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**STRENGTHENING VOCATIONAL SKILLS
IN ADOLESCENTS WITH DISABILITIES:
A REVIEW OF A PEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
WORKFORCE PROGRAM**

by

Jordan Bennie

A Capstone Project Presented to the
FACULTY OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DOCTORATE

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CAPSTONE FINAL PAPER APPROVAL FORM

The Capstone Final Paper is the final product that the OTD students need to complete to report her Capstone Project and her Capstone Experience.

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Degree Sought	Occupational Therapy Doctorate
Department	Occupational Therapy
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We, the undersigned, recommend that the Capstone Final Paper completed by the student listed above, in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements, be accepted by the Georgia State University.

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Abstract

The purpose of this capstone project was to analyze methods of occupational therapy service provision to enhance the delivery of the current workforce program at an outpatient pediatric therapy clinic. The literature review, insight from occupational therapists, and knowledge from experts informed this capstone project. The goals of this experience included: 1) to inform pediatric occupational therapists on beneficial methods, interventions, and resources for the workforce program; 2) to advocate for increased work opportunities for adolescents with disabilities in the community; and 3) to improve workforce program logistics. These three goals bridged the gaps identified in the literature and needs assessment, which revealed areas for improving and streamlining education and promoting awareness within the local community. This doctoral capstone project resulted in a workforce program guide for pediatric occupational therapists, resources for parents, adolescents, and businesses, and new partnerships with local businesses for increased workforce program opportunities. Additional sustainability measures and plans were completed during the experience.

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Summary Pages

Shine Pediatric Therapy endeavors to exceed the norms espoused by conventional outpatient pediatric therapy clinics by consistently striving to enhance inclusivity and broaden opportunities for individuals to integrate more fully into the community. The inception of the Workforce Program in 2023 exemplifies this commitment. It was piloted with one client and one local business. The program aimed to foster vocational skills of the client in a real work environment, supplemented by ongoing occupational therapy services that targeted work outcomes. Structured over six weeks, the Workforce Program included one weekly 2–3-hour work shift alongside a 1-hour occupational therapy session. The occupational therapy component focused on addressing the client’s job challenges. The supplementary therapy was aimed to improve the client’s work performance the following week.

The pilot program yielded valuable insights, highlighting its efficacy in facilitating job skill acquisition within a community-based setting. This outcome was demonstrated by the client’s progression in job task performance and ability to take on additional job responsibilities. Despite the client’s notable success, they did not fully comply with their occupational therapy plan of care during the program. Thus, it was difficult to track progress from a therapeutic perspective and further support their vocational development. This aspect revealed a gap for my capstone project to bridge: Improve compliance regarding attending occupational therapy sessions and following therapeutic recommendations during the Workforce Program.

Due to the client’s inconsistent attendance, there was a lack of therapeutic interventions implemented. Moving forward, the outpatient occupational therapists desired additional guidance regarding overall procedures, approach to intervention, best practices, and meaningful local resources within the Workforce Program. These initial findings also highlighted a need to

identify an overarching model to guide occupational therapists' treatment, share important intervention ideas that could benefit clients' occupational therapy sessions, and locate accessible resources that could help the client and their families. The creation of a comprehensive Workforce Program Guide would help enable occupational therapists to provide higher-quality care to adolescents and their families. An in-service for the occupational therapists would educate them on the intervention ideas, tangible resources, flyers, and information included in the Workforce Program Guide.

Moreover, while the Workforce Program demonstrated potential benefits for adolescents and young adults with disabilities, the limited number of business partnerships presented an obstacle to further implementation. Shine Pediatric Therapy serves many teenagers and young adults who would benefit from further vocational development. Recognizing this, my capstone project expanded its scope to encompass securing more business partnerships. To cultivate these partnerships, part of the project would identify potential businesses and provide relevant education. With additional partnerships available, occupational therapists would have the liberty to place clients in organizations where their strengths and skills would be showcased. My capstone project would also need to support the development of an evaluation tool to assess client suitability for the program as well as the creation of a protocol for assigning clients in well-fitting business environments.

In summary, the purpose of my capstone project is to support the Workforce Program in ways in which clients, families, occupational therapists, and businesses would benefit. It is a multifaceted endeavor that entails extensive research into vocational matching assessments, collaborative consultations with occupational therapists, and exploring local resources to augment clients' and families' understanding of vocational development opportunities. These

components intend to answer my research question: What is occupational therapy's role in developing vocational skills for adolescents with disabilities during a 6-week workforce program?

