



# **WORK OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS**

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# WHAT IS THE CURRENT NATIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE?

- Approximately 9.1% (U.S. Dept. Labor)
- By the end of the year this figure is projected to reach 10%
  - This is the highest unemployment rate in 26 years
- If we include under employment then an additional 17% of Americans who are looking for full time employment cannot find it.
- Some economists are saying that the economic recovery will not take place until at least 2015
- 10% of Americans will receive food stamps in the near future
- 1 out of 4 children will live in poverty

# WHAT IS THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

- On the optimistic side = 44% (Source: ABC News)
- According to the U.S Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately 65% of people with disabilities are unemployed
  - This is for all disabilities
- There are no systematically collected data for individuals on the autism spectrum.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that the unemployment rate for individuals with ASDs may be around 90%

## SURGE IN THE ASD POPULATION

- CDC 1 out of 110 children has an ASD
- Early intervention & the application of empirically based treatment has led to better outcomes
- Students with this diagnosis are coming of age
- The growing AS population entering colleges and the work force bring unique challenges



# WHY IS THIS A 'NEW' ISSUE TODAY?

- Changes in labor economy
- Movement to a knowledge based economy has increased the educational requirements of entry level work
- Education Matters!



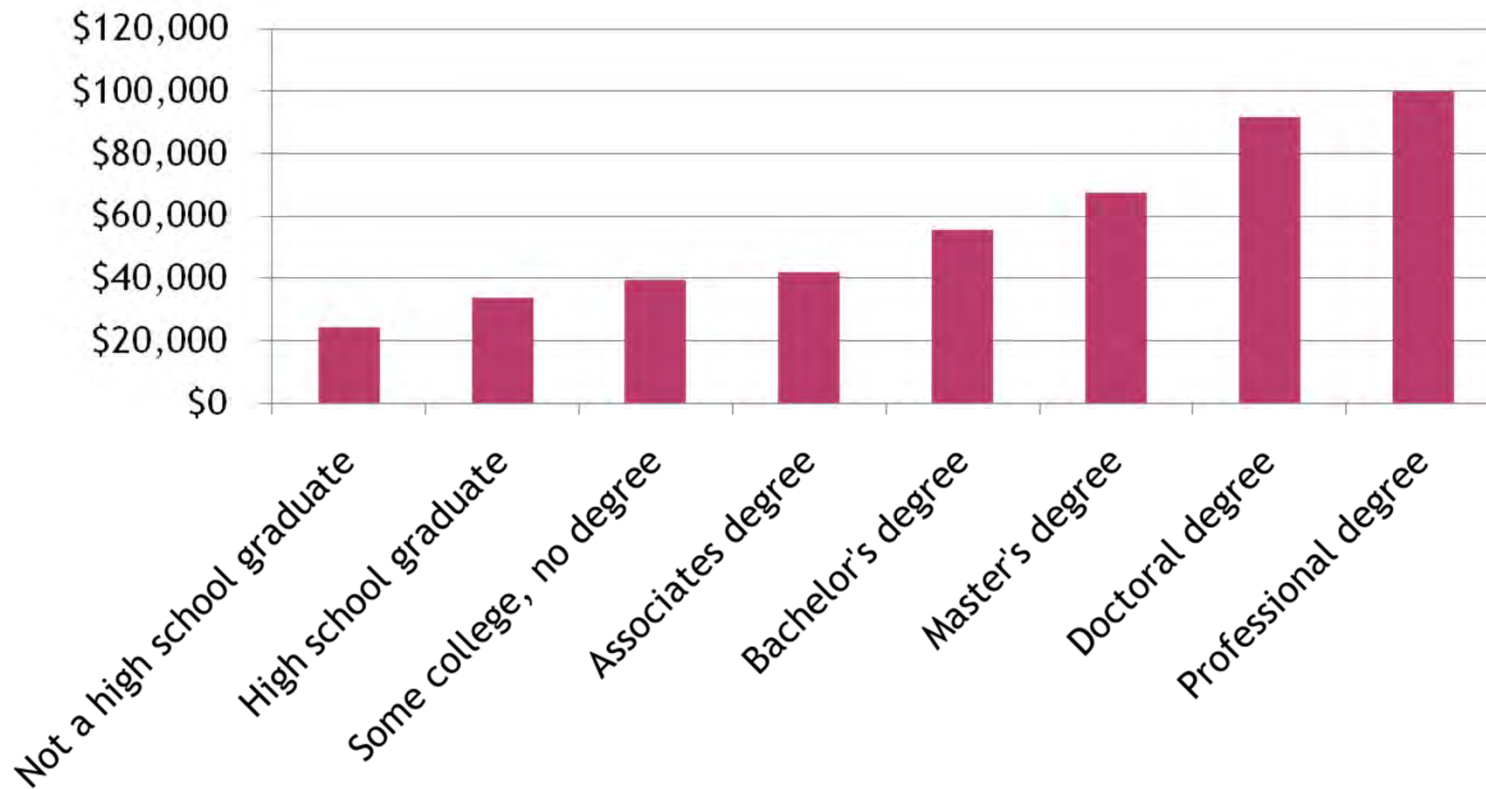
## EDUCATION MATTERS



- Participation in any type of post secondary education (vocational education, college certificate program or even one college course) significantly enhances the ability of individuals with disabilities to secure meaningful employment (Getzel & Wehman, 2005)
- Students with disabilities who earn a B.A. degree obtain subsequent employment at almost the same rate as their neurotypical peers (HEATH Resource Center, 1998; OSER, 2000).



