step 4: Make a Decision**
  - The fourth stage involves making a decision. This means that you must look at all the different solutions that you have brainstormed and weigh the options for each solution. Is the solution possible? What are the pros and cons of each solution? After you have taken time to weigh each solution, then it is time to choose the solution that you think will work best for you.

- **Step 5: Implement the Solution**
  - The fifth stage involves implementing the solution. This means that you go ahead and implement whatever solution you have chosen.

- **Step 6: Provide Feedback**
  - The final stage involves providing yourself with feedback. This means that you review the outcome of your problem solving to determine how well the process worked for you. If

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24 SkillsYouNeed, 2016
it worked well for you, that is great. If it did not work out well for you, maybe it’s time to go back and re-evaluate the process to see if you can find a new solution to your problem.

3. Assist the clients in applying the problem-solving model.

✓ Exercise S2: Problem-Solving Model Worksheet. This template will assist you in learning how to use the problem-solving model to break down a problem. Learning how to use the problem-solving model will help you be able to apply this process to problems that come up in your own life in order to work through the problems to find solutions. This worksheet can assist you with many different problems that you may encounter in your everyday life.

✓ Facilitator Instructions: Refer the clients to the exercise in the participant’s manual. Ask the clients to use the problem-solving worksheet to work through a problem that they experienced recently. Provide assistance to the clients as needed to ensure that the clients understand the steps of each part of the problem-solving process. After the clients are finished, ask them to get into partners and discuss their problem-solving process, making sure to go through each step in the sheet.

Problem-Solving Model

Step 1: Identify the Problem (What is the problem?)

Step 2: Structure the Problem (What information do you need to gather about the problem?)

Step 3: Brainstorm Possible Solutions (What solutions can you think of that may help you solve the problem?)
Step 4: Make a Decision (What are the pros and cons of each solution? Which solution do you think will work for you in this situation? Which solution will you choose?)

Step 5: Implement the Solution (How did you implement your solution that you chose?)

Step 6: Provide Feedback (Did you solve your problem? If not, do you need to revisit a step in the problem-solving process to try again?)

   - A problem is defined as something that is hard to understand or deal with, that is generally worked out or solved.
   - Understanding the process of problem solving is important because everyone experiences problems in their everyday lives, and we need to know how to manage those problems in an effective manner.
   - Lastly, the steps in the problem-solving model include identifying the problem, structuring the problem, brainstorming possible solutions, making a decision, implementing the solution, and providing feedback.
Learning to Manage Emotions

Purpose

• This module is intended to teach clients some strategies to help manage their emotions more effectively.

Goals

• Introduce clients to the concept of managing emotions and why it is important.
• Introduce clients to the four-step process to help manage emotions.
• Assist clients in identifying some healthy coping strategies.
• Assist clients in identifying which coping strategies they use to manage their emotions.

Content

1. Discuss the concept of managing your emotions and why it is important.

• Emotions are part of our everyday lives. Whether you are laughing at a funny joke or feeling frustrated because you’re going to be late for an appointment, all emotions can and do affect you. Regardless of what specific emotions you are feeling, all emotions can significantly impact your health and overall well-being.25

• For many people emotions can be a very scary thing. This may be because they just don’t know how to deal with their emotions. Or maybe they just haven’t found the right strategies that work for them to cope with their emotions. So when people don’t know how to deal with their emotions that they are feeling they generally turn to unhealthy strategies to help them cope. This may mean different things depending on each individual but it may involve doing things such as avoiding something by playing video games, or not eating and missing regular meals.

• These unhealthy strategies are okay to turn to once in a while but if they become your go-to strategy to cope with your emotions then it can become very problematic. Relying on unhealthy strategies to cope can result in damaged relationships with others, and can also damage health and create more health issues.26

25 Whitbourne, 2015
26 Tartakovskly, n.d.
• This is why it is so important to be able to identify what emotions you are feeling and have some healthy coping strategies set in place so that you can deal with your emotions more effectively.

