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Testing Accommodations

Students in the Job Corps program participate in many types of formalized assessments, including classroom tests and exams, the TABE and GED, and certification exams. Some of these formalized assessments or tests are known as standardized tests. Standardized tests are (1) administered under standardized or controlled conditions that specify where, when, how, and for how long the participant responds to questions and, (2) used to compare where the student’s performance falls in relation to the normative group (i.e., the individuals with a certain set of characteristics for whom the test was designed).

Why is so much emphasis placed on testing accommodations, particularly in Job Corps? Think about the TABE, for instance, and how many functions that one assessment serves. The TABE serves as

1. A placement measure so that staff knows where to place a student within the academic program.
2. An outcomes measure of how well the student is progressing in the program.
3. A performance measure to gauge the overall program’s success in educating students in the areas of reading and math.



Therefore, maintaining the highest degree of standardization in these testing environments is critically important to ensuring that testing results accurately reflect a student’s and a center’s growth and performance, to the extent such a test is designed to do so. Providing accommodations to students with disabilities means that the way in which the test is administered is being changed, sometimes only slightly and sometimes more significantly, and these changes ultimately impact the validity of the test scores. Given this, extra care needs to be taken when deciding upon or agreeing upon accommodations that will be granted and included in the student’s accommodation plan.

When the reasonable accommodation committee (RAC) is reviewing accommodations that a student has requested or is discussing needed accommodations with an applicant or student, the following considerations should be made:

- Is the student a person with a disability supported by documentation, or is the disability obvious (e.g., blind, deaf, etc.)?
- Are the accommodations being considered related to the type of disability that the student has? For example, a person with a reading disability would not be granted the use of a calculator unless he/she also had a math-related disability.
- Does the RAC have a copy of McGraw-Hill’s Inclusive Testing Guide as a reference for the types of accommodations that are allowed for TABE use?
- If a student needs TABE accommodations, does he/she also need the same accommodations for the GED test and/or certification exam, if either apply? If not, why not and why would they still be needed for the TABE?
- Accommodations that alter the content of the TABE are not allowable (e.g., paraphrasing sentences, defining vocabulary words, etc.). Doing so means that the structure of the test is being altered and, therefore, would impact the test’s validity and reliability.

Testing Accommodations *(cont'd)*

Other considerations:

- Accommodations needed for the standardized testing should typically also be provided in the day-to-day academic and training environments. Students need exposure to the accommodation to develop familiarity with it and ensure its effectiveness.
- Ensure that accommodations needed for the first TABE test are input into CIS prior to the student actually taking the test. Failure to input the identified accommodations into CIS prior to the first TABE test creates three main concerns for the center.
 - First, the student is not being provided the accommodations already agreed upon, which is a legal obligation for the program.
 - Second, the standardization of the testing outcomes is unnecessarily compromised as the student goes from taking an unaccommodated to an accommodated test situation on the same test. Sometimes this happens when a student initially refuses accommodations or discloses after the fact but then the center can justify why the testing situation went from an unaccommodated to an accommodated one.
 - Third, the center is also measured on testing outcomes and all efforts to avoid any appearance of purposely impacting testing outcomes should be considered.

Become familiar with the process and documentation requirements to assist a student in securing accommodations from the GED Testing Service and the various certification exam entities that apply to your specific center. *For a link to the GED accommodation request forms, see the Disability Resources section.*

Job Corps Participates in NDEAM

Gary: The health and wellness manager wrote an article for the wellness newsletter, the Panther Pulse, highlighting National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). The article also discussed employability skills which are often a barrier for people with disabilities looking for meaningful employment. The article explained how the Gary Job Corps center supports students with disabilities as they learn the career success standards.



Joliet: For NDEAM, the center conducted staff training on various accommodations and had two high school students visit the center and speak with students about their disabilities.

Los Angeles: The center held a Disability Fair and 200 students participated. They hosted several agencies and organizations that work with students with disabilities, including the Braille Institute. Two students also went to City Hall to participate in Disability Mentoring Day where they witnessed the NDEAM proclamation ceremony.

