

Assessing the Impact of a Person Centered Behavioral Support Program on the Employment of People With Disabilities in the U.S. Virgin Islands

Kimberly R. Mills, Ph.D.¹, BCBA-D, Christopher Smith, Ph.D.², Jennifer Zarcone, Ph.D., BCBA-D³

Abstract: The employment of people with disabilities has been and remains a top priority for Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD). Members of VIUCEDD partnered with disability employment experts and behavioral support experts at Kennedy Krieger Institute to develop a pilot program that would merge best practices in disability employment supports, best practices in behavioral supports, and best practices in transition planning for people with disabilities to develop a comprehensive plan to support the employment needs of people with disabilities. The data presented below indicate a mean increase in knowledge of employers and job coaches in relation to disability knowledge and initial favorable trends in relation to decreases in maladaptive behaviors for one candidate associated with this study.

Problem Statement

- * People with disabilities are unemployed at rates of 20.6% to 36% between ages 21-64, compared with 70% or more than those without disabilities.
- * College students: with disabilities at 52.7%, and without at nearly 84%.
- * People with physical and mental impairments at 16% and 7% respectively.
- * Effective, evidence-based supported employment interventions for people with disabilities are available.
- * Evidence-based supported employment includes: pre-employment assessment, client preferences, collaboration with providers, and ongoing job coaching.
- * Person-centered planning is a cornerstone of good disability transition services.
- * Applied behavior analysis (ABA) shows potential for improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities.
- * Lack of literature on ABA supports in the service of disability employment.



Hypothesis

This preliminary research will serve as a pilot program to assess three effective treatment modalities, i.e. supported employment, person-centered planning, and applied behavior analysis, in an integrated and innovative approach to help meet the employment needs of people with disabilities.

Materials and Methods

- * Study participants include 8 young adults with disabilities who are registered with Vocational Rehabilitation Services, 8 employers and 8 job coaches residing in the U.S. Virgin Islands on the Islands of St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix.
- * Assessment from multiple sources and multiple settings implicit in a behavior analytic intervention, combined with the focus on socially-significant behavior change, makes this type of intervention a natural fit and companion for a person-centered approach to disability services.
- * Each employee candidate will undergo a person-centered planning process at the beginning of this intervention. Additionally, characteristics of the person-centered approach to disability planning are inherent in the science of Applied Behavior Analysis.
- * A pre/post-test assessment of 15-item multiple choice items about disability knowledge was administered among employers and job coaches prior to a two-hour training on disabilities and again immediately afterwards.
- * Job coaches also engaged in a two-hour training on Applied Behavior Analytic methodologies and data collection techniques. They were trained on individual protocols and data collection techniques in relation to their individual candidate.