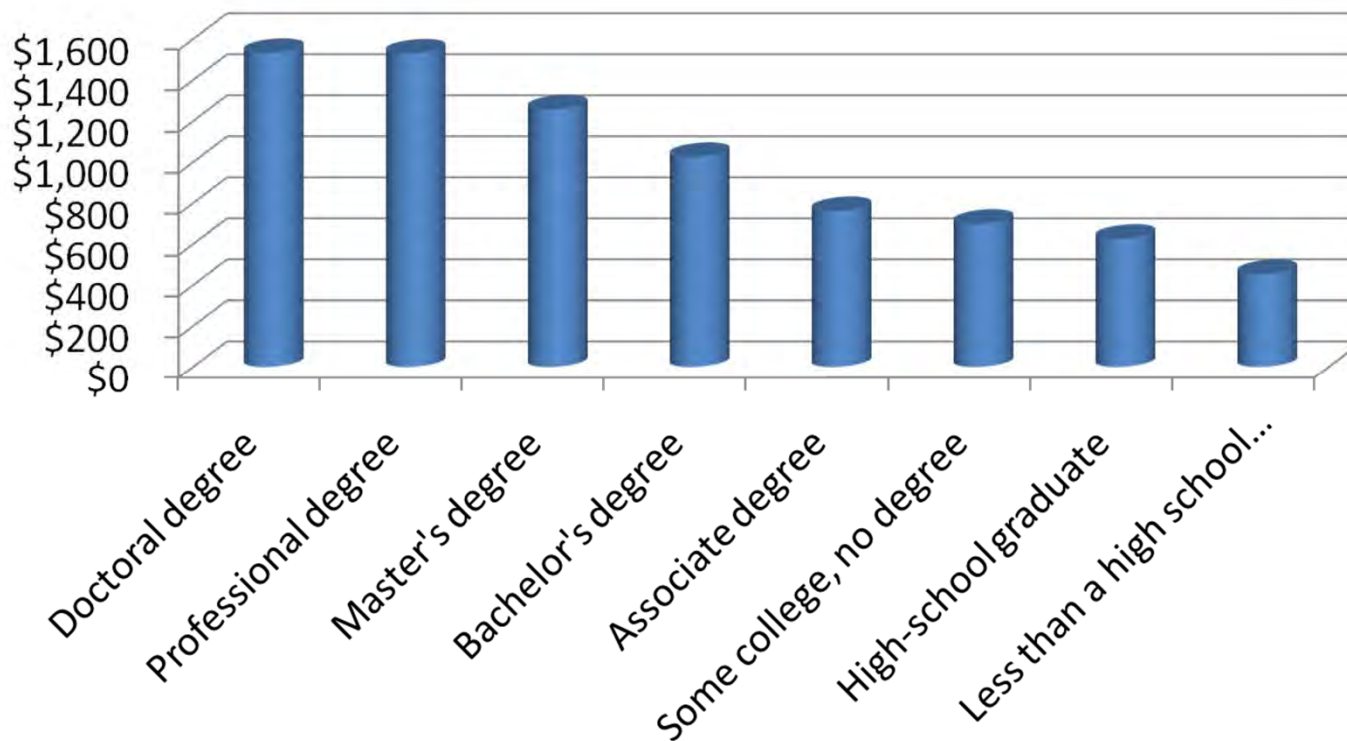
# 2008 MEDIAN EARNINGS FOR FULL TIME YEAR-ROUND WORKERS, AGES 25 AND OLDER BY EDUCATION LEVEL