The culmination of this project aims to enhance access to evidence-based interventions and reliable resources for Shine Pediatric Therapy's occupational therapists, thereby empowering adolescents to strengthen their vocational aptitude. By formalizing the logical framework of the workforce program and disseminating information on additional resources, it aims to streamline the process for therapists and businesses alike. Ultimately the goal is to foster a community where every individual is valued and supported in their pursuit of meaningful employment.

CHAPTER 1

Literature Review

Transition Services

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a pivotal stage, particularly for individuals with disabilities. Compared to their non-disabled counterparts, adolescents with disabilities encounter unique challenges during their transition to adulthood. The Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 provides avenues for individuals to access special education services and individualized supports aimed at addressing “developmental, academic, and social challenges.” (Eismann et al., 2017). However, once a student reaches age 22, they become ineligible for these services and must transition out of the educational system. Consequently, schools bear a significant responsibility in preparing and empowering individuals with disabilities for integration into the broader community and workforce.

A school transition team, often comprised of professionals including occupational therapists, plays a crucial role in ensuring that adolescents receive the personalized support they require. These supports may include vocational training, planning for higher education, acquiring independent living skills, and community participation (Mello et al., 2021). Within this framework, the school system shoulders the responsibility for providing employment experiences, job coaching, as well as assistance with job applications and interview preparation. Occupational therapists emerge as pivotal stakeholders, offering tailored strategies to facilitate job acquisition and foster greater independence in employment settings. These services are indispensable for adolescents with disabilities as they transition from being full-time students to becoming paid employees, enabling their success in the workforce.

In rural and underresourced areas, access to these services can be limited due to the scarcity of available supports and opportunities available. Rural educators often lack sufficient understanding of vocational and transition training for individuals with intellectual disabilities (Brendle et al., 2018). Research by Spencer, Emery & Schneck (2003) revealed that only 5-8% of occupational therapists provided community-based transition services. In addition, numerous studies highlight how individuals and their families express dissatisfaction with the transition process (Benson et al., 2021). Without comprehensive vocational training, adolescents with disabilities are at a disadvantage, facing a decreased likelihood of acquiring and maintaining paid employment.

Furthermore, paid employment serves as a marker of success upon leaving school. Given the inadequacy of transition planning for individuals with disabilities, particularly in rural environments, it's unsurprising that students with disabilities are 60% less likely to secure paid employment (Eismann et al., 2017). Early work experience is invaluable and often paves the way for further employment opportunities.

Thus, when individuals with disabilities lack the essential resources and support to acquire employment experience, they face a higher risk of unemployment and social isolation. According to the 2018 Disability Status Report, the employment rate for people with disabilities was 37.8% and 80% for people without disabilities (Cornell University, 2018). This significant disparity in employment underscores the urgent need for comprehensive vocational training programs. If schools are unable to provide inclusive and community-based vocational opportunities for individuals with disabilities, it becomes logical to explore alternative entities that can supplement their vocational training efforts.

Outpatient Pediatric Occupational Therapy: Vocational Development

Outpatient pediatric occupational therapists serve children of various ages with diverse disabilities. In this setting, occupational therapists collaborate closely with the individual receiving services, their family, other team members, and the community. This collaborative approach is aimed at helping the individual achieve their unique goals and prepare them for future success. *The Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process* recognizes work as one of the nine domains of occupation. It includes employment interests and pursuits, employment seeking and acquisition, job performance and maintenance, retirement preparation and adjustment, volunteer exploration, and volunteer participation (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2020). Specifically, occupational therapists can support school-to-work transition by delivering client-centered interventions within natural contexts. (Eismann et al., 2017). Through their work, outpatient occupational therapists serve as a bridge, enabling adolescents to acquire pre-vocational, job-related, social, and other critical skills necessary for success in the employment sector.

Kwan, Gotomoghaddam, and Collet (2020) reported that adolescents with disabilities face a significant risk of social isolation if they do not develop appropriate social skills. The American Psychological Association established a link between social isolation and various adverse outcomes including depression, poor sleep quality, impaired executive function, and even premature death (Novotney, 2019). Occupational therapists play an important role in implementing strategies that promote social and emotional learning, enabling individuals to recognize and manage emotions, regulate behavior, develop positive relationships, handle challenging situations, communicate effectively, and engage in thoughtful decision-making (Detgen et al., 2021). Additionally, they address practical skills such as recognizing appropriate

dress for different contexts, maintaining good hygiene and personal care, and using manners (Foster, 2017), all of which are essential for navigating various aspects of the workplace. By focusing on an individual's soft skills, occupational therapists ensure that they are better prepared to interact with a diverse range of people in a professional environment.

