

TransCen, Inc.

Expanding Employment Opportunities for Youth Using Customized Employment

JANUARY 31, 2019

This text, document, or file is based on live transcription. Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART), captioning, and/or live transcription are provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings.

.....

>> CALEB BERKEMEIER: Welcome to today's webinar about customized employment and expanding opportunities for youth with disabilities. My name is Caleb Berkemeier, I'm the training specialist with the Mid-Atlantic ADA Center which is a grant funded project of Transcen Inc. And it is my pleasure to introduce to you today our speaker, Doctor Laura Owens. Laura is president of Transcen Inc. and has over 30 years of experience with a strong background as a national leader in the disability employment field. She's currently an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee in the education department, where she teaches courses focusing on high school inclusion and transition from school to work. She's also the founder and president of creative employment opportunities inc. in Milwaukee which she founded in 1991. Prior to joining Transcen, Laura served as Executive Director of APSE the Association of People Supporting Employment first, a national organization focusing on the advancement of integrated employment for people with disabilities.

She's an internationally known speaker, having presented to businesses, organizations, schools and at conferences around the world. And having worked with Laura for a while now, I can tell you personally her enthusiasm and passion for this work, it is unmatched. So with that, Laura, I turn it over to you. >> LAURA OWENS: Thank you so much, Caleb for that great intro. I appreciate it. Welcome. Today we'll be talking about expanding employment opportunities for youth using customized employment strategies. This is an introduction seminar. Later on we'll be doing more in-depth webinars on this. Next slide. For those of you that may know me, I love to laugh and joke around and I love cartoons. So this first slide, Slide 8, it has Dennis the menace watches his grandfather handwriting a note and Dennis says to his father can you believe it, grandpa still uses emails on paper! I use this just to kind of note that times are changing. This is a super exciting time for us. For youth with disabilities and for individuals with disabilities. Slide 9. So let's just talk a little bit very quickly about what we did in the past and why it didn't work. The first thing we used to do, I still unfortunately hear today, it is this idea of job readiness that people with disabilities and youth with disabilities have to be ready before they can participate in employment or community employment. The reality is, nobody is job ready. We become job ready by working. We become job ready by being Part of the labor market. The second thing, we focused a lot on jobs rather than careers, that's the new frontier when talking about customized employment. Not just jobs, but understanding that a job leads to another job that leads to another job that ultimately leads to a career. That's really what we want for our young adults with disabilities. This one is one that I still think we have a little ways to go. That is this idea of being realistic and having lowered expectations for young adults with disabilities. I love this quote by Dr. Roy Grizzard, the first assistant Secretary of ODEP, the Office of Disability employment policy. He

said that people with disabilities should be spared the soft bigotry of low expectations. This idea that people with disabilities need to be realistic about their jobs, their career choices needs to be really looked at. Having worked with individuals for the last 30 years, I have seen people with disabilities go way beyond the expectations anybody ever had of them. My famous example of this, a person I worked with, he really struggled, he has six dish washing positions in two years, he was either fired or quit and when we sat down with his counselor, the question was what would you like to do? What kind of job opportunities are of interest to you. He said, well, I guess dish washing, because that's really all he knew. That's all anybody had allowed him to do. Then he looked at me and said you know those people that talk to you on the phone at night and they call you during dinner? I didn't know what he meant at first and realized he meant telemarketers, and so I talked to his group home staff and they said yes, he's the first person to answer the phone, and with the telemarketers, he starts asking them questions and then they hang up on him! It is kind of reverse! The point was, everybody thought that all he was able to do was dish washing. Clearly it wasn't a good job match for him, not something that he wanted to do. He wanted to talk on the phone. So we assisted him in getting a job at a local marketing firm where he did telemarketing type calls to do research for businesses. He was super successful, worked there for 14 years and the only reason he left was because he moved to Florida. Low expectations I think are something across the board we really need to take a look at. Finally, the focus on placement versus development. When we look at customized employment, we're really looking at job development and really opening up opportunities within businesses. Slide 10. This is another really great quote from a book by Ken Steele, the day the voices stopped. It is about a young man with mental health issues. The statement applies across the board, that employment should