Source: U.S. Census Bureau,  
2009



# WEEKLY MEDIAN INCOME BY EDUCATION (2009)



Source: Current Population Survey, 2009 Bureau of Labor Statistics

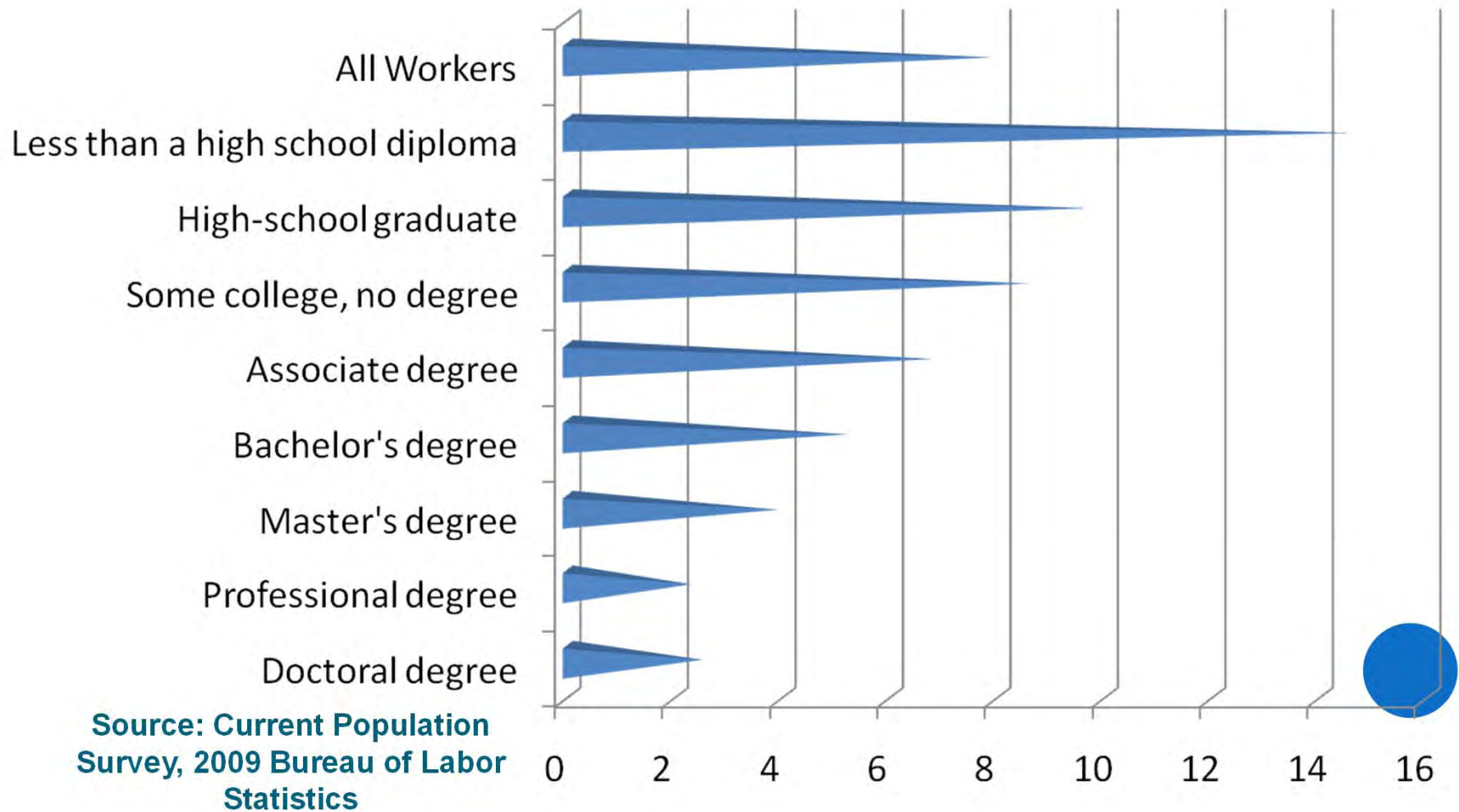


## EDUCATION AND LIFE TIME EARNINGS

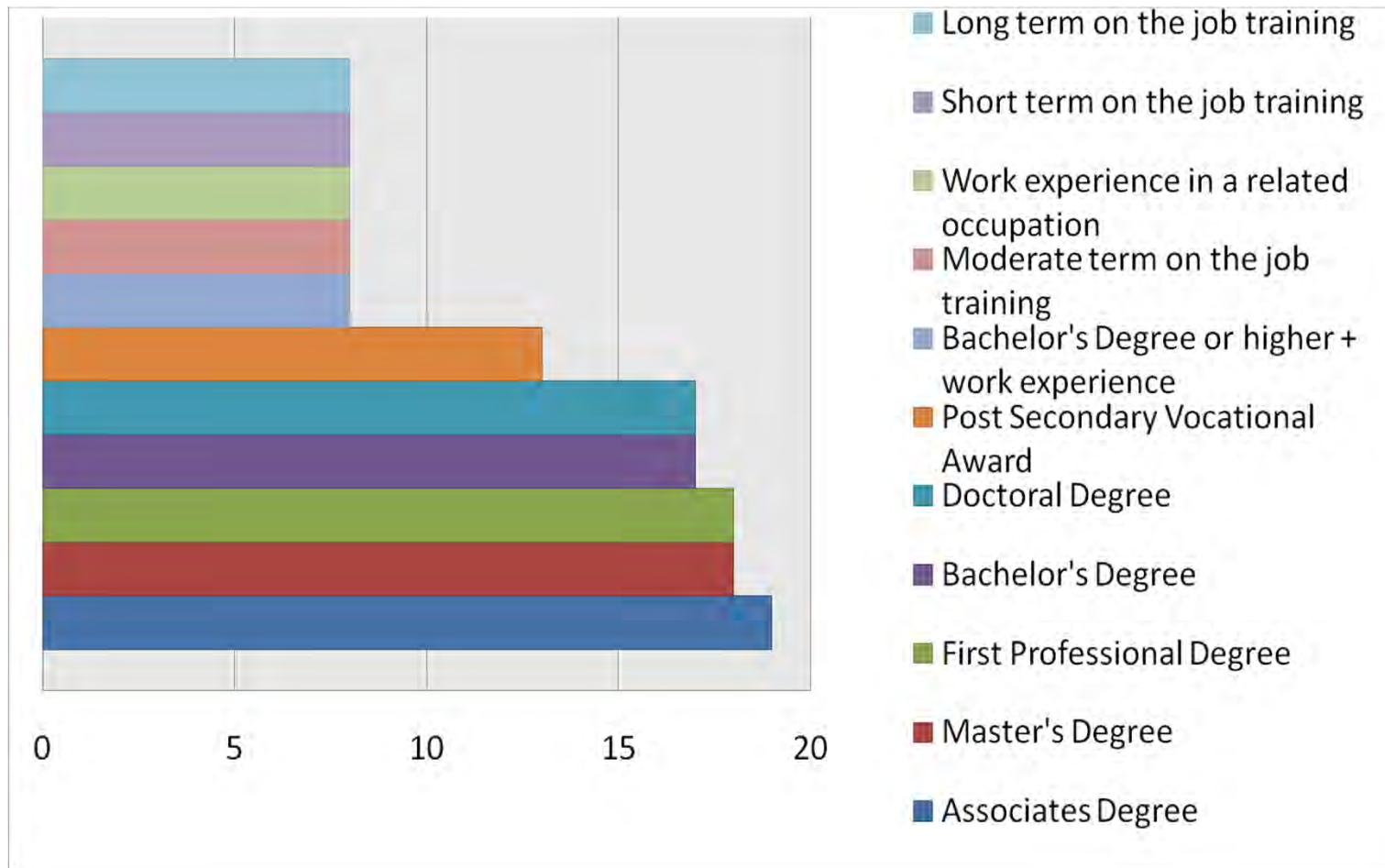
- High School Drop Out = \$500,000
- High School Graduate = \$800,000
- Associate's Degree = \$1,000,000
- Bachelor's Degree = \$1,500,000
  
