EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST TOOLS

People who are job coaches too often think of their roles strictly as "trainers" – that is they train people with disabilities how to do their jobs, and then monitor the person's performance. Job coaches need to constantly remind themselves that they are not just "trainers" but instead "workplace consultants", figuring out ways that the person with a disability can succeed in their job, without relying on the job coach for training or direction. It is important for the job coach to realize that there are wide number of strategies or "tools" that are available to them to assist a person with a disability to succeed on the job, and that direct training of the individual is only one of these tools. In fact, direct training of the person with a disability on how to do the tasks of a job should be used only after other, more "natural" strategies (which don't require the direct intervention of a job coach), have been considered and tried. The following are some of the "tools" or strategies that a job coach should use in their role of "workplace consultant" (this list is by no means exhaustive).

1. **Direct Training of Individual on Tasks:** Directly instructing the individual with a disability on how to perform the tasks of their job

2. **Systematic Instruction:** Breaking a job task down to individual steps, that the person with a disability can understand. The job coach then leads the person with a disability systematically through the steps of the job task, always providing the instruction the same way. Through repetition, the individual master's the steps of the task. Similar to breaking down individual tasks, a person's routine during the workday can be broken down similarly.

3. **Assisting Individual to Meet Production Goals:** Directly assisting the individual with a disability to perform the tasks of their job, so that they complete the required production or tasks of the job

4. **Assistive Technology:** Devices (including simple, low technology devices and more complex high technology devices including APPS) that assist a person with a disability to complete the tasks of their job. An example of a low technology device is a head pointer so that a person with limited use of their hands can use a computer keyboard; a high technology device would be a voice input computer, or a self-instruction video on a smartphone.

5. **Positive rewards:** Rewards for proper completion of a task. Can include items that already exist within the workplace such as break, lunch, paycheck, end of the day and time off. Job coaches can also use other rewards such as buying the worker a soda, stopping on the way home for coffee, taking the worker to some place they enjoy after work, etc.

6. **Natural Supports - on & off the job site:** Supports that are part of a person's life, and that don't come from professionals. These can include a wide variety of items and strategies, but some of the more obvious examples are: having a co-worker (rather than the job coach)

provide instruction and assistance to the worker with a disability; having the worker with a disability participate in the typical training program for new employees; having a co-worker take the person with a disability to lunch (instead of the job coach); having the person with a disability take a car pool with co-workers to work (rather than agency staff providing transportation).

7. **Employer Training:** Providing training to co-workers, supervisors and others concerning how to work with, assist and supervise the employee with a disability; and provide for the support needs of the individual

8. **Self-Maintenance Techniques:** Methods used by a worker with a disability so that they complete the tasks of a job, without being assisted by a job coach or another individual. Some examples include: check-off lists; picture books (with pictures of the individual performing the various tasks of the job); production grids

9. **Identifying Natural Cues:** Identifying items that already exist within a task or the workplace, which will communicate to the person with a disability to perform the next step of a job. Examples include the light on a copy machine that indicates a job is complete; all co-workers leaving an area, indicating it is time for break.

10. **Adding Cues:** Providing additional cues that don't readily exist within the work environment, so that the worker with a disability knows that the next step of a task or job is. Examples include putting lines on containers with similar colored tape or dots, indicating which supplies need to be filled, or which parts go together; setting the watch alarm of a worker with a disability, so they know when it's time to go home.

11. **Reasonable Accommodations:** Changing work routines or work settings to accommodate the needs of the person with a disability. Reasonable accommodations are required of employers under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA has specific criteria concerning what is considered "reasonable" and "not reasonable". Some of the factors considered include the cost of the accommodation, the resources of the employer, and the impact the accommodation will have on the workplace. Some typical examples: installing a ramp for a person who uses a wheelchair, rearranging a work station so that items are easily accessible; reassigning non-essential tasks to other staff; modifying work schedules.