not be -- that employment should be the expectation, not the exception, and that if people are treated as capable, they often surprise everyone and live up to those expectations. Slide 11. I talked about earlier that times are changing. This is one of the changing components of our work. That is the employment first initiatives that are around the country. Every state has some type of employment first activity whether that's a public policy initiative, an executive order from the governor, legislation, just simply people kind of pushing that employment first expectation and it really is about raising expectations for individuals with disabilities. It is very basic, that competitive integrated employment should be the first and preferred service option for individuals with disabilities, including those with more support needs. The little man there says what my philosophy is, there's a job for everyone who wants one regardless of their disability, need for support or economic vitality of their community. Employers need good workers. That's the bottom line. Individuals with disabilities want to work. Slide 12. The other piece of our changing landscape when it comes to employment, it is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act or WIOA. I'm honestly not sure who said this, I don't know if senator Harkins said or if it was something that was said during the discussion around WIOA, but I absolutely love this quote. The days of students with disabilities leaving school poorly educated with no employment experience, no job prospects, living lives of poverty and too often ending up in segregated programs needs to come to an end. To me, employment first, WIO, a, it goes hand-in-hand in really advancing employment opportunities for young adults with disabilities. Slide 13. So WIOA has five components that are called pre-employment transition services. These are all experiences we have known work and we have all been implementing them to some extent over the years. Now there's a law that kind of puts teeth behind what we know is best practice in the field. It is really

about helping young adults with disabilities while they're still in school, starting at age 14 undergo WIOA. We don't have to wait until they graduate before vocational rehabilitation comes in and sort of starts working with them. We really can have that seamless transition and that good seamless hand-off. These are five areas, job exploration counseling, vocational rehabilitation can be a part of that. They can contract out with adult service agencies in the area. They can work with youth on exploring what kinds of opportunities are out there when young adults graduate high school. Work-based learning experiences, we know the best predictor of post school employment success is having a job or work-based learning experiences while an individual is still in school. Counseling on Postsecondary education options, that goes back to that idea of career, it is not just about a job, bullets look at getting a job, then maybe going on to post-secondary education or apprenticeship in some way to build into a career. The law says workplace readiness, but because I'm not a fan of the term readiness and it sets people with disabilities up, I like to say workplace preparation training. Different curriculum that's out there, skills to pay the bills from the Office of Disability employment, it will help to kind of give those soft skills and help young adults understand financial literacy. I remember the first person I helped get a job and they got the first paycheck and they ran to my office and said they ripped me off, the employer ripped me off! I'm like what do you mean? Look at all these things they deducted, all of this stuff. Oh, FICA,s yeah, Social Security. Let's explain what that means. He didn't rip you off, this is part of what you have to do when you're a worker, you pay taxes. Then finally, instruction and self-advocacy which we have done in schools for a super long time. We need to continue with that self-advocacy and how students lead their own IEP meetings so that they can lead their own ISP meetings and own meetings. These are critical as we relate it to customized employment. Slide 14. So

what's this mean for us? An implication for our services, whether we're educators, adult service providers, first and foremost, it means that competitive integrated employment is a priority. It has to be a priority for everyone in school, family and the community. That meaningful community inclusion and engagement is an imperative. We have to make sure that individuals with disabilities aren't just taking the yellow bus from home to school, from home to school, from home to school, then to graduate and end up going in a segregated facility where the bus picks them up and brings them home to segregated community, they have to be a part of the community, meaningfully engaged, having a disposable income to go to the movies, go out to dinner with friends, it is imperative for that to happen. Then the third, that we have to change the way we operate. That is inevitable. The implications of WIO, a and employment first and these changing times that we have, it is that we really need to focus on competitive employment, creating meaningful community inclusion and we must change the way we work. Slide 15. So let's take a look at what we are doing, and how it is working. The first thing is, we do know in most circles that there is a presumption of employment, and that all means all. That the way we look at individuals is not looking at their disability first, but looking at their assets and skills and what they can offer to a business. The second thing, it is the presumption of services versus programs. One of the ideas that I keep trying to get across to people, it is that whenever we talk about customized employment or transition, we are offering a service to individuals. It is a transition service. It is customized employment services. Once we start focusing on programs inevitably someone doesn't fit in the program and we create a new program for them and somebody else doesn't fit that in of that program so we have a multitude of programs and it struck me one day when a family member called me and said I need your help in programming my son, he's

graduating from high school. I thought oh my gosh, I don't know that my mother ever said I need help programming my daughter. Maybe she did! The reality is, we don't program people! We provide services for people. We really have to change how we work and how we talk because language is so powerful. So I am giving services to individuals. They are getting services from me. Really important, no more asking do you want to work? Instead, where do you want to work? My charge is to figure out how to help you. The reality is, when you ask a high school student do you want to work, I suspect the answer will be no. If you would ask me if I really want to work, my answer is probably going to be not really. I do it because I have bills to pay. The question has to be where do you want to work. Next, opportunity, we have to really provide opportunity because under customized employment, there is what we consider non-traditional assessment. It is about exploring. It is about looking at people's interests and challenges and passions. My question to people, it is what gets you up in the morning? What gets you excited before -- forget about school right now, forget about anything else, what gets you excited? That is the foundation of customized employment, it is really getting to know the individual and in order to do that, we have to provide them with lots of opportunities like job shadows in a variety of businesses and environments, not just always in the food, filth, flowers and filing industry. Internships, work experiences, volunteering in the community, there is nothing wrong with volunteering as long as it is true volunteering and not volunteering for life without the opportunity for working in the community for pay. Ultimately, community involvement, you will see stories later on about how the importance of community involvement really allowed people to get employment in the community. Finally, working as the norm, not the exception, as that quote said earlier. What is the first thing people are asked, what do you do for a living. Isn't it awesome that my