2. Discuss the four-step process that can be used to help manage emotions.
• In order to help you manage your emotions, there is a four-step process that you can use to help you.27

• The first step is naming the emotion.
  o What emotion are you feeling right now? Are you feeling mad, happy, sad, annoyed, embarrassed, excited, etc.

• The second step is to accept the emotion that you are feeling.
  o Don’t avoid your emotions, instead accept them. By avoiding your emotions, it can sometimes make things worse. But by accepting your emotions and how they make you feel you can remind yourself that it is okay to have those feelings.

• The third step is to express your emotions that you are feeling.
  o Expressing your feelings is important. You can express your feelings in many ways such as writing in a journal, drawing a picture of how you feel, talking to a friend about your feelings, crying, exercising, or even relaxing. Just make sure that you are choosing a healthy activity or thing to do to express your emotions. Make sure that whatever you choose is not going to harm you or others.

• The fourth step is to choose a healthy way to take care of yourself
  o What do you need to take care of yourself? Pick a healthy choice such as taking a nap, going for a walk, getting a hug, going for a shower, or asking for support from a friend or close family member.

3. Discuss some healthy coping strategies to help deal with emotions.
• There are many healthy coping strategies that a person can use to help them deal with their emotions. But each person is different, so what works for one person may not work for another. This is why it is important to try a number of different healthy coping strategies to find out which ones work best for you.

• Some healthy coping strategies can include:
  o Taking a nap
  o Taking a hot bath
  o Going out for a run

27 Tartakovsky, n.d.
Assist the clients in thinking about what coping skills they use to deal with emotions. Have them fill in the worksheet.

Exercise S3: How I Deal With my Emotions. This exercise will assist you in identifying coping strategies that you use in order to manage your emotions. Learning how to deal with your emotions using healthy coping strategies is very important, as emotions can have a big impact on your overall health and well-being. In order to take care of yourself, you need to know how to deal with your emotions in a healthy way.

Facilitator Instructions: Refer the clients to the exercise in the participant’s manual. Ask the clients list at least 5 coping strategies that they use to deal with their emotions.

How I Deal With my Emotions

List 5 healthy coping strategies that you use to deal with your emotions:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

5. Summary of learning to manage emotions:

- Emotions are a part of our everyday lives. Whether we realize it or not how we deal with and manage our emotions can have a significant impact on our health and overall well-being.
There is a four step process that can be used to help manage emotions. The first step of the process is naming the emotion. The second step is accepting the emotion. The third step is expressing your emotions, and the last is choosing a healthy way to deal with your emotions.

Lastly, there are a number of healthy coping strategies that a person can use to deal with their emotions. Some of these might include going for a walk, taking a hot bath, talking to a friend, etc. But it is most important to know that not all strategies work for everyone. So it is important to try out some strategies to see what works best for you.
Part III: Additional Information
Participant Feedback Survey

Please answer the statements below on a scale of 1 to 5 based on the following ratings:
1= strongly disagree
2= disagree
3= neutral
4= agree
5= strongly agree

1. I found the information presented easy to understand. ___
2. I found the information presented helpful to me. ___
3. I found the activities easy to understand. ___
4. I found that the activities helped me further understand the information being presented. ___
5. The facilitator was able to provide me with answers to my questions. ___

Please answer the following questions using short answers.

6. What did you like most about the sessions?

7. What is something that you would change about the sessions?

8. Is there anything different that the facilitator could have done to improve the delivery of the sessions?

9. Overall, did you enjoy participating in the sessions?
Facilitator Resources

American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) Directory
http://www.afb.org/directory.aspx
Offering a large list of services in the US and Canada; you can also search via service or organizational name and you can narrow your search to specific Canadian provinces or American states. There are 325 listings under the heading “employment, job training”.

Career Connect (AFB)
http://www.afb.org/info/living-with-vision-loss/for-job-seekers/12
An employment information resource for job seekers who are blind or partially sighted offering employment information, career exploration tools and job seeking guidance for students, adults and service providers.

