

CAREER TRAINING BEGINS IN THE HOME

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To help develop an acceptable work ethic and social skills in the work place, I would ask that the parents or guardians of the students in CEVEC'S Vocational Adjustment Lab assist us by practicing some of the following suggestions at home.

In advance, *Thank You* for going out of your way to help my employee understand what the "World of Work" is all about and allowing him space to practice and make mistakes under your guidance before going out into the community. Remember, our goal is employment and the necessary skills that are needed to achieve it.

Honesty

Task Assigned: Developing honesty starts in the home. Hopefully the student has had time to learn the importance of honesty. Now that our students are nearing the age of job placement, it is important that honesty be recognized and how it relates to the "World of Work". Have the student show his honesty by admitting responsibility when directions are not followed. Praise him and tell him that you would rather have him admit his mistakes so he can learn from them, and the next time do things differently.

Lesson Learned: As most of you probably already know, there are many ways to be dishonest at work. From asking someone to clock out for you, so that you can leave early, to taking a longer break than allowed. The latter indiscretion is actually considered stealing. Basically speaking, you are taking money for work you did not do. An employee could loose his position for taking home desk supplies, and that would be sad, because that black mark on his name will follow him from job to job.

Being on Time

Task Assigned: Allow the student an opportunity to become familiar with wearing and using a watch. Set a time to go somewhere with him. Expect him to meet you at a pre-arranged location at that time. A small reward might be in order if he is successful.

Lesson Learned: Being on time is one of the most important skills when trying to get and keep a job. If an employee is frequently late upon arrival and after breaks, he will soon be fired.

Calling In

Task Assigned: Get the student accustomed to using a telephone. Speaking clearly, while using an acceptable voice level and identifying himself at all times, is a very good habit to develop. Also, memorizing his home telephone number, address and social security number is a valuable asset when it comes to accepting responsibility for oneself.

Lesson Learned: All employees are expected to notify their supervisor when they will not be at work. A mother's call is not a realistic substitute for the employee calling himself. Time cards usually require a social security number which will be asked for at various stages during an employees career. Calls about absences and lateness should be made early in the morning to permit employers to make necessary assignment changes.

Pleasant Greeting

Task Assigned: Have the student greet you each morning with a verbal greeting. Please allow him to initiate this greeting.

Lesson Learned: An employee will be expected to greet a supervisor or fellow employees each morning. This will not include any physical contact such as hugging. It will be important for the student to recognize the difference between greeting a family member and a business associate. In some cases, a handshake would be appropriate, but not to someone seen everyday, such as a boss or a co-worker.

Dress and Grooming

Task Assigned: Please stress good grooming practices at all times. Showering, shaving and the use of deodorant are absolutely necessary at all times. Also recognizing that there are clothes for work and clothes for home. Some things should not be worn to work either because they are dirty, worn out or inappropriate.

Lesson Learned: Employees are judged by their appearance long before they are given a chance to exhibit their proficiency. It would be too bad to loose an opportunity due to a dirty shirt or a hole in a pair of pants.

Neat Work Area

Task Assigned: Accentuate the importance of keeping his room neat and organized.

Lesson Learned: Keeping a neat work area is something that is usually not addressed but expected. If it becomes a problem, especially with other co-workers or customers, a confrontation between the employer and employee could occur.

Staying on Task

Task Assigned: Assign a task for the student to perform and give a certain amount of time to complete the task. The time allowed should be just enough to finish. He will probably need to be on task the entire time in order to meet the goal.

Lesson Learned: Employees are expected to be on task most of the time. When a boss looks up and sees an employee just sitting and daydreaming it will be seen as a negative. He may only be prompted once or twice before he is let go.

Eye Contact

Task Assigned: When conversing with the student, encourage eye contact at all times.

Lesson Learned: When addressing a supervisor or talking with co-workers the employee will be expected to look at the person.

Positive Attitude

Task Assigned: Try and have the student maintain a positive attitude especially under adverse conditions. When dealing with disappointment for whatever reason, if the parent can model and then identify their positive behavior by explaining how they arrived at their positive outlook, it will become clearer to the student exactly what behavior is appropriate and why.

Lesson Learned: While maintaining a job, negative situations are bound to arise and employees will have to decide that how they handle it will determine whether they keep a job. Unfortunately, not all situations are fair, but our students must realize that keeping the job is their #1 priority.

Following Directions

Task Assigned: Try finding a task at home that is multi-faceted and then assigning that job to the student, and this is the hard part, leaving him totally alone to try and remember each part of his assignment. Please make this level appropriate. Give the student a task that he is capable of performing with success. Start with a two step direction and increase accordingly. It is very important that the student not question why certain tasks are done a certain way, but to just do what is asked.

Lesson Learned: Following directions given by a supervisor is the one of the first proficiencies noticed by the person in charge. Also, bosses do not always have the time to explain every step of a job. Following directions without inappropriate questioning tells the boss that you are a well focused worker.