friend Jennifer who happens to have downs syndrome can say to somebody I work for a law firm. That's what we want for all of our youth. Slide 16. So what we have to do, we have to change the message. Right now we have a lot of barriers. We have Social Security, which is a perceived barrier. It doesn't have to be a barrier. You know, where you can't work or you can't earn over a certain amount of money so you can only work ten hours a week, that's it. You are not job ready, the readiness component, there is no jobs for people like you, people with limited skills, you're better off not working altogether or you'll lose your healthcare. The message really has to be I think you should go to work and that's what people with disabilities want. That's what we need to do. Slide 17. I was in Pennsylvania a few months ago. I loved this simple, yet powerful message, #I want to work. This is powerful. This is people photographed at the governor's office talking about customized employment, people with disabilities not only want to work but deserve to work and they're great for business. I loved that and I wanted to put that in there. Really, that is the epitomy of customized employment. Slide 18. There are two killer concepts I mentioned, this idea of readiness that people with disabilities need to be ready to work. Again, we need to remember that nobody is ready to work. You become ready by working. That's the only way. I mean, I liken it to myself, I got my degree in special education and I was going to be a teacher until I walked in my classroom and thought Holy cow, I don't knowhow to be a teacher. The first year is how I learned to be a teacher. We learned by doing. Al so there is no such thing as readiness. The idea of realistic. Maybe somebody has what we consider to be an unrealistic goal. Then let's talk with them about it. Let's build that self-advocacy, the self-determination, let's help them to understand maybe you can't be a doctor, but maybe you can do something in healthcare. What's more important in that discovery process with customized employment, it is to find out why that

person wants to be a doctor. Maybe they want to be a doctor because they have had so many health issues and spent so much time in the hospital that that is all they know. They think this is what I want to do. I was watching some show the other day, a young man had suffered a stroke, and he now wants to become a physical therapist because that's what helped him through the stroke. This picture is a picture of Jenna that came to us saying she wanted to be a teacher. That's what she wanted to do, most people look at that and say she's not really to be a teacher, not realistic, she happens to have an intellectual disability, but she's super good with children and so we worked with a local school district and as you see, she's one of the teachers [Genna] she's a co-teacher she calls herself in the 4K kindergarten classroom. She's an instructional assistant. They put her name up on the board because she is a co-teacher. We have to really think about readiness and realistic as killer concepts in customized employment. Slide 19. So the Office of Disability employment policy in 2012 defined customized employment as something that's based on an individual's match between their strengths, conditions and interests of the job candidates and the business. Customized employment really is looking at what are the needs and what are the interests of the job seeker and then what are the needs of the business and how do we make that good match. Slide 20. Customized employment, people think it is a new model, it really is not such a new model, but we have really codified it, we have said here is what customized employment is all about. It really should expand the universally accepted practice of recognizing the power of individual -- what they want to do and the power of the community. We have that old model of train, place and sheltered workshops, segregated facility based services to get people ready to work. With he know that that's not something that is beneficial and it didn't help people with disabilities get employed any quicker or faster or get them jobs any

longer. Then we move to train and place model which is quickly the train and pray model, what we said, oh, let's put them in this space, let's put kaleb into this Home Depot, we then just placed people instead of really looking at what their passions were. So our new approach of customized employment, it is to discover, connect and support. We'll discover people's talents and skills and interests. We'll connect them to the community. We'll connect the community to them. We'll provide support. This is just a picture of Liz. She lives in a rural community. You can tell because this is a family video. I don't know that they even exist in any other place in the world. There is a family video store in her community. She was doing an internship there. This is what she did. She restocked all of the videos that came in. She has a pretty significant disability, you can see that she has her headphones on because noise really does something for her, and she has behavioral issues. Again, discovering her passions and talents and connecting her. Now the community is more connecting with her and then we can provide that support. Slide 21. This idea of readiness, it is a myth. It is a myth when it comes to employers that we assume that employers are expecting the perfect employees. I know for myself, as an employer, I have certainly wanted that perfect employee, but I also know I'm probably not going to get the perfect employee but for these guys. The reality is, we hire people based on what we think, we hope they fit in our work culture and fit in to what we want them to do for a job. Slide 22. If you take a look at this list, have you ever worked with anyone who had any of these character risks, that had behavioral outbursts or were chronically late, didn't communicate well, got distracted easily, who was lazy, couldn't take criticism, a messy office, acted impulsively, I suspect that every person could say yes, I worked with or still work with people who fall into these categories and yet these are all the reasons that we hear why individuals with disabilities can't work. Because they can't take