Career Connect – Aaron’s Adventures in Employment (AFB)
A video-radio series that follows Aaron, a teenager, as he searches for a job, deals with less-informed co-workers and gets college-ready, all the while offering tips, advice and good humour.

Vision Aware (AFB and Reader's Digest Partners for Sight)
http://www.visionaware.org/default.aspx
An online resource providing free, practical, hands-on information to help promote independence and enhance quality of life for individuals who are blind or partially sighted, as well as their families, friends and service providers. Offers tips related to accessibility, living independently, employment and more.

WORKink – (Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work)
http://workink.com/
An online career development and employment portal for Canadians with disabilities, it provides job search tools, career guidance and resources related to education and employment. It also offers some free programs to help job seekers build up their skills and capacity. Workplace Essential Skills Partnership (WESP), is a four-week program, Partners for Workplace Inclusion Program (PWIP) enhances employability skills and Youth the Future is focused on carving successful education and career paths.

Career Connect Canada (CNIB)
http://www.cnib.ca/en/services/careerconnect-canada/Pages/default.aspx
A free resource for students and any job seeker looking to explore jobs and network, for employers looking to diversify their workplace and for friends or
family members who want to help someone in their career exploration. CareerConnect Canada offers a mentorship program whereby people connect online with individuals who are blind or partially sighted working in their fields. Using their knowledge and first-hand experience, they provide advice, encouragement and networking opportunities and can also help employers learn about accommodations and other ways in which they can diversify their workplace.

Project Aspiro
A career planning and employment resource for people who are blind and partially sighted. Project Aspiro provides a variety of resources related to employment such as self-evaluation, career exploration, job search skills, and many more.
References


Kathy McAuliffe (2016). Why networking is so important for your job search. Retrieved from http://www.worknetdupage.org/blog/2016/01/20/networking-important-job-search/


Appendix C:
Learning Job-Readiness and Self-Management Skills

A Resource Manual for Participants

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2016
Job-Readiness Skills
Learning Job-Search Strategies

• Before beginning your job search, it is important to take some time to learn about yourself and your personal interests. Being aware of your own skills, interests, and abilities can have a positive impact on your job search process. Having a strong awareness of yourself and your abilities can:
  o Help you choose jobs that match your personality, interests, skills, knowledge, and abilities.
  o Help you identify potential barriers that may need to be overcome.
  o Help you search for jobs that you will take an interest in.

• In order to learn more about yourself, it can be helpful to create a self-evaluation that looks at your abilities, interests, work personality, values, and your liabilities.

 ✓ Exercise J1: Create a self-evaluation profile for yourself.

My Self-Evaluation Profile

Part 1: Interests

List up to 5 of your top interests. (Don't worry about making your interests career-specific, just list the things that you enjoy doing.)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Part 2: Skills/Abilities

List up to 5 of your skills/abilities. These might involve skills that you are comparable or better at doing than most people, and things that other people (such as friends/family) have identified as your strengths.

1.
Part 3: Values

Identify your top 5 values. These are things that you believe in that are important to you such as family, health, freedom, etc.

Some words that are used to describe people's values might include: adventure, athletics, beauty, craftsmanship, creativity, dependability, entertainment, family, flexibility, freedom, friends, happiness, health, honesty, humour, independence, innovativeness, kindness, loyalty, nature, orderliness, privacy, religion, security, structure, wisdom.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Part 4: Work Personality

Identify your work personality and choose what work environments are most suitable for you. John Holland's Vocation Theory identifies six work personalities and the matching work environments. Read through the descriptions and choose the top 3 that you think are most suitable for you.

The six work personalities and typical work environments with jobs being performed that match the traits are listed below.

**Investigative** people are analytical and tend to have strong mathematical or scientific abilities. They like to experiment, think, observe, and solve problems. The investigative work environment appeals to people who are abstract-thinkers who prefer to work with their minds rather than their hands. Investigative environments encourage problem-solving and experimentation. Logical, original thinkers, with interests in science, math, medicine, and technical areas, are encouraged in such work sites.