Acknowledgements

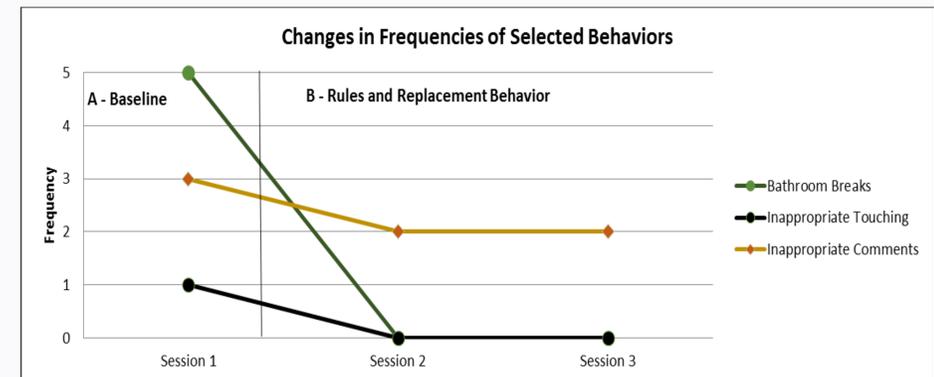
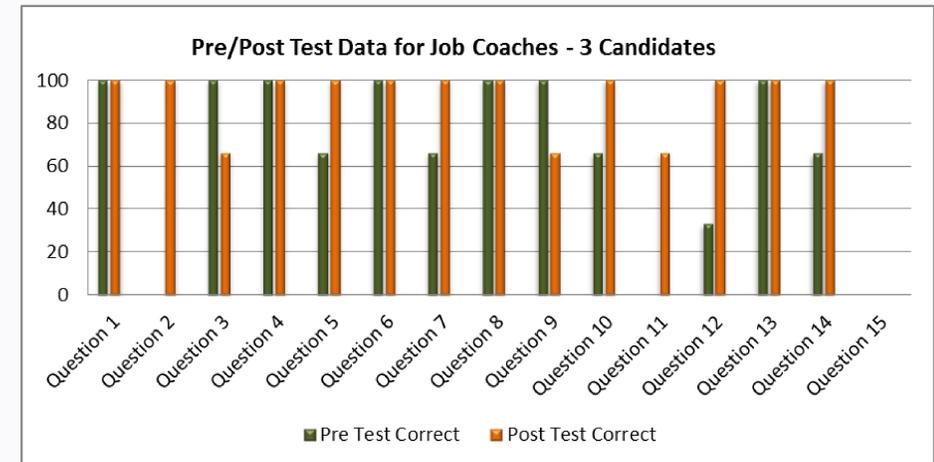
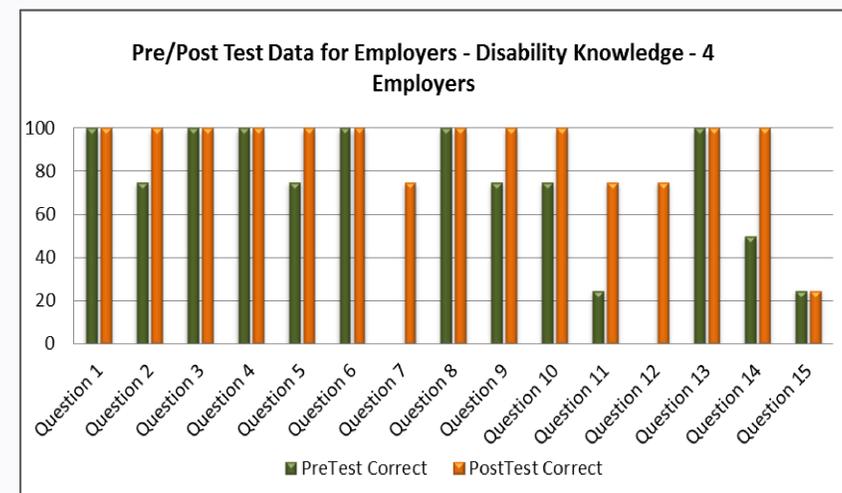
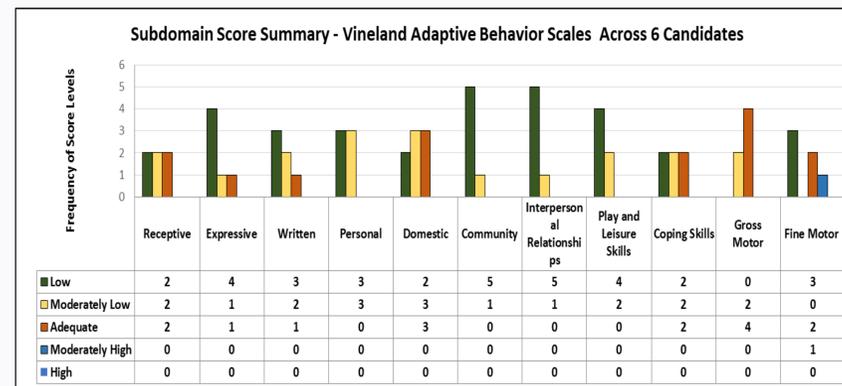
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Employee subjects all received or will receive a:

- * Person Centered Planning Meeting with a multidisciplinary team
- * Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale
- * Functional Behavior Assessment
- * Behavior Intervention Plan Development when applicable
- * A treatment planning guidebook with data collection systems and plans complete with individualized problem behavior protocols, data systems to track skill-building along adaptive inventories, and behavior reduction along maladaptive behavior domains.
- * Other career interest inventories and surveys
- * Ongoing monitoring of data and treatment

Results

- * Among employers, there was a net gain of knowledge between pre and post-test assessments related to disability knowledge. The total correct answers on pretest responses was 40 versus 54 on posttest assessments for employers.
- * Among job coaches, there was a net gain in correct responses as well with their pretest data totaling 29 correct responses versus 39 at post-test follow up.
- * All 8 disability employment candidates demonstrated severe deficits in adaptive behaviors, based on the results of the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Inventories.
- * Preliminary single subject data indicates reductions in problem behaviors.



Conclusions and Next Steps

- * Supported employment candidates with severe deficits in adaptive behaviors are in need of person centered adaptive behavior inventories. Identified deficits can be included in the employment training programs.
- * Employers and job coaches can improve their disability knowledge through exposure to a brief disability training intervention.
- * Future analysis of these data will include the administration/re-administration of the Adult Hope Scale to Caregiver participants to see if project has resulted in any changes related to their responses on the inventory.
- * Ongoing and future data collection will include detailed data collection on a number of adaptive and maladaptive behaviors for the employee subject clientele, the graphing of those data and the use of those data for program modifications.
- * Future iterations of this research will focus on extending those aspects of this study that proved to be effective to a larger group of employee subjects.



Contact Information

Kimberly R. Mills, Ph.D., BCBA-D
Kimberly.Mills@uvi.edu
340-692-4265

1. Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities
2. Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities at Kennedy Krieger Institute
3. Kennedy Krieger Institute, Neurobehavioral Unit