

Handout 5B.3a

DEVELOPING RÉSUMÉS AND INTERVIEW SKILLS

A critical piece of workforce preparation is developing youth's ability to present themselves in the most positive way to potential employers. The two main ways that employers learn about youth's experience and abilities are résumés and interviews. In both cases, employers want to know about a youth's skills (have learned to do), talents (have innate ability to do) and gifts (have innate ability and desire to do).

Capturing Youth Skills

Identifying, listing and describing skills are not easy tasks. However, there are three basic steps that can be used for work and program activities:

- List by title each job held or program activity, starting with the most recent.
- Write a detailed description of four to five major duties.
- Think of the skills needed to accomplish each duty listed. Write those skills down on a piece of paper. Remember to look for both job and self-management skills. Be sure to include tools used, machines operated, knowledge applied, etc.

Résumés

According to Webster's dictionary, a résumé is a summary of a person's personal history and employment experience. Youth service professionals can help youth capture their employability skills, program activities, and work experience in the way most likely to gain an employer's interest and get the youth an interview. There are two main formats for résumés: chronological (experience) and functional (skills-based).

A **chronological résumé** is the most common type of résumé and preferred by employers. This type of résumé is best if you have demonstrated experience within your desired career field. It highlights the positions you have held and the companies for which you have worked. It illustrates how you have made progress towards your career objective through your employment history. However, if you

are new to the job market or have gaps in your work history, a chronological résumé may be tougher to write.

A **functional résumé** can showcase the work experience that is most important to your career objective. This type of résumé may work best for first-time job seekers, those reentering the workforce after a long break from employment, or those changing careers. The functional résumé can be used to minimize employment gaps. It highlights more relevant skills instead of position titles. However, many employers do not like functional résumés because it is harder to follow a candidate's work history. As some young people will have more work experience than others, make functional (skills-based) résumé templates available in addition to chronological ones.

Chronological or "experience" résumés may include:

- Name, address, phone/fax numbers and e-mail address;
- Career objective;
- Education (dates, institution, city, degree/major and specialties);
- Employment (dates, company, city, job title, details of position, and description of accomplishments—include internships and volunteer jobs.);
- Summary of qualifications, including languages, leadership positions, relevant classes, computer skills (programs you can operate), awards received and interests/activities; and
- References (supervisors and teachers).

Functional or "Skills-based" résumés may include:

- Name, address, phone/fax numbers and e-mail address;
- Career objective;
- Functional skills summary (includes skills from

Developing Résumés and Interview Skills

school, positive personality traits, grades if good, special projects, etc.);

- Volunteer experience (dates, locations, city, details of position, and description of accomplishments—include in-school jobs.);
- Summary of qualifications, including languages, computer skills (programs you can operate), awards received and interests/activities; and
- References (from supervisors and teachers).

Remember, it is important to use **action words** such as “achieved” or “operated.”

This site lists over 300 action words:

http://www.résumé-help.org/résumé_action_words.htm.

Interviews

According to Webster’s dictionary, an interview is a formal personal meeting arranged to evaluate an applicant. Staff can help youth prepare by anticipating the questions that will be asked, identifying responses that highlight the youth’s skills and work experiences, and practicing key interview skills. Students can practice mock interviews in groups of two and provide feedback to one another. Staff can videotape these mock interviews and provide constructive feedback. It is particularly useful when peers provide concrete examples of what the young person did well and identify areas for improvement. (Create an interview evaluation sheet for youth observers to use, including: eye contact, posture, business attire, handshake, smile, responsive answers, prepared questions for employer, etc.) Some programs ask employers to conduct the mock interviews, and provide feedback to participating students.

Disability Disclosure

In a disability context, “disclosure” means that people with disabilities share personal information about their disability for the specific purpose of receiving accommodations. There is no standardized form or set of requirements regarding what people must share about their disabilities. Thus, youth need to decide what, if anything, they want to reveal. Disclosure of a disability can also

mean different things depending upon the type of disability. Youth with non-apparent disabilities must make the decision whether to disclose they have a disability. These youths should decide to whom they choose to disclose to and how much information to provide. Generally, youth with non-apparent disabilities find it most beneficial to disclose information only if they need accommodations.

To receive accommodations at work or in postsecondary school, information about disability must be shared with the relevant authorities. An accommodation is an adjustment to an environment, which makes it possible for people with disabilities to participate equally. While youth with disabilities may be familiar with accommodations, as they may have used them in grade school, they may not be familiar with the art of disclosure. Unlike in grades K-12, it is a youth’s responsibility to personally disclose his or her disability to someone who has the authority to provide accommodations.

Knowledge of the specific accommodations that youth will need in a given situation can help frame what disability information needs to be disclosed. If the youth does not require accommodations, it is generally not necessary to disclose the disability. Here are ways you can assist young people with determining whether disclosure is appropriate:

1. Discuss the appropriateness of disclosing their disability in some situations and not in others (e.g., social, school, or work settings, or community activities);
2. Evaluate the pros and cons with youth who are considering disclosure; and,
3. Encourage youth to practice effective communication of their disability, needs, skills and abilities with people they respect and trust and know their strengths well.