criticism, they're lazy, they don't communicate well, they don't work very fast. This idea of readiness, it is sort of a misnomer. Slide 23. Again my favorite cartoon, Peanuts, we have Linus, Charlie Brown, Lucy. Linus says I would hate to have a job you have to get up early in the morning. Charlie says I'd hate to have a job where you stayed in the same place all day and Lucy says I'd hate to have a job where you have to be nice to everybody all the time. This is funny but this is also about being able to do the task, doing the job, but it is also about just that work culture fit, does it fit that person? The reality is, with each of these people, we could probably find and customize a job for everybody, even Lucy who doesn't want to be nice to everybody all the time. There is a job out there for everyone of them. Slide 24. So the first step in customized employment, and this is where educators can really come in and family members can really come in and help us, it is to discover the possibilities. Listen to your student and job seeker, listen to what they're saying, observe what they're doing if they're smiling, if they're happy, if they are kind of jovial while doing something, you can pick up a lot of honored people's body language, along with the things that they say. Let's listen to them, because who wants to be stuck in a job that's something that they don't really want to do but it just happens to be a job that was available. Focus on skills, not deficits. The old approach prior to customized employment, which this is a little new when it comes to customized employment, it is that we used to focus on deficits. I would go in a business, I would try and customize, in quotes, a job, or create a position. I focused on an individual's deficit. I would go in, I would take a look around, talk to the employer, and I would say, well, I have a candidate whose really good but they won't be able to do these three things. They could do all of these other things. Sometimes employers would say, yes, absolutely, and most of the time they said no. They wanted them to do everything. Customized employment focuses on

skills, instead I go in, look at possibilities in a business, what needs to get done that's not getting done, how can I work with this business, how can my job seeker, how can my candidate meet the needs of the business. So I come in, I say this person can do these five things and it will free up this person and so I'm going to focus on what this person can do and what they can offer that business. There are no prerequisites, nobody has to come in having to be job ready because the thought is that everybody is job ready. You go in, you try something. Most of us have had multiple jobs, we're not in the same job that we had when we graduated high school. That's because we learn, I started out at my parents' campground, I learned I didn't really want to do that. Then I started working with the DNR wardens up in northern Wisconsin, I realized quickly I didn't want to do that. Then I became a bartender. I did multiple things all leading me ultimately to what I'm doing today. We have to look for those rays of light. What value can that student or job seeker bring to the business. So discovering possibilities, spending time with -- I would like to say hanging out with intent. I'll hang out with the clients that I'm working with, the students that I'm working with, and just spend time with them, getting to know who they are, what they like. What trips their trigger. Slide 25. So doing this, what we do, we build what's called a positive personal profile. It is a tool that we use. It is just a form that we fill in and we fill it in constantly. So like the individualized education plan, the IEP, it is something that's a living, breathing document. We talk about that person's dreams and goals. What are they ultimately wanting to do, move out of the house, live somewhere else, own a car, you know, whatever it is. What are those dreams and goals. What are the talents? What are they currently doing now in school? How can we turn that into a talent? What current skills and knowledge do they have that can build into a job or a career? How do they learn about -- do they learn about us by seeing somebody do it, did they learn

best by listening to it, do they learn best -- what is the multiple intelligence, and how can we build on that? What interests do they have. When I first started in the field, there was a lot of young adults, especially young men that wanted to be NBA basketball players, NFL football players, so we had to work through that. Now they want to be gamers. They want to work in the gaming industry. Okay. Let's build on that. How can we take those interests and build that into job opportunities or careers. Also looking at personality traits, including quirks. Are they quirky? Do they do different things that you may want to take into consideration? What's their temperament? Do they like to work inside, outside, with a lot of people? By themselves? What's important to them. What are the values? This one I learned when I worked with a young man that was Jehovah witness, he got a job he couldn't take because I forgot on Wednesday afternoons he would canvas the neighborhoods with the group he was with, I had to remember to take that into consideration, that was super important to him. Dislikes, work experiences they have had that they liked or didn't like, what part of that work experience did they not like and what did they like. Support systems, do they currently have a support system? Who is that? Can we build on that support system? Then, of course, we don't want to just focus on, you know, they don't have a disability, because they do, so there is going to be some challenges. So what are the challenges in context. How can we accommodate for those challenges. What are some solutions that are currently working that we may be able to utilize when they obtain employment in the community. Slide 26. I don't know why it is doing that. How do you find this information on a positive personal profile. A lot of different ways. I like to say hang out with intent. I spend a lot of time with people out in the community, in their home, I let them direct it, I never say let's go here, let's go here. I have them directed. We'll spend time on Thursday. What would you like to do, what would