- Source: Getzel & Wehman, 2005



# UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN PERCENTAGES (2009)

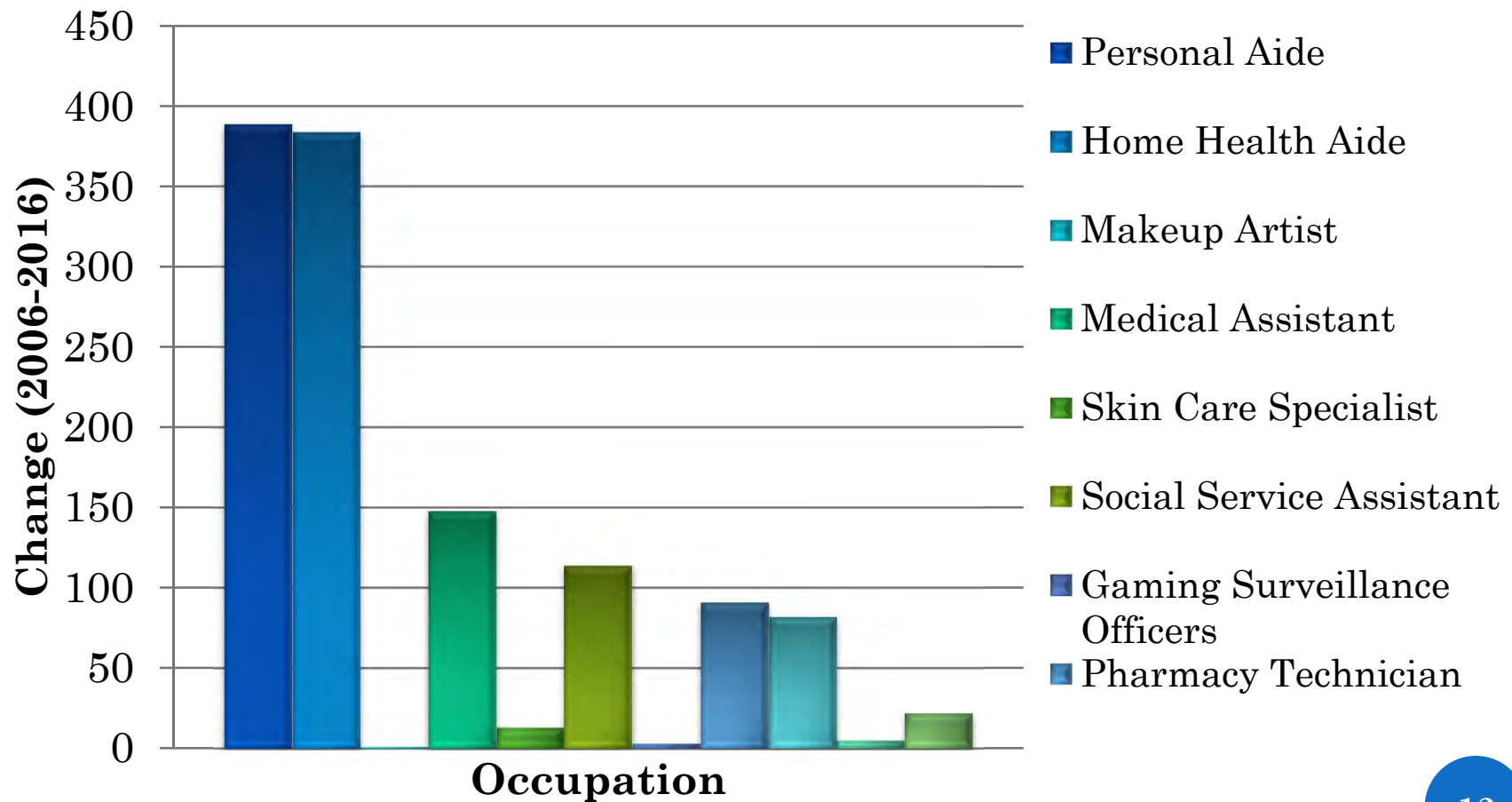


## PERCENT CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT BY EDUCATION OR TRAINING BY CATEGORY (2008-2018 PROJECTED)



Source: Occupational Outlook Handbook 2010-2011

# FASTEST GROWING OCCUPATIONS (NOT REQUIRING COLLEGE DEGREE), 2006-2016



<b>Occupation</b>	<b># of openings 2018 in thousands</b>	<b>% Growth from 2008</b>
Home health aides	1,383	50
Personal and home care aides	1,193	46
Skin care specialists	54	37.9
Physical therapist aides	63	36.3
Dental hygienists	237	36.1
Veterinary technologists and technicians	108	35.8
Dental assistants	401	35.8
Medical assistants	648	33.9
Physical therapist assistants	85	33.3
Occupational therapist aides	10	30.7
Pharmacy technicians	426	30.6
Environmental engineering technicians	28	30.1
Occupational therapist assistants	35	29.8
Fitness trainers and aerobics instructors	338	29.4

## WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

- A surge of young people who need a different path to access work, relationships, and independence
- All young people need to be as educated as possible to access the range of occupational choices
- Without a college degree, jobs in the service sector are most available



# TOP 50 EMPLOYERS OF 2009 READERS CHOICE AWARDS OF CAREER & DISABLED MAGAZINE

1. General Electric
2. John Deere
3. Caterpillar
4. 3M
5. Raytheon
6. Lockheed Martin
7. Boeing
8. DuPont
9. Procter & Gamble
10. BAE Systems
11. AT&T
12. Microsoft
13. Northrop Grumman
14. Darden Restaurants
15. General Motors
16. IBM
17. Ernst & Young
18. Kaiser Permanente
19. The Hartford
20. CVS/Pharmacy
21. Verizon
22. Wells Fargo Bank
23. WellPoint
24. Hewlett-Packard
25. Wal-Mart Stores

# TOP 50 EMPLOYERS OF 2009 READERS CHOICE AWARDS OF CAREER & DISABLED MAGAZINE... CONTINUED

26. Pitney-Bowes
27. 7-Eleven, Inc.
28. SunLife Financial
29. Hyatt Hotels & Resorts
30. Xerox
31. Toyota
32. Sears Holdings
33. Novell
34. Boehringer Ingelheim
35. Nissan
36. Cisco Systems
37. Sprint
38. Arrow Electronics
39. AIG
40. Amgen
41. State Street Corporation
42. Affiliated Computer Services
43. Honeywell
44. The Aerospace Corporation
45. American Honda
46. Time Warner
47. T-Mobile
48. Medtronic
49. InterContinental Hotel Group
50. Sun Microsystems

## WALGREENS EXAMPLE

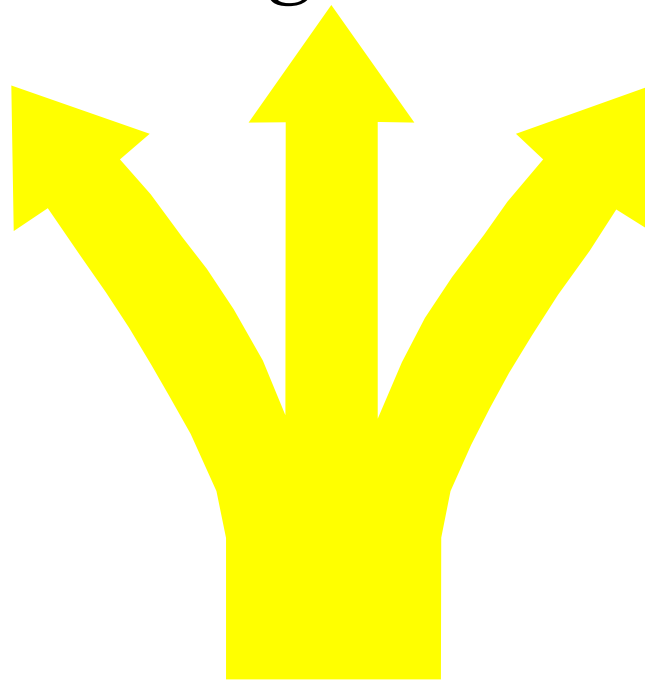
- Anderson, SC  
Distribution Center
- 700 employees
- 40% of the works force has some sort of disability
- This distribution center became the most efficient center in the system by over 20%
- Walgreens opened a distribution center in Windsor, CT which started shipping January 19, 2009.
- They exceeded their expectations by employing over 33% of the workforce with some sort of disability

# THE CHOICES

Vocational Programs

Supported Academic Programs

Transitional Programs





# VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS

- **Vocational Rehabilitation: to help individuals with disabilities to access work**
- **Day treatment, habilitation programs and supported work programs**

# SUPPORTED WORK PROGRAMS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

- “Competitive work in integrated work setting...consistent with the strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and informed choices of the individual”  
(Rehabilitation Act Amendments, 1998).
- The goal: help the individual to integrate into normal adult functioning in terms of work and relationships



## BUT ARE THEY EFFECTIVE? *YES*

○ The characteristics of the effective programs are:

- Work site is committed to employing individuals with a disability
- Providing support to stay employed in terms of problem solving and advocacy
- Helping the individual to disclose their disability to an employer
- Psychiatric services are integrated with the vocational service





## SUPPORTED ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

- The ADA and integrating into institutions of higher education
- A wide range of remedial and supportive services

# TWO GENERAL APPROACHES OF ACADEMICALLY SUPPORTED PROGRAMS

1. Modify behaviors and/or skills of the student by
  - Providing therapy and counseling for feelings of helplessness, isolation, and/or for social skill deficits
  - Teaching organizational and study skills
  - Providing targeted disability-specific assistance (e.g., providing a curriculum in reading and comprehension, computational math skills, etc).