Occupational therapists play a vital role in preparing individuals for entering the workforce. They possess the expertise to conduct vocational evaluations, explore individual job interests, and provide recommendations for work placements (AOTA, 1980). These services assess adolescents' physical, cognitive, and social aspects, offering valuable insights into their learning abilities, skills, work tolerance, interpersonal qualities, and interests (AOTA, 1980). Understanding these characteristics provides crucial guidance regarding the type of job or workplace where the individual is likely to thrive. Research indicates that job satisfaction strongly correlates with job success, underscoring the importance of occupational therapists in supporting vocational development and placement. Moreover, while on the job, occupational therapists assist individuals in utilizing assistive technology, understanding work ergonomics, trying specific job task modifications, implementing energy conservation strategies, and performing work activities safely (Smith et al., 2017). These services are indispensable for adolescents to experience success and enjoyment in a work setting.

Despite the well-established role of occupational therapy in enhancing work readiness and job performance, many institutions fail to fully utilize these services. Numerous research studies have highlighted a need for increased support during the transition process (Rosner, et al., 2020). There is a growing call for heightened advocacy for occupational therapists to be included in the transition from school to work, actively contributing to adolescents' vocational development. Rosner, et al. (2020) reported "significant and concerning gaps in the literature on

the school-to-work transition for youth with intellectual disabilities” It is imperative for adolescent development and transition to implement occupational therapy services when appropriate, as this helps them experience being valued members of the workforce and fosters greater integration within the community.

Community-Based Learning

Community-based learning integrates education with the surrounding environment. An extensively researched approach to enhancing vocational knowledge and strengthening job qualities is through internships, a form of community-based learning (Ghoraishi Khorasgnai, 2022; Gault et al., 2010). An internship provides individuals with meaningful, practical, work-related training (UMBC, n.d.). Connecting internship opportunities to occupational therapy service provision offers individuals tailored support and collaborative experiences in a realistic job setting.

Occupational therapy is widely acknowledged as “a service delivered in community-based settings” (AOTA 2020), implementing both appropriate and necessary job-related interventions within the community. Therapists are able to use meaningful activities as tools to achieve a client’s therapeutic goals. Occupational therapists may also use occupations to facilitate the development of specific skills or abilities. Providing these services in the community allows occupational therapists to assess and address client’s needs within their real-life environments. Engaging in meaningful occupations in the actual context is often the goal of occupational therapy. Thus, occupations are not only used to build the client’s skills but also the desired outcome itself. This contextualized approach enhances the relevance and delivery of interventions, as they are tailored to the specific challenges and opportunities present in the community setting.

Employment of Individuals with Disabilities

Employment is not just a means of earning income; it is a fundamental human right and of immense importance in people's lives, significantly contributing to their health and well-being. Work often occupies a substantial portion of one's life, with the average American dedicating approximately 1,757 hours a year to work, accounting for about 20% of their year and 50% of their total waking hours (Huberman & Minns, 2007; Thompson, 2022). Beyond financial stability, employment provides individuals with steady opportunities for social interaction, increased self-esteem, and essential time management skills. (Mostafavi, 2023; Rosner, 2020). Consequently, research indicates that employment can notably improve one's quality of life, social well-being, and mental health (Dunstan et al., 2017; Evans and Repper, 2000).

Unfortunately, there exists a notable disparity in employment rates between individuals with and without disabilities, with the former facing persistent unemployment. A review of the literature by Nategaal et al. (2023) identified several barriers perpetuating this pattern, including the perception that people with disabilities are unproductive and entail high costs. Moreover, employers may have a lack of knowledge regarding disabilities. Fraser et al. (2010) similarly discussed a belief that people with disabilities are less qualified and incapable of performing required work tasks. However, there is substantial evidence highlighting the benefits for organizations to employ individuals with disabilities. The United States Department of Labor reported that accommodations made from employing individuals with disabilities resulted in increased employee retention, enhanced productivity and morale, and greater workforce diversity. Remarkably, nearly half of the accommodations come at no cost (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

With this in mind, Lindsay et al., (2018) discovered that employing individuals with disabilities yielded overall business growth. This growth included increased profits and work safety, enhanced reliability and loyalty, improved innovation and job satisfaction, as well as fostering a more inclusive work culture and heightened awareness of abilities. Consequently, there is a substantial advantage for employers in hiring individuals with disabilities. The challenge lies in the fact that this information is not widely discussed. Yet, it is crucial to emphasize the benefits that hiring people with disabilities fosters inclusivity, drives business growth, encourages innovation, and cultivates a more vibrant workplace culture.