you like to show me? Where do you want to go? You can interview, interview the person, family, friends, neighbors, we did a meeting with a young man that the neighbor knew more about him than his own mother did because he spent a lot of time, she worked, so after school he would go over to this elderly neighbors house and help with the laundry, she was so cute, he helps explain things on TV that I don't understand, it is great. Observations, lots and lots of observations. You have to be a mini detective. Observing them in school. Observing them in home, in the community, if they are taking a tour of a job site, if they are currently working in a job, observing, seeing, what do they like? What can they build on? You can always do career assessment, there are formal career assessments you can do online, a lot of schools have formal career assessments. I like more informal. There is more of these little cards that we use that we can kind of play a game about different types of career opportunities, you can do computerized situational assessments. Most importantly, experiences. Having young adults experience the real thing in the community. Slide 27. So the most valuable discovery or assessment strategy really in my opinion, when it comes to customized employment, it is spending time with the job seeker in a variety of settings and letting them direct that opportunity so asking them where they want to go. Sometimes you have to start with here are three options. You choose which one. The first time I did this, I remember asking a young adult, what would you like to do, and they said I don't know, what do you want to do? You decide, what do you want to do today? He said I don't know, what do you want to do? We did that three times and I realized I'm not getting an answer out of him. I said well, we could go out to eat, we could go shopping, we could go back home and you could show me your bedroom. He said oh! Okay! I would like to go out to eat! I said great. I said where would you like to go out to eat. He said I don't know, where do you want to go out to eat. He

realized I'm going to have to work slowly with him and give him options but it was ultimately him who directed where we were going to go. Slide 28 it. Here is an example of a young person I worked with. She's been working for a lot of years. This is kind of what I'm talking about when we talk about discovery. This is what Mattie's file told me. She had a developmental disability, she was deaf and blind. She lived in an institution most of her life. She failed in quotes at several workplace. She was non-verbal with lots of behavior outbursts and moved very slowly and was very stubborn. That didn't tell me a lot. I spent a lot of time with Mattie what we discovered, it was that she's actually super curious, she loved variety and loved learning new things. We introduced a tactile communication system for her. She loved learning how to use it. She was sneaky, when we went to the YMCA, she picked the Whirlpool, never the bicycle, she was loving it, always smiling, she enjoyed cooking, smelling the food, stirring, that physicalness of cooking, coring, she also liked swimming. She really liked sitting in the Whirlpool long story short! You can't see but you can see the difference, the file said one thing, but when we spent time with her, she had a lot going for her. Every Friday we would do something and we would go have lunch at the Pizza Hut which was five blocks from her home. We did this for literally six months. Finally one day the manager came up to me -- you have to remember, Mattie is deaf, blind, has an intellectual disability and I would sit and talk to her. She didn't talk back to me. She would talk and I would watch her. The manager came up, said well, what's the story here? I said what do you mean what's the story? He said, yeah, you're here like every Friday with her, and it is kind of cool how I watch her order her own pizza and her own drink and -- but yeah, what's going on. I told him, you know, she lives in a community, she's looking for a job, and I'm just spending time with her to find out a little bit more about her, what she can do. Slide 29. So I took a look at all of this

as I'm talking to the employer. I said what are good jobs for Mattie, what would an employer value in her, she likes to cook, likes to be busy working with hands, likes swimming, that's good too. Apparently those bottom two of two, those are things that an employer would really value. Slide 30. So for 18 years Mattie worked at Pizza Hut. Not your typical food and fit industry, seriously, because she couldn't do a lot of the things that an employer there wanted, we were able to customize because he saw her skills and abilities by hanging out with her in the community. When he asked me what's the story, he said you know what, I have a son with a disability and I hope this is something that's around when he graduates high school. He was 3 at the time. I said I'm sure we'll be around! But Mattie started out making the pooh zoo sauce when Pizza Hut made the sauce, they don't do that anymore so that job then moved into stocking the salad bar, and then she made pizza boxes, she filled salt and pepper shakers, actually she filled salt shaker, pepper made her sneeze so we stopped doing that pepper. She did all kinds of jobs that were really important for the business and worked there for 18 years and she outlived 12 managers and the 12th manager came in, said, yeah, we're going to have to lay her off, because it was during the recession. First I was devastated and thought 18 years at Pizza Hut, she needs to move on. So long story short, six -- the last six years she's now working as an assistant in the office at the Menomonee Falls school district where she purges files, shreds, colate, does all kinds of tasks and she's making -- I believe last I heard she was making \$9 an hour. Slide 31. Customized employment is employment where we look at job tasks and reassign them from an existing job, or we restructure them from one or more existing job cans, or we actually create something to match the skills and accommodation needs of the job seeker and business. Slide 32. The thing that's really important to remember, it