Examples of investigative jobs are programmer, educational psychologist, mathematician, translator, archaeologist, veterinarian, botanist, technical
publications writer, chemist, geographer, statistician, electrical engineer, food tester, surgical technician, astronomer, and inventor.

**Artistic** people are creative and expressive. They like to perform, draw, sing, play musical instruments, or do other things that enable them to demonstrate their artistic talents. Artistic environments encourage perceptive, creative, free-spirited individuals. These work environments demand intuition and imagination. They tend to be unstructured environments with an emphasis on freedom of expression and aesthetics. Artistic personality types gravitate to occupations in the performing and visual arts, as well as in other creative fields.

Examples of artistic jobs include stage technician, actor, musician, acrobat, package designer, fashion artist, singer, conductor, comedian, prose/poetry writer, editor, decorator, illustrator, narrator, music teacher, magician, milliner, photographer, auctioneer, set designer, graphic designer, and critic.

**Social** people like to be with other people. They like to teach, understand, and help others. They are often good communicators who are skilled with words. Social environments attract gregarious people who are interested in people and like to work with others. These environments require strong verbal skills, an interest in people, and a willingness to help others. Careers in teaching, social work, counselling, and other helping professions are in social environments.

Social jobs may include the following: athletic trainer, occupational therapist, teacher, psychologist, respiratory therapist, dental hygienist, probation officer, social worker, nurse, claim examiner, librarian, police officer, bartender, paralegal assistant, cosmetologist, recreation leader, historian, caseworker, hearing officer, and comparison shopper.

**Enterprising** people like to influence or lead other people. They also like to manage, persuade, and sell things and enjoy competitive, moneymaking environments. Enterprising people are assertive and outgoing so they match-up with entrepreneurial or business-like environments which tend to be highly competitive and profit-oriented. Enterprising personalities like to be in control and are often found in leadership roles. They enjoy jobs in sales, politics, and business management.
Enterprising jobs may include laundromat operator, salesperson, contractor, warehouse supervisor, communications consultant, kitchen supervisor, food services director, legislative assistant, housekeeper, barber, umpire, waitress, attorney, lobbyist, interpreter, artist's manager, securities trader, travel guide, and investment manager.

**Conventional** people like structure and order in their lives. They like to work with data, pay attention to detail, and often have good organizational skills. They are good at following through with others’ instructions. People who tend to be practical, neat, and well organized gravitate to conventional work. Conventional work environments are structured, orderly environments. Conventional personality types do well in accounting, business, and clerical professions.

Examples of conventional jobs are accountant, music copyist, clerk, auditor, bookkeeper, food checker, mortgage clerk, dry cleaner, building inspector, bibliographer, editorial assistant, title examiner, court clerk, ticket agent, receptionist, ticket taker, scheduler, cashier-checker, information clerk, credit-card clerk, and data entry clerk.

**Realistic** people are often athletic or have mechanical abilities. They have good manual skills and like to work with tools, objects, equipment, animals, and plants. They often like to work outdoors. The realistic work environment appeals to people who want to work with things (objects, tools, and machines) rather than with other people or ideas. Jobs in this area require attention to the present rather than to the past or future. Frequently, these jobs require mechanical or technical abilities.

Realistic jobs include plumber, cook, electrician, firefighter, engine tester, mechanical engineer, stone carver, automobile mechanic, electrical appliance repairer, piano tuner, baggage handler, assembler, janitor, animal breeder, shoe repairperson, bicycle repair person, carpenter, and small maintenance person.

My top 3 work personalities are:

1. 
2. 
3. 
Part 5: List your top 3 challenges when searching for employment. Some things to consider when thinking about your challenges might include:

- Do you have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities for the jobs that you are interested in applying for?
- Do you have enough functional vision to do the tasks required of the workers in the fields that you are looking into?
- Do you have enough experience to compete with other workers?
- Is the experience that you do have current?
- Do you have other transferrable skills, knowledge, and abilities from either life experiences or employment experiences that will qualify you for the job that you want?