TWO GENERAL APPROACHES OF ACADEMICALLY SUPPORTED  
PROGRAMS

2. Alter the learning environment by:

- Providing assistive technologies and programs (e.g., recorded textbooks, proofreading programs, utilizing note-takers),
- Allowing flexibility in aspects of a course or programs of study (e.g., changes to testing procedures)
- Providing tutoring and special mentoring.



# WHICH APPROACH IS MOST EFFECTIVE IN WHAT SITUATION?

- We have lots of practice wisdom but no data!



# COLLEGE IS MORE THAN CLASSES

- Social experiences
- Living experiences
- Learning experiences





# COMPREHENSIVE TRANSITION & POSTSECONDARY (CTP) PROGRAMS

- Combine vocational and academically supported program models.
- Focus on job specific social skills, independent living skills, and academic skills
- Tend to be more individually tailored
- Longer than a 4 year degree program.

# COMPREHENSIVE TRANSITION & POSTSECONDARY (CTP) PROGRAMS

- Passage of HEAO 2009
- Now students with ID in U.S. DOE approved CTP can complete the FAFSA
- Eligible for:
  - Pell Grants
  - SEOG
  - Student Work Study monies
- NOT eligible for student loans
- Go to [thinkcollege.net](http://thinkcollege.net) for a listing of U.S. DOE CTPs.

# TYPES OF COMPREHENSIVE TRANSITION PROGRAMS

## ○ College Based:

- Are a department of the college or university
- Draw upon the infrastructure of the institution
- Answer to the college administration
- Students reside in college owned residence halls or apartments
- Have financial aid programs for their degree bearing programs already established and approved by the U.S. Department of Education



# TYPES OF COMPREHENSIVE TRANSITION PROGRAMS...CONTINUED

- College affiliated programs
  - Operated by private for profit or not for profit social service agencies
  - Based out of a private apartment complex or residential space
  - Ideal for students who have difficulty generalizing independent living skills across environments
  - The program has memorandum of understanding with a community college
  - ARE NOT eligible for Title IV funding



## MOST PROGRAMS INCLUDE 4 COMPONENTS

- Supported employment & work skills training
- Adult life skills training (e.g., financial management, grocery shopping, laundry, and home maintenance)
- Social and personal relationships counseling and training
- Encouraged social involvement in the community



## BEST PRACTICES OF COMPREHENSIVE TRANSITION PROGRAMS

- Using group modality
- Involving the family
- Developing community partnerships
- Taking a long term approach: the importance of follow-up
- On-going evaluation

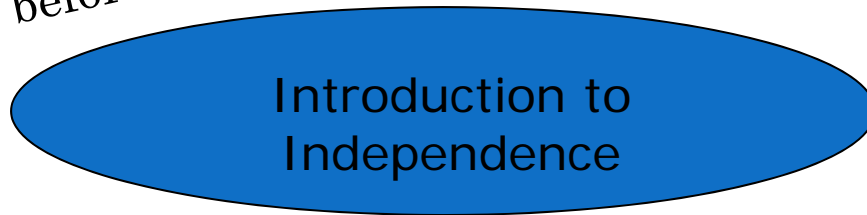


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# THE VIP PROGRAMS OF NYIT

*Summer before 1st yr*



*3 year, 2 tracks*



*Ongoing for grads*



## INTRODUCTION TO INDEPENDENCE

- Conducted 1 or 2 summers before 1<sup>st</sup> VIP fall semester. Ages 16-21
- 7 week summer experience
- Held in the same dormitories as the student will live in come fall
- 4 days a week-  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the day is spent in vocational placement
- Fridays dedicated to travel training
- Stipends paid. \$ used to teach budgeting. Students pay for social activities/trips
- Emphasis on socialization



# VOCATIONAL INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM

- Two Concentrations- 3 Year Program. Ages 18-25+
  - Vocational & Independent Living Skills focus
  - Pre-degree students take some courses at NYIT for credit
- Addresses academic, vocational, & independent living skills
- Individualized attention 2:1 student/staff ratio
- Department of Labor Funding
- Traditional curriculum format: freshperson, sophomore, & junior
- Certificate of completion
- Optional 4<sup>th</sup> year individually tailored

