

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT: JOB DEVELOPMENT MODULE, SECTION 6

Stacy: Stacy is 18 years old and has an intellectual disability. She attends a postsecondary transition program at a 2-year Community College where she takes courses. According to her program coordinator and professors, she is not a candidate for work because she is lazy, nonverbal, disrespectful, can't focus on tasks, is consistently late to class and misses a lot of full days. When the job developer went to campus to interview and observe her, Stacy never makes eye contact, does not answer any questions, and actually falls asleep between classes. The coordinator says she has never completed a career assessment and her homework is sporadic at best.

What do you actually do with this young lady?

The job developer actually started working with Stacy by observing her in a number of different environments. She scheduled a meeting at her home, followed by breakfast out, and then taking her to campus.

Here is what she learned.

Stacy lives in a tall tower of a large desolate housing project on the south side of Chicago. She lives with her mother, who has more severe disabilities than she has, and 2 younger siblings and a younger cousin. Their apartment on the 29th floor is spotless once inside, and Stacy runs the show. She prepares all meals, including school lunches for the children and lunch for her mother who has difficulty safely preparing meals (she once started a fire on the stove when she was home alone). Stacy dresses the kids, packs their backpacks, organizes homework, feeds them breakfast, walks the elementary school kids to their bus stop (there had been recent gang fighting cross fire incidents in that project, so she was afraid to let the kids go alone), walks the middle school kid to his bus stop, packs herself up and gets to school – the entire time barking orders and managing the logistics. If one of the children is sick, Stacy stays home with that child. If her mother is having difficulty with her meds in the morning, Stacy waits until it is managed before leaving for class. This explains her many late and absent days.

By the time Stacy headed off to campus, she was tired, worried about the kids getting off the bus stop, worried her mom might start another fire, embarrassed about where she lived, and saw no useful purpose for taking classes in her life. At breakfast, Stacy knew the workers at the restaurant, ordered appropriately, gave the right amount of money and even checked her change. When they sat down at breakfast, Stacy was ready to answer the job developer's questions and she actually learned a lot. When the job developer took her to the college, Stacy was comfortable walking around campus, saying hi to people, and knew her way around comfortably. The job developer could see the change in the way Stacy held her body as she walked into class – at home, hanging out around campus, and in the restaurant, she stood tall and confident; at class she slouched and pulled a hood over her head.

The one-on-one interview did reveal a lot about Stacy. Stacy really likes kids and enjoys being around them. She does not enjoy reading and has difficulty with it, but can get by. This is why she dreads going to her classes; she doesn't want anyone to know about her reading, so she has refused to ask for help in her classes through Disability Support Services. She has an uncle – her mom's brother – who stops by weekly to check on them and help with money. He sometimes takes her food shopping so she doesn't have to walk. When she's not at class, she takes pride in how things look: The apartment is always spotless (there are curtains on all the windows and matching pillows on the furniture), the kids are dressed in cute outfits that she picks out, and underneath her oversized hooded sweatshirt, she actually wears a cute shirt, matching belt and shoes. She is very personable when in comfortable situations, and she exhibits great organizational skills when running the household. She also enjoys sports – particularly basketball and the Chicago Bulls, and she wishes she had more time to go out and be with friends and do more on campus, but she is often at home watching the children and her mother.