My top 3 challenges of searching for employment:

1. 
2. 
3. 

- There are many places that you can look for job postings such as: employment centres, online job boards, job posting websites, agency/company websites, and networking with people you know in your community.

- Networking is actually considered to be the most effective aspect of searching for a job.

- Networking is considered to be one of the best ways to find a job because:
  - People tend to hire people that they know and like.
  - Many people are applying to the same job posting as you, so if you network it may make you a member of a much smaller pool when it comes down to choosing who to call for interviews.
  - Many jobs do not get posted.
Here are some helpful tips for networking:

- **Tip 1:** You have more people in your personal network than you think. People such as your family, friends, neighbours, classmates, acquaintances, etc. are all part of your network.

- **Tip 2:** Reach out to people in your network. Once you have made your networking list then you can start contacting people. Let them know that you are looking for a job and be as specific as you can in terms of what kind of job you are looking for.

- **Tip 3:** Work on developing relationships. Networking involves connecting with others, asking questions, and exchanging information. When networking it is important to:
  - Be authentic
  - Be considerate
  - Ask for advice, not a job

✓ Exercise J2: Create a networking list.

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**My Networking List**

1. **Contact Name:**
   Phone #: Email Address:
   Job Title/Position/Agency:

2. **Contact Name:**
   Phone #: Email Address:
   Job Title/Position/Agency:

3. **Contact Name:**
   Phone #: Email Address:
   Job Title/Position/Agency:

4. **Contact Name:**
   Phone #: Email Address:
   Job Title/Position/Agency:

5. **Contact Name:**
   Phone #: Email Address:
   Job Title/Position/Agency:
• Another common way to search for jobs is using online resources.

• Depending on which online method you choose to search for jobs, it is important to note the following tips:
  o Be careful about which job websites that you use.
  o Make your job search specific.
  o Sign up for new job posting alerts by email.
  o Be aware of scam job postings.
     Make sure you look at the date that the job posting closes.

• When researching potential jobs, you will want to consider things such as:
  o What will I need to do for this job position?
  o What kind of environment will this job require me to work in?
  o What level of education is required?
  o What skills do I need got this job?
  o How much experience is needed for this job?
  o Can this job provide me with skills I can use in other work settings?

• In addition to these questions, being a person who is blind or partially sighted, there are a few more questions you will need to ask yourself when researching potential job opportunities such as:
  o Does this job require me to travel? If so, what method of transportation would be reasonable for me to use in this position?
  o Do I have enough functional vision to be able to meet the requirements of this job position?
  o Is this job in a location that I am able to access using public transportation? If not, how will I get to and from work?
  o What challenges/limitations might this job position offer me and what is my plan to address these concerns?

• Answering these questions when researching jobs is important because they can help you:
  o Identify skills, education, experience, and any other requirements for the position.
  o Assist you in determining if this job is a good fit for you, and help you to determine if you will be able to meet the requirements of the job with your current level of vision.
o Acknowledge the potential limitations/challenges you may face in this job and have a plan of action as to how these challenges can be addressed.
o Determine if the job will offer transferrable skills that you can use in other work settings that are relevant to your field of work you are interested in.

✓ Exercise J3: Fill out the Researching Potential Jobs Worksheet

**Researching Potential Jobs**

Instructions:

Step 1: Go online and do a job search to find a job that you are interested in.

Step 2: Once you have found a job posting you’re interested in, fill out the information below:

**Job Posting Information:**

Name of Job Posting:
Location of Job:
Date Job was Posted:
Date Job Posting Ends:

**Job Requirements:**

What level of education is needed for this position?

What skills would I need for this position?
Would I need any specialized training to be eligible for this position? If so, what training is required?