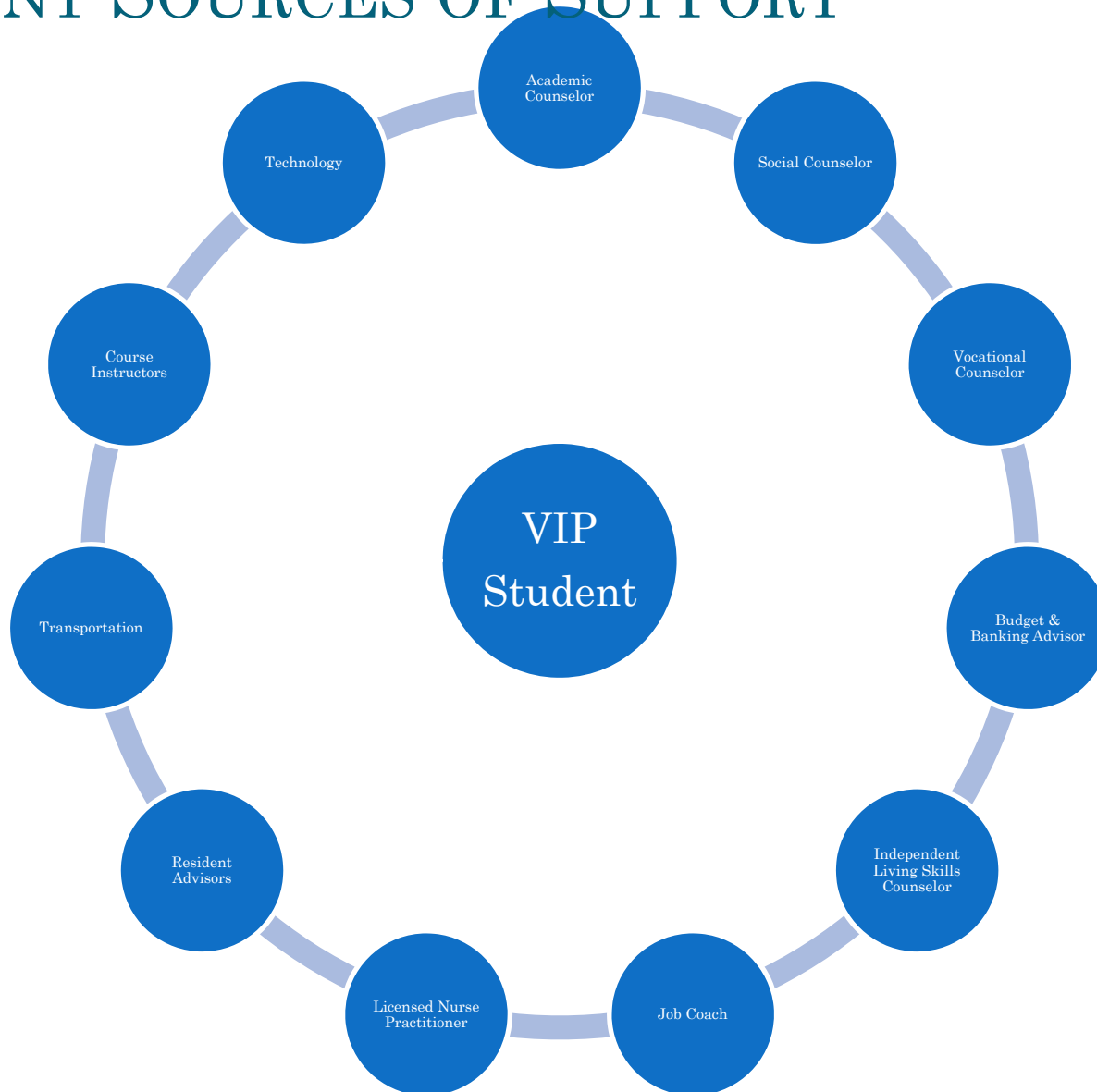


# WHO ARE THE VIP STUDENTS?

- They are young adults ages 16-25 years of age with significant learning disabilities or higher functioning individuals on the autism spectrum
- They must have a desire to learn how to work and have the potential to live independently



# STUDENT SOURCES OF SUPPORT



# WHAT MAKES VIP UNIQUE?

- Chartered by the Board of Regents of the State University of New York to confer degrees & certificates
- Credentialed by Middle States Commission on Higher Education
- Planned activities every weekend
- Professional Transportation System
- Travel training to NYC
- International travel options
- 6 vocational areas
- BOCES option
- 4<sup>th</sup> Year option
- Research
- Awaiting U.S. DOE approval as a CTP



# STEP ONE

Obtain an **accurate assessment** of an individual's **strengths, aptitudes, and interests**, as well as his/her areas of **deficits**.

The **Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale**.

Covers five different domains including **communication, self care, fine and gross motor skills, and communal living**

Analysis of the individual's **travel skills** and other issues

**Travel training skills and access to public transportation**, as well as an assessment of **sensory integration issues & impairments in executive functioning**

# STEP TWO

What to do after leaving the **secondary school environment**

College-level **academic courses**

There needs to be **sufficient scaffolding** to help the individual navigate the **social demands of the college environment** & compensate for **impairments in executive functioning**

**Transitional programs**

**Combine** aspects of a **college degree program** and a **vocational training program** (training in job skills directly related to the pursued field)

Also offer training in areas of **social skills** & **independent living**

Offer **internships** in student's chosen occupation & train individuals in **resume writing, job search, proper dress, interviewing**

## STEP THREE

Job Search

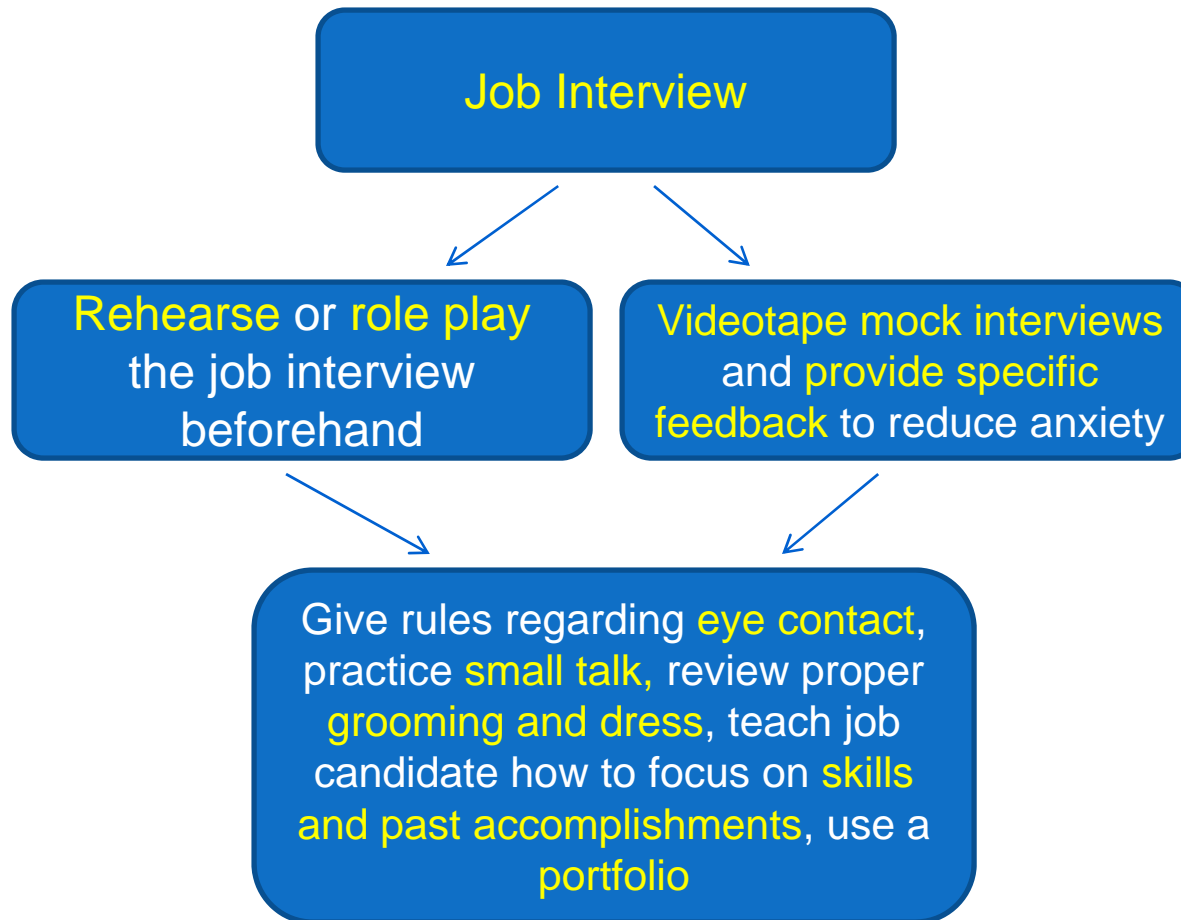


Use **personal** or **familial** connections



80% of jobs are found through **personal connections** and only 20% of available positions are **advertised on the internet**