Request Work / Ask for Help

Task Assigned: After assigning a task to the student, such as setting a table or bagging leaves, encourage him to let you know when he is finished. However, do not give him enough supplies to finish the job. In order to complete the task he will need to ask you for more supplies or help.

Lesson Learned: Supervisors will expect employees to use initiative when working. If they notice employees not working because they have run out of work, they will get angry. This will be seen as a negative, and could affect future employment or possible salary increases.

Voice Level

Task Assigned: There are appropriate voice levels to be used depending on the circumstances. Encourage the student to order from a menu every time you go to a restaurant, speaking with an appropriate voice level. When in a quiet zone like a library, have him speak with a whisper.

Lesson Learned: When speaking on the telephone, after identifying himself, an employee must speak loudly and clearly enough to be heard. Students, in the past, have spoke so softly on the telephone that you couldn't hear them. When speaking in the work area, it is often difficult to hear employees as well. This is frustrating to co-workers and supervisors.

Safety

Task Assigned: Make sure that the student is aware of safety garments that can be worn to protect himself. Explanations on the importance of wearing paraphernalia such as aprons, gloves or safety glasses are needed to help the student understand the importance working in a safe environment. Try to give him opportunities to work in environments where safety goggles should be worn such as hammering or drilling.

Lesson Learned: The student must learn the importance of wearing extra gear if his supervisor so advises him. The entire liability issue has changed the way job tasks are done in the work place. He should also be told that he has the right to such protection if he thinks that his health might be in jeopardy.

Work Quality

Task Assigned: An assignment as simple as making a bed would be a great time to make a student aware that the bed should not be made haphazardly. After an example is given of how to correctly make a bed, and the student has a chance to see what a neatly made bed looks like, expect that same quality when allowing him to complete the task himself. Remember you are doing him no favors by accepting work that does not meet industrial standards.

Lesson Learned: All students, will be expected to produce a product that meets the standard

performed by all other employees. Extra time might be allowed to an employee with special needs, but never lesser quality.

Flexibility

Task Assigned: Assign the student a simple task such as straightening up the living room. After he has begun, tell him that instead of doing that, you need him to fold towels. He should be able to accept a change without getting angry or asking why.

Lesson Learned: While on a job, a boss may tell his employee that he needs him to stop doing what he was doing (this can be especially frustrating when the employee may be almost finished with the project) and start on a new job. Frequently, this job change may be due to a phone call that was received by the boss that moved up the completion date on a job that had not even been started. There is usually a good reason for the change, but the employee should never expect the courtesy of an explanation.

Appropriate Conversations

Task Assigned: There is a time and place for everything. As the parent or guardian, if you could begin to make the student more aware of conversations that are out of place, such as talking of bathroom habits while at the dinner table or talking in a place of prayer about a movie that he saw recently.

Lesson Learned: Conversations not related to work are frowned upon in almost all work settings and should be left until break time. Work production slows down when employees become engrossed in a conversation. Production is the main goal of any work setting.

Working Under Pressure

Task Assigned: Having only a short time to complete a task, and still do a good job is an admirable trait to possess as an employee. Have the student realize that you need a specific job done in a hurry and keep reminding him every few minutes. There are times when he must learn to increase his work speed when necessary.

Lesson Learned: There will almost always be pressure situations on any job. Learning to deal with them and what behavior changes are needed, is a trait that is difficult for some to understand. Not only how to increase work speed when called upon, but to understand that other employees may exhibit negative behaviors during pressure situations. It is important that the employee continue to follow directions and not react to a negative co-worker.

Work Speed

Task Assigned: Work speed is an essential element in the work world. As an exercise to teach the student exactly what work speed is and the importance of increasing it, take a chore such as making their bed. One day without saying anything, time them and see how long it takes to complete. Then, tell him what you did and ask him if he thinks that he might be able to do that same job again the next day in a shorter amount of time. Remember that quality must always meet standards.

Lesson Learned: The speed with which an employee completes a task is important to a supervisor as all employees will be judged by the same industrial standard. There are times when a rush job may come in, or during lunch time for a food service worker, that that same employee might be expected to work at a faster pace than normal. It will help if he understands that this possibility exists.

Good Team Worker

Task Assigned: Any task around the house can be turned into a team project. Choose something that has several different parts, such as making potatoes for dinner. Assign one person the job of washing and peeling the potatoes, another dicing the potatoes, filling the pot with water and putting them on to cook.

Lesson Learned: In industry, from factory to food service, people are expected to be good team workers and are expected to carry their share of the work. Not being part of the team can create bitterness in the work place.

Handle Problems / Deal With Anger

Task Assigned: Verbal problem solving is a difficult skill to master, even under the best of circumstances. Whenever you see a problem arising, sit down with the student and try to help them sort out exactly what is happening and what options might be available as far as dealing with the problem.

Lesson Learned: There will always be circumstances that arise on a job site that can cause negative feelings. One helpful tool in dealing with those times is to understand that there are varying degrees of anger. It is not worth getting very upset over something minor. Sitting and talking is always an option. Knowing who to approach when the need arises, is also important.

