

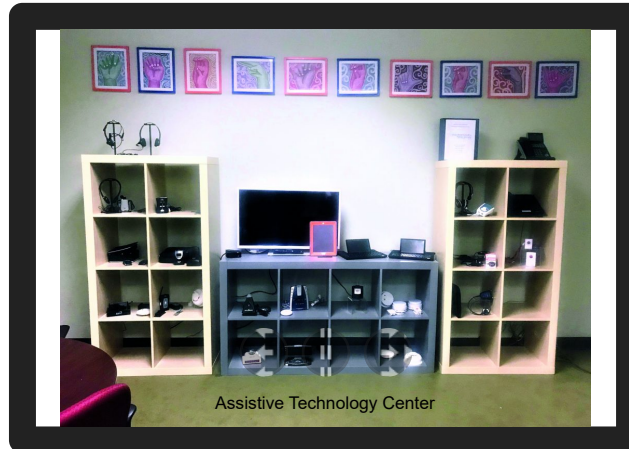


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Area Easterseals center assists disabled persons find jobs

By Shanee Frazier on November 25, 2017 · No Comment



MAPLEWOOD, NJ — Anyone in the area who has ever been told that they can't obtain employment due to a disability should pay a visit to Easterseals New Jersey. The workforce development team of Easterseals New Jersey has located its solution center in the Hammond Map Building on Valley Street in Maplewood.

Through Easterseals Employment Services, individuals with disabilities can secure satisfying work environments that allow them to maximize their potential, while simultaneously making employers aware of the positive benefits that result from establishing disabilities-inclusion initiatives for those with disabilities ranging from physical to developmental, such as autism, as well as mental illness and other special needs.

Easterseals Employment Services program provides support for those with disabilities seeking first-time employment, as well as those looking to return to the workforce after a period of absence. Some of the services provided by the program include: job-development assessment, job sampling, workplace integration, jobsite analysis, job shadowing, and post-placement training and support.

"I think that what sets us apart from other workforce-development programs is that we use an individualized approach in every part of our services, from the discovery services all the way up to our extended supports. Our intake process is very complex where we truly get to know the strengths, weaknesses and work history of an individual so that we can get a real understanding of who they are and provide the best method of support that we can," Director of Supported Employment Daniela Bardesio said in a recent interview.

"My team uses a lot of tools that other agencies don't use to help engage the client so that they become a part of the process instead of just accepting our advice. For example, we use interactive forms

and videos that explain complex situations, like disclosing a disability. We firmly believe in informed choice and it helps every part of their journey be an informed process.”

Bardesio said that, in addition to providing information to clients, the organization also works diligently to provide information to potential employers about the many benefits of hiring someone who has a disability.

“The most difficult part of the work is dealing with society’s preconceived ideas of the employability of individuals with disabilities. It’s something we still come across and struggle with and are very strong advocates for eliminating,” she said. “I have been an Easterseals employee for four years, and we are very mission-driven. Every facility and every service was created on the foundation of addressing different needs, and 70 years later our focus is still to address those needs and ensure that our participants are happy at the end of the day.”

The process of seeking employment through Easterseals is centered on the idea of finding the best fit for the client, no matter how long it takes or what specific needs the individual has.

“The most rewarding part of the job is matching participants with jobs that they truly want. We aren’t a staffing agency; we don’t match jobs to people — we match people to jobs. No matter how farfetched a person thinks their goal is, we unravel the ball to figure out what they want and empower them to pursue it,” Bardesio said.

Once hired, employees are provided with on-the-job training to enhance their job-specific skills, knowledge and competencies, allowing them to perform at their best. Employers see the benefits in employee performance and engagement, with employees expressing greater job satisfaction.

The Valley Street location also houses Northern Career Pathways, a division of Easterseals Employment Services that is focused on those who are deaf or hard of hearing. NCP’s location offers the Assisted Technology Center, which includes a variety of devices available for candidates that can help them to improve their performance.

Demonstrations of the technology are available, including: active hearing protection to amplify signals, voices and warning signals while suppressing harmful noise levels, an alerting device for important sounds such as a doorbell, telephone ringing or emergency alarm. Other examples include Augmentative and Alternative Communication Devices, which enable individuals with speech and language limitations to communicate. Dynamic display speech-output solutions allow users to select the words or phrases they want to say from a series of customized pages on a touch screen. There is a multitude of other technologies also available.

“The biggest misconception for individuals with hearing loss is that because they can’t hear anything, they can’t do anything,” Northern Career Pathways manager Lauren Mackiewicz said in a recent phone interview. “There are a lot of levels of hearing loss and with hearing aids and the right resources they can absolutely do the job.”