## STEP FOUR



# STEP FIVE

Learn **employment and anti-discrimination laws** that are in effect

Reducing stress

Identify what **triggers** the individual's **anxiety**

Practice **stress reduction techniques**

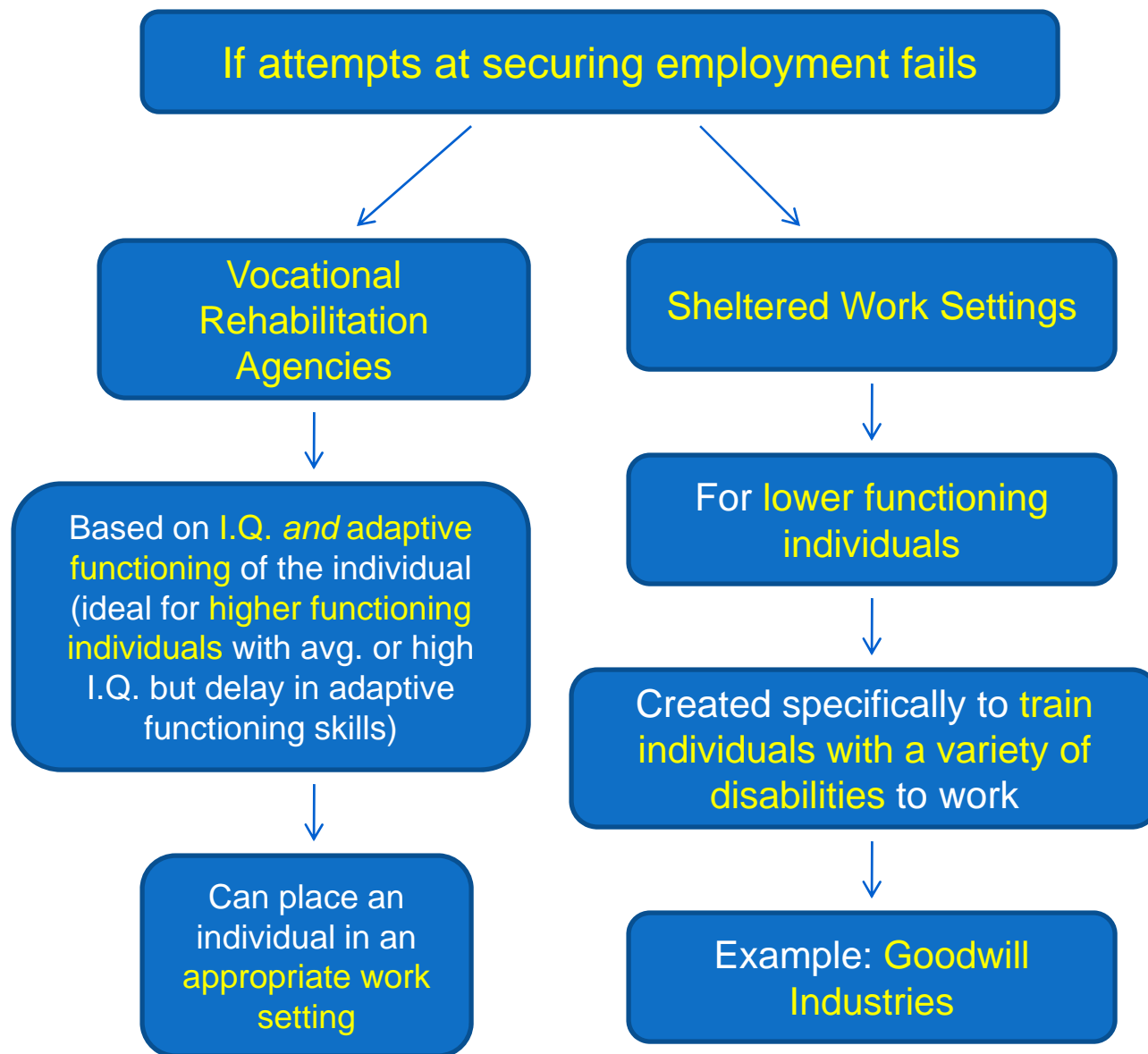
**Share techniques** with employer

Mentors

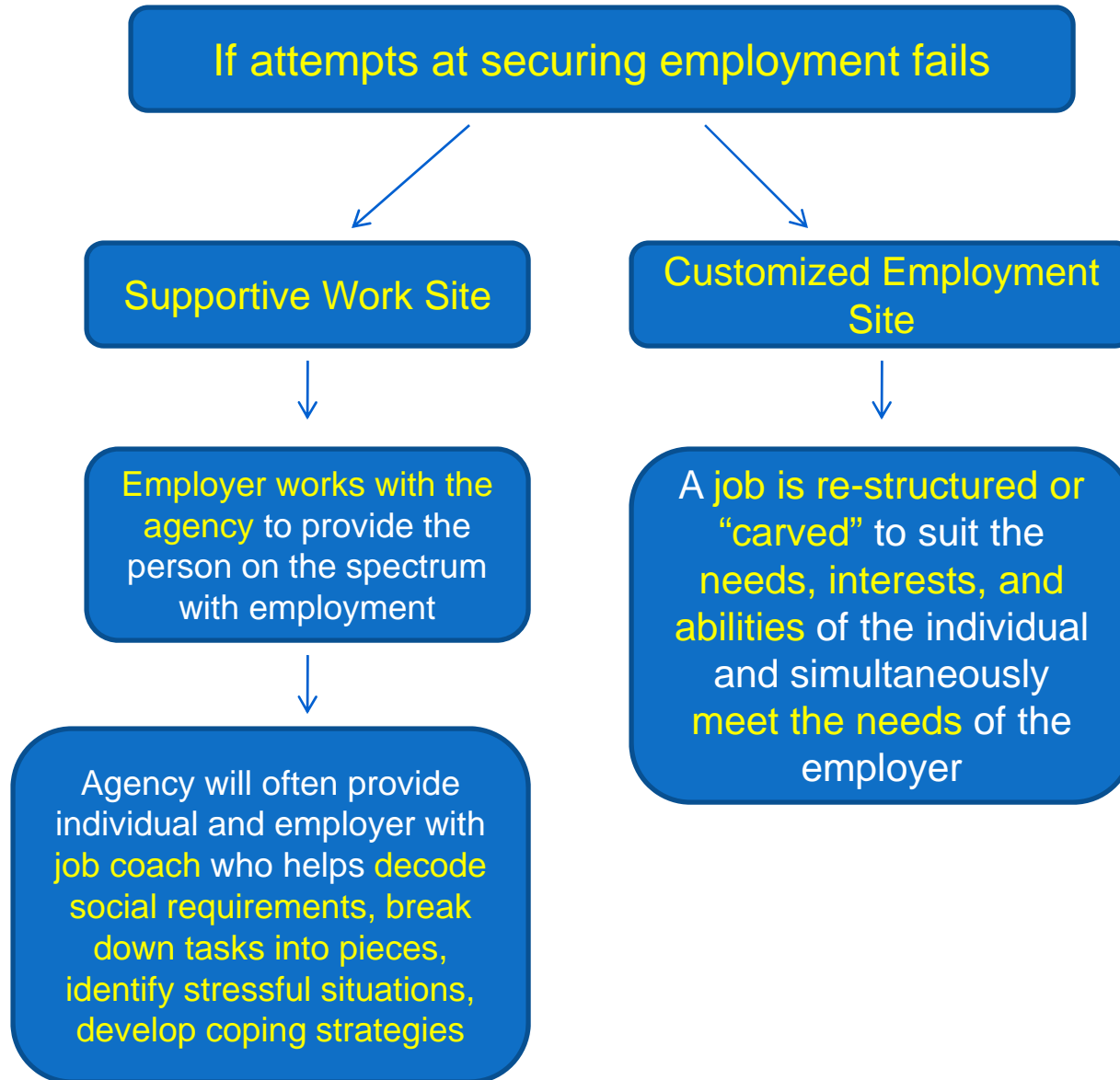
Help to **interpret ambiguous social situations**