Accepting Criticism

Task Assigned: This is a tough skill to teach. For years I have been trying to teach this, and there is no easy way. A gentle suggestion as to how a job might be done better the next time might be a good way to start.

Lesson Learned: Making the student aware that it is his responsibility to please his bosses and supervisors makes it easier to teach "accepting criticism". There will be times when this will not occur and he will have to listen to negative comments from his boss. Even if he does not agree with him he should limit his comments and return to his job. Life does go on and we have to learn to live with our disappointments. You may try explaining, that if a boss did not care for an employee's work, he would not bother to criticize him, he would just fire him.

Customer Service

Task Assigned: Following a transaction in a local department store ask the student to rate a clerk that has helped you at the store. Was she kind, helpful, happy or rude?

Lesson Learned: Making the student aware that you would be more likely to return to a store where you were treated nicely is the first step in helping them to realize that they may be in the position some day of determining whether or not a customer will return to a store where they work, just because of them.

Feelings

Task Assigned: Dealing with feelings at all times is an important skill. Whenever you see the student inappropriately feeling sad or angry about a certain situation, sit down with him and try to help him sort out those feelings and make him aware that at times, he must overcome them in order to perform an assignment.

Lesson Learned: Being able to overcome adverse feelings, not related to your job, and to proceed to work where you will be expected to carry on as usual, is an expectation that most supervisors have of all employees. There will be times when this is difficult, and to be honest with a boss and tell him what the problem is, might be the correct way to proceed. This should

not be done on a regular basis, because constant mood swings would be frowned upon at a job.

Sexual Harassment

The work place has changed so much in the last 10 years, all employees, regardless of their abilities, must be aware that any comment of a sexual nature no matter how innocent, made to anyone in a work setting, could cause offense. Just sitting and talking about this to the student will help them become more aware and will enable them to make informed choices when conversing with others.

Leadership

Task Assigned: Following certain guidelines, permitting a student the opportunity to be in charge of a situation, such as baby-sitting for a younger sibling, is an excellent way to teach leadership. However, this should not be attempted unless the student has learned to accept responsibility for himself first.

Lesson Learned: Asking anyone to accept the total responsibility of another person or situation is a highly beneficial method of promoting self esteem. When something more than normal is expected of someone, they usually rise to the occasion. The result of this, is a worker who feels good about himself and his job.

Social Proficiency

Task Assigned: Please allow the student an opportunity to help other people in a variety of situations. Make them aware that when you are carrying a heavy box, you could use some help. When going through a door, try not to hold the door for them, go through the door first and hold it only for a short time, allowing them to personally catch the door. Please make them aware that they should then hold the door for the next person coming through. You would not believe how many students can not do this, because they have never been shown. Allow them to move obstacles that might be in the way when someone is carrying something down the hallway. Also, remind them that the use of the words "Please" and "Thank You" are always expected.

Lesson Learned: Social etiquette at the job site is an important part of the total "good worker" image. Some students lack only the awareness of a situation, because many of them have had things done for them most of their life. They accept eagerly the opportunity to help someone else.

Reliability / Dependability

Task Assigned: Find a simple task around the house and ask the student to not only perform the task, but that you will expect him to do it each morning or once a week, depending on the situation, without being reminded. Examples could be taking out the trash, washing dishes, etc. Telling him that you can go on to other tasks because you know that he is responsible enough to be depended on for that one job is a great ego builder. Making sure that you point out the importance of this skill is an integral part of being able to understand this concept.

Lesson Learned: In the work place, employers expect to have workers that show up everyday and on time. They will do a job with good quality and change to other jobs without negative comments. Being able to do this could affect future financial position gains.

Accepting Responsibility

Task Assigned: There are certain tasks that you should expect him to perform around the house now that he is old enough. Consider the responsibility of feeding a pet or setting the table.

Lesson Learned: The very first step in maturing as an adult is to understand that we are all responsible for ourselves. For some students that idea is a new one. It is not easy to grow up, however it may be even harder to allow a student with special needs to grow up. You are not doing him a favor by doing things for him all the time. If you fear for that day when no one will be there to help him, please give him the greatest gift in life, the ability to take care of himself. It will have a profound effect in his life, not only in the work place, but in life in general. It will be difficult for most care givers, especially if there is an emotional attachment, however that caring must be based on the individual's best future interest. Employees are expected to be able to complete their jobs in a responsible manner.

Problem Recovery

Task Assigned: During everyday living, problems arise. Feelings are hurt, sometimes for no reason and sometimes with good reason. Students should be aware that the recovery period when not being able to purchase a candy bar, is short as compared to having your new bike being run over in the driveway or someone taking a personal belonging.

Lesson Learned: How an employee handles a situation is frequently observed by supervisors. Recovery from a problem situation affects work production and that is basically the main concern of an employer. If time is given to collect himself following an incident, it will be expected that he will return to work without prompting, after a short period. We teach our students that problems not related to work should be left outside the work place and picked up when they leave.

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