People who interact with youth with apparent disabilities may be aware of some aspects of the condition without being informed. Nonetheless, the young people must know how and what to say about their disability, and to whom. All youth should learn the skill of emphasizing their abilities and strengths; this especially applies to youth

Developing Résumés and Interview Skills

discussing their disability. As you advise people with disabilities, remind them that it is not necessary to share everything about their disability and its effects. It is most important to provide information about:

1. How their disability impacts the capacity to learn and perform effectively; and
2. What environmental adjustments, support and services they will need to access, participate and excel in their job, studies, community activities, etc.

It is important to remember that only youth with disabilities can decide whether or not to disclose their disability. It is your job to assist them in making an informed decision. As with any decision, disclosure has both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, disability disclosure can afford opportunities for success because reasonable accommodations can be provided. Disclosure may also help the youth find strong support systems. On the other hand, it may be intimidating for youth to share personal information about their disabilities, where there are no assurances that the other person will react positively.

Also, what may seem a disadvantage in one setting or situation can be an advantage in another. Encourage young people to reconsider the disclosure question each time they encounter a new setting, situation, or set of circumstances.

Examples of places where disclosure can happen include: application or cover letter; before an interview; at the interview; third-party phone call or reference; before any drug testing for illegal drugs; after a job offer; during employment; or never.

For information on disclosure, including **Internet implications**, see the two disclosure fact sheets included.

Sample Interview Questions

Remember, employers are often looking for certain information in your answers that reflect that you can solve problems and get results. These are sometimes called **STAR** answers: the **S**ituation, **T**ask to be completed, **A**ction you took, and the **R**esults. (A sample response might be: “I was working at **S**, I was asked to do **T**, so, I immediately did **A**, and we achieved **R**.”)

Common Interview Questions*:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in working for this company?
- Tell me about your education.
- Why have you chosen this particular field?
- Describe your best/worst boss.
- In a job, what interests you most/least?
- What is your major weakness?
- Give an example of how you solved a problem in the past.
- What are your strengths?
- How do others describe you?
- What do you consider the most important idea you contributed or your most noteworthy accomplishment in your last job?
- Where do you see yourself in three years?
- Think about something you consider a failure in your life, and tell me why you think it happened.
- How do you think you will fit into this operation?
- If you were hired, what ideas and talents could you contribute to the position or our company?
- Give an example where you showed leadership and initiative.
- Give an example of when you were able to contribute to a team project.
- What have you done to develop or change in the last few years?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Questions to Ask the Employer:

- What are the responsibilities and accountabilities of this position?
- How well is the position defined? Can its duties be expanded?
- Please describe an average day on this job.
- What is the history of the position? Why is it vacant?
- What aspects of this job would you like to see performed better?
- What are the key challenges or problems of this position?
- Where can I go from here, assuming that I meet/exceed the job responsibilities?
- How would you describe the ideal candidate?

Developing Résumés and Interview Skills

- What are the employer's short- and long-range objectives?
- What are some outside influences that affect company growth?
- Where does the company excel? What are its limitations?
- When and how will I be evaluated? What are the performance standards?
- With whom would I be working? Who would be my supervisor? Who would I supervise?
- What is the department's environment like?
- When will you make the hiring decision? May I call you for the decision?
- How many days were you absent from work because of illness last year?
- Are you taking any prescribed drugs?
- Have you ever been treated for drug addiction or alcoholism?

There are many websites with résumé writing tips, sample résumés, interviewing strategies and practice interview questions. These sites include:

Illegal Questions:

- What is or was your spouse's name or line of work?
- Have you ever filed a Workers' Compensation claim or been injured on the job?
- Do you have any physical impairments that would prevent you from performing the job for which you're applying?
- Have you ever been arrested?
- What is your hair/eye color? What is your height/weight?
- Have you ever been hospitalized? If so, for what condition?
- Have you ever been treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist? If so, for what condition?
- Is there any health-related reason you may not be able to perform the job for which you're applying?
- Career One-Stop Résumés and Interviews: <http://www.careeronestop.org/RésumésInterviews/RésumésInterviews.aspx>
- Massachusetts' One-Stop Center – The Résumé Guide: http://www.mass.gov/Elwd/docs/dcs/1865_508.pdf
- Service Leader.org - Put Volunteer Work on Your Résumé: <http://www.serviceleader.org/new/volunteers/articles/2003/04/000052.php>
- Edmonds Community College - Getting Started Creating Your Résumé: http://careeractioncenter.edcc.edu/_jobsearch/résumé/Creating_Your_Résumé.php
- Jobsmart: Résumés & Cover Letters: <http://jobstar.org/tools/résumé/index.php>
- California Employment Development Department WorkSmart! Interview Tips: http://www.worksmart.ca.gov/tips_interview.html
- Job Interview Questions: <http://www.jobinterviewquestions.org/>

Source:

Adapted from Rhodes, Sallie. (2007). *High School/High Tech Program Guide: A Comprehensive Transition Program Promoting Careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math for Youth with Disabilities*. Washington, DC: National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, Institute for Educational Leadership.

Adapted from Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. (2009). *Creative Job Search*. Retrieved October 20, 2009 from <http://www.deed.state.mn.us/cjs/>

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