is that the benefits have to outweigh the costs. >> We're on 33. Yeah. The difference between job placement and development -- I know that earlier, it is important to really remember, job placement, it is looking at the opportunities that already exist in a business or in a community. What happens with a job placement, it is that it puts job seekers in direct competition with job seekers without disabilities. Here we go. There are existing openings. You know, it is kind of filling an order, seeing if that person can fit. Job development, which is really the epitomy of customized employment, we look at the unique skills, gifts, tamn'ts of that person, and then we develop or create opportunities within the labor market and negotiate those opportunities to meet the needs of both the individual job seeker and the employer. The combination builds that employment piece. What's really important to remember, that's the next slide, Slide 34, what I was going to say before, there was a slide up there talking about the cost benefit that no matter what we do with customized employment, it has to benefit the business as well as the job seeker. It has to be a win/win between both. So after discovering, after we get to know the individual, now we really need to look at the essential elements of working with the business. This is straight out of WINTAC, a technical assistance center and the website is listed there. This is essential elements to avoid using job openings and typical personnel processes, so we need to make sure that we are using job openings in an appropriate way. I might use them to open up a door to get into a business. I might say to karma labs in Franklin, Wisconsin, I have noticed that you have a lot of jobs out there. I'm interested to know a bit more about your business. When they find out that I work with people with disabilities they usually say no, we're not interested, we don'ts have any opportunities and my response is always great, I'm not looking to have you hire anybody right now, I'm just looking to find out what kinds of job opportunities

do you have. Then businesses love to talk about their businesses. Using connections and networks. The individual student, their family, your connections and networks together, developing strategies as employees identify areas of need through interviews and empathize customized job descriptions and negotiating the support plan. 35. The first thing you want to do is find out as much as you can about which companies exist in the community. Do any of them hire based on the type of work that your job seeker is looking for. Also what's really important again, it is remember the peanuts cartoon, is it the kind of work culture, the atmosphere that you would want that job seeker to be in. Does it match their temperament and preferences. Where do you start looking? The business sections of newspapers, that's the biggest friend, go online, see what business publications are out there, join and participate in the Chambers of Commerce, other professional organizations, become an active member, don't just put the sign on the door saying that you're a member but go out, go to the business after hours event and go to the networking lunches, go to the American job centers or the workforce centers, the one stops, we call them different things and go there and they have business associates that connect with businesses too. So find ways to collaborate with them. Go on the Internet, Facebook, company websites, Google, your own boards of directors, all of them are on your board for a reason. Even school board members, they're on the board for a reason. Go to them. Ask them, you know, tell me a little bit about your business. Would you open up your doors to do a work-based learning experience or hire a student or young adult? Then really most importantly, it is the personal sphere of influence, that network that youth have, that families have, that you yourself have. Slide 37. The personal sphere of influence, it is really about all the people you know either directly or indirectly. They could be immediate family members, distant relatives, close friends, casual

acquaintances, people that you do business with, people that do business with you. All of the people, and there is a book that says that every person has about 250 people in their personal sphere of influence. So tap into the networks. People will know people that know people that could hire our youth with disabilities. Slide 38. So getting your foot in the door, things to remember, you want to have a good elevator speech. The elevator speech should be talking about the fact that you are an innovative business resource. Not that you are assisting youth with disabilities and other challenges in getting a job. You want to focus on the fact that you're here for them, you're here to find out about the business and that you're able to help the business. Slide 39. These are just a couple of ideas of being able to make a request easy for an employer to say yes to. The company provides area businesses with employee recruitment and retention support. Our success comes from learning about the hiring needs and expectations of businesses. I'd like to learn a bit more about your company and arrange a tour to see work firsthand. Most employeries say yes to that. They like to say talk about their business. Another one, I work with students interested in your industry, the industry you're in. I would love to set up a 20-minute visit to see what you do and talk to you about the skills needed to work in this field so I can help the students learn what they need for these types of jobs. Again, employers are going to say great! I'm always going to be looking for good, quality workers. Slide 41. So this is Patrick. This is a young man that we worked with who, again, was connected to his community. He was on the intermural basketball team, he was a black belt in Karate and not a special black belt, he was truly a black belt in Karate. He was part of his local church and he would go and every week during the summer he would go out and build houses or rebuild things and, you know, be a part of the community. People knew Patrick as a contributing member to their community. That's how he got his job. It was that