Employees in the **Human Resource department** can help implement **reasonable accommodations** and **mediate** in situations where the person's disability is interfering with his/her effectiveness at work

## STEP SIX



## STEP SIX (CONT'D)



## STEP SIX (CONT'D)

If attempts at securing employment fails



Competitive Work Site



Individuals **earn a competitive wage**



**Salary** is earned through their contribution to the company



**No subsidies** are provided to the employer for the individual's wages, and **little, if any support, is given** to the individual at the worksite



Provide **highest level of community integration**

# VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering at non-profit organizations while looking for paid employment



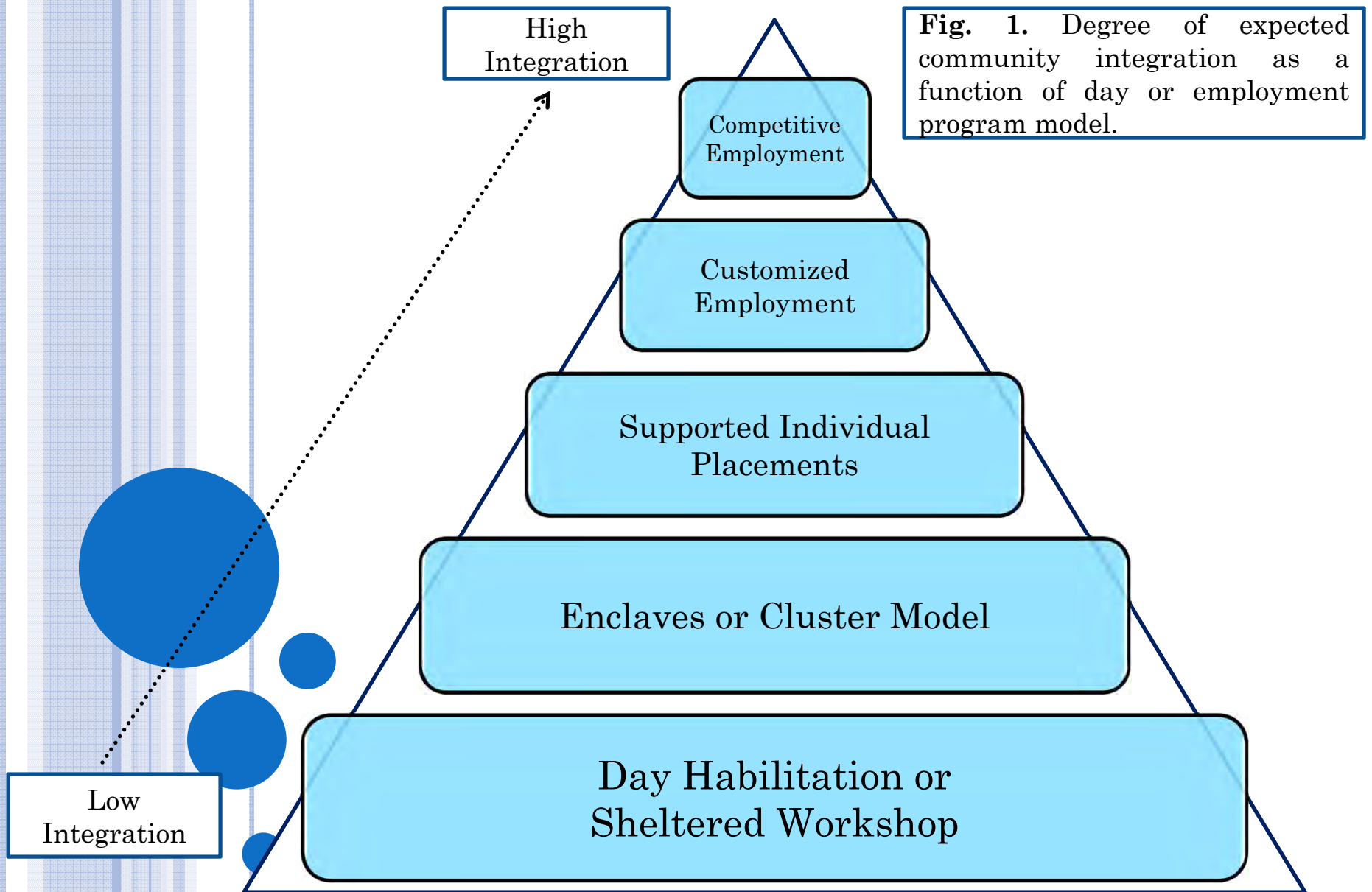
References from these sources can be invaluable in later job searches



Can sometimes lead to the creation of a paid position



At an organization that one is passionate about, skills and strengths of the individual on the spectrum shine



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## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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