**Personal Abilities/Potential Limitations**

Will I be able to meet all the requirements of this job with my current level of functional vision? Why or why not?

Are there any potential limitations/challenges that I may face in being eligible for this job? If so, what is my plan to address these concerns to make sure that I can do this job?
Learning Job Interview Skills

- Job interviews are a crucial part of the job search. The outcome of the interview is very dependent on how well you perform in the interview, and how well prepared you are.

- In order to be prepared for the interview ahead of time, it will involve:
  - Doing research to learn more about the agency/organization.
  - Preparing for potential interview questions.
  - Preparing questions for the employer.

- Doing research will help you learn more about the organization/agency. The following are some questions that can help you when doing your research:
  - What does the organization do?
  - What is the organization’s mission statement or values, goals and objectives, etc.
  - Who are the customers and clients of the organization?
  - What skills is the employer looking for?
  - What qualifications are needed for the position?

- Preparing for potential interview questions is one of the best ways to help you prepare for an interview. Some questions that you should anticipate answering might include:
  - Why do you want this job?
  - What do you have to offer this organization?
  - What are some of your strengths? Can you provide an example?
  - What are some of your weaknesses? Can you provide an example?
  - Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?

- Here are some suggestions to help you improve your answers to the potential interview questions:
  - Review your experience – in school, work, or volunteering.
  - Think of examples of situations that illustrate your abilities. (good judgment, communication skills, initiative, etc.)
  - Make a list of things that you have accomplished or achieved that you are proud of. You may use this list to refer to during the interview if needed.
  - Think about examples of challenges that you have faced, and be able to describe how you dealt with them, as well as what you learned from them.
• Preparing questions for the employer. This is the time where you get to interview the employer to ask any questions you have. Some examples of questions that you may want to ask the employer might include:
  o What does a typical day look like for a person that works in the position that I am applying for?
  o How will this position offer me opportunity to learn and grow with this organization?
  o When should I expect to hear back about the hiring for this position?

• The interview is the most important component of the job search process. The interview provides you with an opportunity to show the employer you are a good fit for the position that you are applying for. How you present yourself in the interview is essential to your success. The following are some tips for successful job interviews:
  o Dress appropriately
  o Be on time
  o Bring a copy of your resume and reference list
  o Be yourself
  o Be confident
  o Pay attention to your body language
  o Be professional at all times with EVERYONE you meet, before during and after the interview
  o Listen and ask questions if needed
  o “Sell” yourself
  o Think before you speak
  o Avoid lingering

 ✓ Exercise J4: Fill out the Commonly Asked Interview Questions Worksheet.

Commonly Asked Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself?
2. Why should we hire you? What special skills or talents do you have that others may not?

3. What are your strengths? Can you give an example?

4. What is your weakness? Can you give an example?

5. How do you handle pressure?

6. What accomplishment do you feel most proud of in your life?

7. Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years?

8. Tell me about a time you experienced a problem and how you solved that problem.

9. What interests/hobbies do you enjoy doing?
10. What are three words that someone close to you would use to describe you?
Disclosing Your Disability to an Employer

- One of the most difficult issues in employment that people with visual impairments face is deciding whether or not to disclose your disability to a potential employer, and when and how to go about doing that.

- The following are some questions that you should carefully consider before deciding if, how, and when to disclose your visual disability:
  o Is your disability visible?
  o How do most people react when they learn about your disability? How do you deal with their reaction?
  o When do you feel most comfortable and confident disclosing your disability?
  o Does not disclosing put your safety or the safety of others at risk?
  o Will the employer think you’re dishonest? How would you deal with that reaction?
  o What misconceptions might the employer have about your disability?
  o If you disclose, will you be able to reassure your employer that your disability will not affect your ability to do the work?
  o Asking for accommodations will almost certainly require you to disclose. Do you need accommodations for the interview? Or if you get the job?
  o What do you know about this employer's policies and experiences regarding people with disabilities?