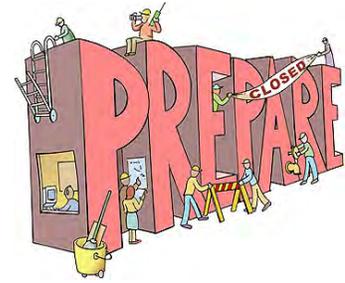
Montgomery: Staff from Easter Seals and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) conducted presentations for students. Easter Seals provided an overview of their job training programs and NAMI provided information on their services and explained the stigmas associated with mental health.

Pittsburgh: The academic manager created a customer service class in which students used the “Skills to Pay the Bills” curriculum published by the Office of Disability Employment Policy. The center also provided handouts on disclosure (how/when/what/where) to employers and various disability employment materials to both the career transition readiness and career transition services staff.

Westover: The center created an obstacle course. Students placed their dominant arm in a sling, and using their non-dominant arm put on their uniform, placed books in a backpack, wrote sentences, and performed other daily life activities. The center also had students navigate the campus in wheelchairs and share their experience. The purpose of the event was to show students what people with disabilities “can do” on a daily basis.

Preparing for Your ROCA

As most of you know, a review of the center's Disability Program is part of the center's Regional Office Center Assessment (ROCA). The disability coordinators are an integral part of the review. Here are some tips to help your center prepare for this portion of the ROCA.



Accommodation Files: There should be one accommodation file for each student receiving accommodations. These files should be stored in a single location and maintained in a locked storage cabinet/file. Accommodation files should contain the following:

- Notes/updates summarizing all actions related to the provisions of the accommodations. This can be completed either by using the notes tab function in CIS or by handwritten records.
- IEPs and non-medical supporting documentation.
- CIS accommodation plan with both the disability coordinator's and the student's signature.
- Accommodation effectiveness reviews.
- Signed reasonable accommodation request form.

The accommodation file may also contain:

- Referral form
- Transition plan
- Positive behavioral plan

Accommodation Process–Staff Notification: Ensure staff knows about new or updated accommodation plans by sending a weekly email to center staff. A disability coordinator should maintain these emails as documentation of completing this requirement.

Accommodation Process–Effectiveness Reviews: Review accommodation plans as part of the evaluation of student performance panel process at least every 60 days, and include the student's input. This documentation should become part of the student's accommodation file.

Referral Form: Ensure a referral form is available to staff should they have a disability/accommodation concern. File referral forms in the accommodation file or in the student's health record if an accommodation plan does not exist.

Customized Partnership Tool: The Disability Program partnership tool assists centers with documenting their efforts to establish partnerships. During your ROCA, use this tool to show your efforts in establishing partnerships with outside agencies in serving students with disabilities.

Administrative:

- Secure a space for the reviewer to work.
- Schedule staff and student interviews and have an area available to conduct the interviews.
- Complete pre ROCA questions and either email to the reviewer prior to visit or provide when he/she arrives on center.
- Have all requested materials readily available.

The more prepared you are for the visit, the quicker the reviewer can complete the review and provide technical assistance to improve the center's Disability Program. *Please visit the Disability Coordinator Orientation page on the Job Corps Disability website for additional resources.*

Spotlight on Assistive Technology

Trade: Retail

Scenario: We have several students with a variety of learning disabilities and mental health disorders in the retail trade. What types of assistive technology are available to assist these students once they transition into the workforce?

There are many accommodations using assistive technology available for students with disabilities in the retail industry. Some examples of accommodations include:

Disability: Learning

Scenario: A clerk with dyslexia

Solution/Benefits: The Reading Pen 2 Tutor (<http://www.enablemart.com/Catalog/Wizcom-Reading-Pens/ReadingPen-2>) and the Franklin Talking Dictionary (<http://www.maxiaids.com/products/87/Franklin-Spanish-English-Talking-Dictionary.html>) provide users with reading difficulties and dyslexia immediate word support and assist with reading and comprehension.



Reading Pen 2



Franklin Talking Dictionary

Disability: ADHD

Scenario: A cashier who does not always remember to close out the cash register at the end of the workday.

Solution/Benefits: A checklist created by the employee's supervisor outlining the proper procedures for closing out the cash register at the end of the workday that is posted in a static location.