he was out in North Carolina with his church building homes that had been destroyed by the hurricane. One of the young men that worked with him and his dad owned this company, he came back from Wisconsin, I have this great young man, he has that great work ethic we have hire him, we didn't tell him that he had this syndrome, he came back, he was like, yes, let's do it. What's great about that story, it is that this company thought they did the right thing and they he had given a lot of work to the local workshop, the facility, thinking it was a good thing to give people opportunities to work, they brought all of that work back and created an opportunity for Patrick to work. He still works there today. It has been ten year, he's been there for a long time. His connection to the community, people seeing him as a viable employee, it was part of the way that Patrick was successful. Slide 42. So during your meeting, your tour, you are kind of Kolumbo, you're a detective, you're asking a lot of questions. What about this, who does that, how does that work? So finding out about customer, employee complaints, are there logjams, backlogs, long lead times that need to be addressed or unassigned, but very critical tasks that need to be done that don't get done because other things take precedence because of burnout, high turnover in certain areas or managers and key staff pulled away from core tasks that don't get done. Are there certain times of the year where they have crunch times like the holidays, are there times that important tasks need to be done during seasonal times, talking about all of these things, finding out as much as you can about that business, asking a lot of questions, being that detective will help you to find out how to best meet the needs of the business through one of your candidates, through one of the students. Slide 43. We do this through the informational interview. The question again for the information interview is not do you have any jobs, that's not what you do during an informational interview. During an informational interview you're learning more

about that company. The question is, I want to learn more about your business. I want to learn more about your industry. That is -- those are the questions and that's what an informational interview leads to, good customized employment. Slide 44. So this is an example of Maddie. Maddie did her own informational interview, we went out with her, were walking around the community, she said I want to go to Fresh Time. A farmer market. She said her mom shops there and she's always wanted to go, an interest of hers, she had three main interests and one was baking. She wanted to do that. We took her to these places for art, music, it was another one, and baking. We went in, we talked to the manager of the bakery department and we started to talk and asking about what they do and then Maddie says so how many people work in the bakery. The manager said four. She said well I think you should have five and the fifth one should be me. She said here is what I can do. She started showing how she could organize the bread and restock things and so long story short, her informational interview led to an internship that ultimately led to employment for her. This is a 19-year-old young girl who I think has a future in negotiating skills. Slide 45. So customizing employment for students with significant disabilities, you want to make sure that you approach an employer you know or you spend time developing a relationship. That relationship with the employer is super important. You want to sell yourself, your service, not your program, but your services, you want to use features to benefits, and you want to focus on job seeker assets, one of the benefits, the benefits, they have to outweigh everything, create a customized task list for that person, and you want to be honest that this person may need some extra support and so you want to make sure you support that extra support. Slide 46. So my final story, it is Ivan, this is his positive personal profile, we had done a person-centered planning meeting with him, we had neighbors, family, they all came together to talk

about Ivan, helping him transition from school to work. These are some things that came up in his planning meeting we included in the positive personal profile. He loved sports, especially all Wisconsin sports because he's from Wisconsin. He was sweet, he was independent, he had a close knit family. He loved to joke around, he was a hard worker. Very smart. Slide 47. Through the meeting, two of his siblings came up, you know, we go to school at Marquette University, we think you should contact Marquette. Here is the name of somebody at the recreation complex that you may want to talk to. We did. During our informational interview we found out that they had five full- sized basketball courts with 2,000 students and alumni using the facility every day. If you are anywhere from the Midwest where it is minus 50 today I believe, the courts, they were filthy because in the winter everybody brings in snow and salt and it is just a mess. The janitorial staff never had time to clean them. It wasn't a priority for them. They didn't really like to do it. Slide 48. So what we did, we completed the informational interview, then we refined the tasks based on the needs of the business. We compared it to Ivan's positive personal profile. We presented an employment proposal to Marquette and set up a working interview. We negotiated the terms of this employment. Slide 49. This is the proposal, things that Ivan loves, he loves Marquette, sports, he's persistent, hard worker, easy to work with. Then we refine the task of cleaning the five courts during the peak time, adapting the wet mop so that he could drag it behind him, you will see that he uses a wheelchair, and that he could also pick up extra basketballs left behind during the time that people were there. Slide 50. As a result, he is now known as the human Zambo had ni, you see him to the right, he attached his wheelchair the wet mop, his favorite parts of the job is telling the players to get off the court so he can sweep and mop the floors. He picks up the balls and he's become such a great employee there that they have