- The following are some tips that can help when disclosing your disability:
  o Be positive and use your disability as a strength.
  o Be prepared ahead of time to address any concerns that are expressed about your disability.
  o Be knowledgeable about what accommodations that you may need for the job.
  o Anticipate potential questions that employers may have about your disclosure.
  o Once you have made a decision about deciding to disclose, ask yourself this last question. Will disclosing my disability at this time help me to reach my goal of getting a job?
Exercise J5: Writing a disability statement.

Writing a Disability Statement

As a person with a disability, it’s important to be able to express what your disability is and how it affects you. It’s important to not use too many technical terms and to keep your explanation practical. Make sure to be clear about what you can see, and explain how you accommodate limitations. Mentioning how you access computers or other information is usually a good idea.

Putting together a disability statement prepares you for the moment in the job hunting process where you'll need to both emphasize your skills and potential and put an employer's concerns to rest. Using plain language in describing your ability to accomplish job duties or meet general goals in life is important.

You can talk about your disability by explaining how you will perform the job duties in question, or by describing how you have performed similar jobs in the past. It can be helpful to relate possible accommodations to specific job duties, and to think about what the employer will want or need to know. Disclosure during the employment process is not an appropriate time to lecture someone about having a disability. Rather, your disability statement is an opportunity to promote yourself and to help a potential employer see how you will be a valuable member on their team.

Examples of Descriptions of Disabilities

When you describe your disability or impairment, always use positive language, simple terms and phrasing, and include functional implications. Here are some examples:

“I have an eye condition that limits what I can see. It's like looking through a straw. I have to scan or look around more because of this loss of peripheral vision. I can look at you and see your face, but I do not see the rest of you or the surroundings.”

“I use screen reading software called JAWS. It reads information from the screen to me. I use one earphone for listening to my screen reader; I can use the other ear to use the phone or listen to other information.”
“Because of my visual impairment, I am unable to drive, so I use the bus system to get around. I took the bus here today. If the bus is not working, I have other methods of transportation.”

“I use a device that enlarges paper documents to allow me to see them easily. Other documents can be given to me electronically or I can scan them into my computer.”

“As you can see, I have great technology skills and I am very creative and will be able to meet the duties assigned to me.”

**My Disability Statement:**

1. Briefly describe what your eye condition is and how you see:

   ex. “I have an eye condition called retinitis pigmentosa that limits what I can see. It's like looking through a straw. I have to scan or look around more because of this loss of peripheral vision. I can look at you and see your face, but I do not see the rest of you or the surroundings.”

2. Describe what technology or adaptations you use to do things such as using the computer/ reading and writing:

   ex. “I use screen reading software called JAWS. It reads information from the screen to me. I use one earphone for listening to my screen reader; I can use the other ear to use the phone or listen to other information.”

   ex. “I use a device that enlarges paper documents to allow me to see them easily. Other documents can be given to me electronically or I can scan them into my computer.”
3. What strengths/specific skills do you have to offer:

ex. "I have great technology skills because I use technology on a daily basis. I am also very creative so I can usually find new ways to adapt things to ensure that I am still able to do them."
Self-Management Skills
Learning to Set Goals

• Goals are important for a number of reasons.
  o They can be thought of as acting similar to a GPS, in that they give you direction so that you can choose where you want to go.
  o Goals also help you figure out what is most important to you and helps you determine what you need to focus on.
  o In addition, they also help you identify your priorities in life and look at your future.

• Setting goals can be very difficult, especially when you have not had much experience with setting goals for yourself. This is why it can be helpful to use the SMART goal method.

• SMART stands for:
  o Specific
  o Measurable
  o Attainable
  o Realistic
  o Timely

• Here are some guidelines for you to follow when developing your goals:
  o Write your goals using a positive statement, instead of a negative one.
  o If you have several goals, make sure to prioritize them.
  o Write your goals down.
  o Take the time to review your goals.
  o When you have reached your goal, make sure to reward yourself.
SMART Goal Worksheet

Generic goal Statement:

Specific:

Measurable:

Attainable:

Realistic:

Timely:

SMART Goal Statement:
Learning to Problem Solve

• Problem solving can be very difficult, especially when you are unsure of how to deal with a complex problem.