Disability: Low Vision

Scenario: A stockperson with low vision who has difficulty with seeing in dimly lit areas.

Solution/Benefits: The lighted pen (<http://www.pinnaclepromotions.com/promotional-product/Alexis-Lighted-Ballpoint/1455/4944/>) and headlamp flashlight

(<http://www.botachtactical.com/stenedhe.html>) offers the individual additional light in dimly lit areas, which makes it easier to complete

paperwork or inventory. The portable magnifier makes it easier for an employee to read tags on merchandise.



Lighted Ball Point Pen



Headlamp Flashlight

Amigo Portable Magnifier



Disability: Mental Health Disorder

Scenario: An individual with a mood disorder that is inattentive to details and frequently forgets job tasks.

Solution/Benefits: Using the talking keychain (<http://www.maxiaids.com/products/2601/Talking-Key-Chain-Square-White-.html>), the employee's supervisor can record step-by-step directions for specific tasks (i.e., procedures for opening the store, checking messages, or doing inventory). The digital voice recorder (http://www.jr.com/olympus/pe/OLM_VN7200/) enables the individual to record their daily job tasks assigned to them by their supervisor.



Talking Keychain



Olympus Digital Voice Recorder VN-7200

Disability Resources

Testing Accommodations

McGraw Hill Inclusive Testing Guide <http://www.access.nyed.gov/aapp/documents/guidelinesforinclusivetestadministration.pdf>
GED Testing Accommodation applications <http://www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/accommodations-for-disability>

Job Corps Program Instruction Notice 12-18

The PRH requires centers to complete and update annually an accessibility plan. The plan should focus on readily achievable barrier removal—things center staff can do to make the center more accessible that are easily accomplishable and able to be carried out without much difficulty or expense. There are new tools to complete this plan and a sample center accessibility plan is now available.

Disability Coordinator Tools

A new sample referral form is now available on the Disability Coordinator Orientation Page of the Job Corps Disability website.

Emergency Preparedness

Emergencies and disasters can be particularly concerning for people with disabilities. The Pacific ADA Center in collaboration with the Great Lakes ADA Center offered free webinars that focus on key strategies and approaches at various levels (federal, state, and local) toward emergency management and preparedness and the inclusion of people with disabilities. The materials from each session are available on the Job Corps Disability website under the Training and Webinars section, Emergency Preparedness.

Upcoming Job Corps Disability Webinars

- **An Introduction to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD): Providing Accommodations & Supports to Students with PTSD**
Wednesday, 12/19/12, 11:00 am EST (10:00 CST, 9:00 MST, 8:00 PT) and 4:00 PM EST (3:00 CST, 2:00 MST, 1:00 PST)
- **People First Language: Words with Dignity for People with disAbilities - Disability Awareness/Sensitivity (People First Language)**
Wednesday, 1/17/13, 11:00 AM EST (10:00 CST, 9:00 MST, 8:00 PT) and 4:00 PM EST (3:00 CST, 2:00 MST, 1:00 PST)
- **Understanding and Accommodating Students With Emotional Disabilities (ED) and Severe Emotional Disabilities (SED)**
Wednesday, 1/30/13, 11:00 AM EST (10:00 CST, 9:00 MST, 8:00 PST) and 4:00 PM EST (3:00 CST, 2:00 MST, 1:00 PST)
- **Creating Your Center Accessibility Plan**
Tuesday, 2/12/13, 11:00 AM EST (10:00 CST, 9:00 MST, 8:00 PST) and 4:00 PM EST (3:00 CST, 2:00 MST, 1:00 PST)
- **Accessible Recreation: Removing Barriers for Students with Disabilities**
Wednesday, 2/20/13, 11:00 AM EST (10:00 CST, 9:00 MST, 8:00 PST) and 4:00 PM EST (3:00 CST, 2:00 MST, 1:00 PST)
- **Disability Coordinator Orientation**
Wednesday, 2/27/13, 11:00 AM EST (10:00 CST, 9:00 MST, 8:00 PST) and 4:00 PM EST (3:00 CST, 2:00 MST, 1:00 PST)

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