Employment for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities: Job Coaching & Strategies for Instruction

Part II

Ellen Condon
University of MT, Rural Institute on Disabilities
Role of the Job Coach

• Assist the employee with a disability to learn their new job, and facilitate their inclusion into the work environment.

• Support the employee to become an independent, competent & confident part of their new workplace.

• Support coworkers and supervisors to feel confident to support their new employee or coworker.
Method

• The method is the way each task is performed in the work environment.

• Each workplace has their unique method and ways of doing things.

• By learning the methods used in the company you honor their ways and their expertise and then you can train the new employee to perform the tasks like everyone else in the company.
Vision of Correct Performance

In order for someone to teach a task, the trainer needs to have a step-by-step vision of how the task should be completed. It isn’t adequate to just have the picture of the end result.
Method of a task as seen through content steps:

Natural worker & supported employee

Step 1.
Example of a complex task with a method:
Teaching

The goal is for the new employee to perform the tasks of their job competently, confidently and eventually independently of their job coach.
In order to begin job coaching:

- You have a plan of who will teach the job seeker each part of the job. Will a coworker teach the person how to punch in when they arrive? Will the natural trainer start training the person on the job (with you looking on to offer support or advice if they need it?) and will you take over the training when it is beyond the extent of what they offer to all employees???
Benefits of using the natural trainer:

• This is one of the first opportunities for a new employee to form a relationship with their coworkers and to tap into supports naturally available in the work environment.

• If the job coach steps in immediately to train and supervise the new employee it sends the message to the workplace that the natural supports may not be skilled enough and may not be needed.
Benefits of using the natural trainer:

• The natural trainers most likely know the task better than an outside job coach.

• By tapping into the natural supports on day one, the job coach makes eventual fading of the formal support easier for the employer and for the employee.
The downside of the natural trainer:

• How well do they teach?

• How comfortable will they be giving information and upholding high standards for the worker with a disability?

• Is there a balance between the natural trainer and the job coach?
The new employee will need information about their new job.

Don’t be so focused on letting them be independent that you don’t teach them the job or encourage the natural trainer to teach them the job.
Types of Informational Cues

• Physical cues- placing your hand on the learner to share information about what you want them to do.

• Examples: the trainer might place their hand over the learner’s hand to help them put enough pressure on a drill to drive the screw into the wood, or position the tool in the learner’s hand and position their fingers around it to show them the correct hold.
Types of Informational Cues

• Modeling- performing or demonstrating the action that you want the learner to perform.

• Examples: Modeling how to use the touch screen computer to log in when you get to work; demonstrating how to bend your knees and keep your back straight when lifting something heavy.
Types of Informational Cues

• Gesture- motioning with your body to communicate the desired action of the learner.

• Examples: pointing toward the employee’s ID number on their card during the punching in process; making a swiping motion with your hand across a computer screen to communicate how to advance the information on the screen.
Types of Informational Cues

• Verbal Cues- giving the learner information through words.

• Examples: “When the computer reads, ‘input id number’, type the numbers from the back of your card into the computer”; “Fill the container to the top.”
Example from UHCL

- **Target Behavior:** Sorting Silverware (this example can be used for multiple household chores)
- **Verbal Instruction:** “It is time to sort silverware”
- **Gesture:** Point to silverware and silverware container
- **Model:** Demonstrate how to place 1 of each piece of silverware in the container
- **Physical:** Guide them hand-over-hand in sorting of and placing 1 piece of silverware in the container
Delivering a nonstop monolog is not a verbal cue...

Give people succinct, useful information with as few words as possible.
Giving information about how to perform a task correctly…

Is not the same as directing someone to do something. We can’t expect learners to perform competently unless we give them information through teaching.
How do I know what cues to use?

- Sometimes certain cues will be more effective in providing information than other types of cues.
- Physical cues work well when teaching someone to move their fingers a certain way.
- Verbal cues might be effective when pointing out the natural features of a work item (e.g., “Your ID number is always the number under your name”).
- Sometimes cues can be used together such as a verbal cue and a gesture.
The trainer needs to give the learner enough information to know what to do, when to do it, and when the step is correct.

Once the learner starts to know what to do, the trainer gradually fades their support, resulting in a competent, confident, and independent employee.
What do you do when the coworker is training but not giving information?

• The learner is performing the task incorrectly or not well at all and the coworker is just letting them do it or worse yet telling them they are doing a good job.

• Job coach options: “Make sure you are holding this employee to the company standard. We want to make sure they are doing things your way.” Try to tactfully give the coworker information without offending them and without taking over for them.
When to give information? And how much?

• Teaching - giving the learner information about what is expected and how to perform each step before they act to ensure that they perform it correctly.

• If you teach a task step by step, according to the method you observed, the result will be competent performance. If you merely critique the end product you will miss issues in performance.
When to give information? And how much?

- Correction - providing information after the learner performs the step of the task incorrectly.

- Hazards of correcting instead of teaching are that you get a frustrated learner and for people who take extra time to learn, this will increase the training time and reduce the overall competence of the learner.
When to give information? And how much?

• Initially it is best to give people information up front. As they are learning their job, back off and wait to see if they move to the correct step on their own. If they are about to make a mistake, step in and give them information. This is called ‘timing’...letting them learn to make the decision about what to do, but stepping in before they make a mistake.

• Later on in training let the learner make the mistake and see if they catch it and learn from it. This is called self-correction.
Think of fading as requiring more of the learner…

And less of the trainer.
Fading cues

More powerful
- Full physical guidance such as positioning the person’s hand with your hand.
- When gesturing, show the entire action required.
- Directing verbal cue such as “pick up the papers and walk to the copy room.”

Less Powerful
- Partial physical—touching the person’s hand to indicate that they need to move toward the next piece.
- Pointing toward the screen instead of demonstrating the entire swipe motion.
- An indirect verbal cue such as “What’s next?”
Tips for Good Training

• Avoid giving the learner permission to proceed onto the next task—give them information so they can make the decision for themselves.

• Avoid directing the worker to do X. Teach them how to determine when it is time to do X themselves (either through a clock or an alternative strategy).
Tips for Good Training

• Don’t encourage the learner to rely on you to determine if their work is correct or adequate. Teach them to evaluate the end product.

• Your job is to teach them to perform each step of the task correctly, which should ensure an adequate product.
Tips for Good Training

• Avoid giving people constant encouragement and praise. This isn’t typical for people working in real work settings and the learner can become overly dependent on the praise.

• Instead, when you are teaching use “no news is good news.” The learner will figure out that when you are quiet they are correct. You will provide information rather than cheerleading.
When to change the way a worker is doing the task?

• When and why to change the method
• What is the risk?

• Adding a jig to help someone count
• Insisting someone use the shirt folding board when coworkers do not
Facilitating Natural Supports

• How do you not get in the way initially?

• Look for the opportunity to encourage natural supports.

• Teach the job seeker to seek out assistance.

• Invite assistance from coworkers.
Long-Term Supports

Developing a follow-along plan and troubleshooting issues
Alternative Strategies

- Face time w/ employment consultant or supervisor
- Texting
- Self-monitoring production
- Self-managing time
- Using visual cues to proceed from task to task (first/then)
This project is funded in whole or in part under a Contract with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. The statements herein do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Department.