• It is important to understand that not all problems can be solved in the exact same way. Problem solving is complex and each problem may be unique.

• However, if you have an effective process that you can use, then you should be able to apply that to each individual situation to find a solution that works best for you.

• The problem-solving model involves a number of steps that are applied to a problem in order to figure out a solution.
  • Step 1: Identify the Problem
    o Recognize that there is a problem.
    o Identify the problem.
  • Step 2: Structure the Problem
    o Gather more information about the problem.
    o For example, is the problem something that you are able to solve on your own or do you need help from others?
    o Do you know all the details of the problem and how is it affecting you?
  • Step 3: Brainstorm Possible Solutions
    o Think about different possibilities that could be used to solve the problem.
  • Step 4: Make a Decision
    o Look at the different possibilities you have brainstormed and weigh the options for each possible solution.
    o Choose the solution that you think will work best for you.
• Step 5: Implement the Solution
  o Go ahead and implement whatever solution you have chosen.

• Step 6: Provide Feedback
  o Provide yourself with feedback by reviewing the outcome of your problem solving to determine how well the process worked for you.
  o If it worked well for you, that is great. If it did not work out well for you, maybe it’s time to go back and re-evaluate the process to see if you can find a new solution to your problem.

✓ Exercise S2: Problem-Solving Model Worksheet.

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**Problem Solving Model**

Step 1: Identify the Problem (What is the problem?)

Step 2: Structure the Problem (What information do you need to gather about the problem?)

Step 3: Brainstorm Possible Solutions (What solutions can you think of that may help you solve the problem?)

Step 4: Make a Decision (What are the pros and cons of each solution? Which solution do you think will work for you in this situation? Which solution will you choose?)
Step 5: Implement the Solution (How did you implement your solution that you chose?)

Step 6: Provide Feedback (Did you solve your problem? If not, do you need to revisit a step in the problem solving process to try again?)
Learning to Manage Emotions

- For many people emotions can be a very scary thing. This may be because they just don’t know how to deal with their emotions. Or maybe they just haven’t found the right strategies that work for them to cope with their emotions.

- This is why it is so important to be able to identify what emotions you are feeling and have some healthy coping strategies set in place so that you can deal with your emotions more effectively.

- In order to help you manage your emotions, there is a four step process that you can use to help you.

  - **Step 1: Naming the emotion**
    - What emotion are you feeling right now? Are you feeling mad, happy, sad, annoyed, embarrassed, excited, etc.

  - **Step 2: Accept the emotion that you are feeling**
    - Don’t avoid your emotions, instead accept them. By avoiding your emotions, it can sometimes make things worse. But by accepting your emotions and how they make you feel you can remind yourself that it is okay to have those feelings.

  - **Step 3: Express your emotions that you are feeling.**
    - Expressing your feelings is important. You can express your feelings in many ways such as writing in a journal, drawing a picture of how you feel, talking to a friend about your feelings, crying, exercising, or even relaxing. Just make sure that you are choosing a healthy activity or thing to do to express your emotions. Make sure that whatever you choose is not going to harm you or others.

  - **Choose a healthy way to take care of yourself**
    - What do you need to take care of yourself? Pick a healthy choice such as taking a nap, going for a walk, getting a hug, going for a shower, or asking for support from a friend or close family member.


- Some healthy coping strategies can include:
  - Taking a nap
  - Taking a hot bath
  - Going out for a run
  - Exercising at the gym
  - Walking your dog
  - Talking to a friend/family member
  - Writing a poem
  - Writing in a journal
  - Reading a nook
  - Doing yoga

Exercise S3: How I Deal With my Emotions

How I Deal With my Emotions

List 5 healthy coping strategies that you use to deal with your emotions:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.