asked limb to do the intermural sports and making sure that he does the scoring for them during intermural times. So super successful based on his interests in customizing employment. Slide 51. So things to remember, listen to your job seekers. Don't expect them to stay in jobs they don't like. We wouldn't. Always focus on a person's skills, abilities, tapping their assets, what they can offer to a business, not their deficits. Be strategic in approaching targeted companies and get to know them. Develop relationships with them. Understand that you have to infiltrate that hidden job market so that networking, connecting with the businesses, the chamber of commerce meetings, other places. AI Slide 52. Always remember that employers are looking for employees, no matter what. Even in times of recession, they're always looking for good employees who are interested in their business and willing to learn. Get to know employers, relationships, it is huge, present relevant skills, again, focusing on the assets of that person, use a visual resume, try reverse job fairs, but be professional in how you present that job seeker. Slide 53. The final thought, it is in the end, it is important to remember that we cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are. That to me sums up what customized employment is all about. >> CALEB: Thank you. That's really great. We have a few minutes left. Maybe we can squeeze in a few questions. So how can -- well, what are some of the biggest fears or concerns that employers may have when it comes to customized employment? What kind of thing can a job developer do to address those concerns? >> LAURA OWENS: A great question. When we talk about customized employment, it is really about the relationship. If you have a relationship with that business or with that employer, and you can connect with them, then it is much easier to ask them, you know, what are you afraid of? What are the concerns about hiring this person? When you just go in cold off the street, try to say, okay, I'll try to customize this opportunity and pull

different jobs and pull them together, then employers are more fearful of things like liability, they have to be able to do all of these jobs, they have to be able to be cross trained, that's when you get the barriers. If I go in a business, I really develop that relationship over time, so customized employment, it is really not something that happens in a minutes. You really have to spend time in the community. When I see our employment consultants sitting behind their desk, it I worry. They need to be in the community. Employers are much more willing to say, okay, you know, I'm going to give this a try. I know you, I trust you. So those fears and concerns, they're kind of elevated. >> Is it necessary to manage expectations of employers or the youth that we're looking to create an opportunity for? If so, how do you go about doing that. >> LAURA OWENS: That's a really good question. Going back to the expectations, sometimes what will happen, we customize an employment opportunity and that's their job forever. It is kinds of already that low expectation. They go in, they do just that one thing. So Maddie for example, she could have gone in and only made pizza sauce which meant she would lose her job earlier because they wouldn't have seen her as being able to do other tasks. We expanded her tasks. When you customize employment, you want to make sure that this is just -- this is their entry level. When they fist start a job, they'll be able to work sort of at this baseline and as you support people, you want them to understand and the employer to understand we want you to know, add more job duties so that person is seen as a more valuable employee. Patrick has multiple jobs that he does on the job that he didn't start out doing. He's doing them now. Now he's seen as a valuable employee. Then the job seeker starts to see themselves in a different light. Wow, I can actually do these kinds of things. >> CALEB: One more question here: What are the biggest benefits of customized employment? >> LAURA OWENS: I think the biggest benefit is that it meets the need of the business and the

job seeker. The reality is, I think we forget that we are all supported employees, and we all have customized jobs. Employers have job descriptions, but those are only recommendations really. Most of us have job descriptions, most of us don't know what's on our job description. If we do, we don't do everything equally well. We are customizing our job cans because employers look at us and say, wow, I hired you for all of this, you are really good at these three things. I want you to focus on these three things. Customized employment should not be seen as this thing we do for just people with disabilities. It is something that we all do. We're all supported in our jobs by family, coworkers, friends, then we have customized jobs. Employers look at us, they say these are the skills that you're bringing to my business, and as long as I'm a value to that business, then they'll keep me on. >> CALEB: Fantastic. A great way to end. Thank you, everyone, for joining us. As a reminder, we'll be sending out session evaluations. Check out the email for that. We would love to hear your feedback on today's session. Slide 55. For a certificate of participation or CRCC credit, the code that you need to submit to us is work. Work. You can consult the reminder email about how to submit that to us. Be sure to submit that by 5:00 p.m. eastern time on Wednesday, February 6th. Slide 56. Transcen is a national organization offering web-based and in-person training for state agencies, school districts, provider organizations, and others interested in meaningful work and community inclusion for individuals with disabilities. You can check out our website for upcoming training and webinars at Transcen.org. You can call us with any questions that you have at 305-424-2002 and also email us at inquiries@transcen.org. On behalf of Laura and Transcen, we thank you for joining us today.

This text, document, or file is based on live transcription. Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART), captioning, and/or live transcription are provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings.