CHAPTER 2

Needs Assessment

The purpose of this needs assessment was to identify current gaps within the workforce program that could be addressed through this capstone project. The assessment involved a thorough literature review, discussions with Shine Pediatric Therapy's occupational therapists, and meetings with current business partners. Upon gathering and analyzing this information, it became evident that several areas within the workforce program require attention.

The primary need identified was to enhance vocational opportunities for adolescents with disabilities in the community through the workforce program. To facilitate this expansion, a comprehensive review of the program was deemed necessary. A review of the program would offer valuable insights into its strengths, weaknesses, and potential areas for improvement. Discussions with occupational therapists highlighted the significance of the Person Environment Occupation Performance model (PEOP) as foundational to the program's operations. Utilizing this model as a framework was brought up multiple times in how foundational it was to the program's functioning. This model would serve as the framework for reviewing the workforce program.

Gaining a better understanding of the local environment and community was crucial in identifying how this project could address unique needs. Shine Pediatric Therapy is located in a small rural area, in the southeastern United States. Through discussions, it became evident that opportunities for adolescents with disabilities are scarce in this region. Not only are the resources limited for this population, but there is a prevalent stigma surrounding the hiring of people with disabilities.

Information gathered from a native of the town revealed that this bias often stems from a lack of awareness and understanding. To address this barrier, we devised a strategy to raise awareness of the program within the community. The goal was to showcase the success individuals with disabilities can achieve in the employment sector with this program's support as well as demonstrate how the program could benefit local businesses. This approach served a dual purpose: advocating for additional partnerships to empower more clients' vocational skills and to promote an inclusive community.

Additionally, occupational therapists uncovered that an adolescent client, who expressed interest in the Workforce Program, was not receiving any pre-employment transition services, nor working toward vocational goals in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). This discovery underscored the necessity of the need to research additional available resources to enhance their vocational development. Developing an educational flyer would be a pivotal step toward preparing adolescents with disabilities for the workforce. Providing additional accessible information on resources and supports could help connect adolescents to opportunities that foster essential job skills.

Furthermore, occupational therapists specializing in the treatment of adolescents expressed a lack of soft and social skill intervention ideas. While they felt confident in delivering hard skill treatments, making task modifications, teaching compensatory strategies, and implementing assistive technology, there was a clear need for innovative interventions targeting soft and social skills.

Typically, interested clients for the Workforce Program are approved by the lead occupational therapist based on recommendations from other therapists. These recommendations are based on individual therapist's clinical judgment. Recently, a client expressed interest in

participating in the Workforce Program. Despite initially appearing as a strong candidate, the client exhibited adverse behaviors that could hinder their success in a job setting. These behaviors were uncovered after the lead occupational therapist had already begun considering the client for the program. Recognizing the importance of ensuring that candidates are well-suited for the program, there is a need to develop an informal screener. This tool would enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the candidacy process, allowing therapists to identify and address potential challenges earlier in the evaluation phase.

As previously mentioned, maintaining compliance with both the work shift and occupational therapy plan of care had posed challenges within the program. In response, occupational therapists requested the creation of a document outlining expectations and responsibilities for both the client and their parent/guardian. The development of a workforce program “contract” is seen as a suitable solution to address this need.

In addition, our business partners emphasized the need for improved communication before the commencement of the program. They requested relevant and pertinent information about the client who will be working under their supervision. This information would enable them to adequately prepare for the client, tailor their leadership style, understand how to leverage their strengths and address areas of difficulty effectively. Creating a document outlining key information regarding the client would meet this need.

Finally, another identified need was streamlining communication between businesses and therapists during the program. Currently, client performance and progress updates are conveyed via text messages from the business to the individual therapist. However, partners have expressed difficulty in teasing out skills from the shift and compiling a narrative for the occupational therapist. To address this issue, it was proposed to implement a Google Form with

sliding scale questions targeting the client's therapeutic goals and individual skills. Providing an efficient means to isolate specific skills and rate the client's performance was needed to streamline the therapist's treatment planning process and make it more efficient for the business partners. This Google form would be exclusively intended for the use of the business partners and therapists.

In summary, the needs assessment provided valuable insights into the current state of the workforce program and guided the development of targeted interventions and strategies to address identified gaps and challenges.

CHAPTER 3

Capstone Experience Protocol

ACOTE Concentration Areas

The Capstone Experience primarily focused on addressing two ACOTE Concentration areas: program development and advocacy. Through an evidence-based review of the existing Workforce Program, meaningful recommendations and modifications were proposed from an occupational therapy perspective. While quantitative assessments were not used in this program review, the evaluation utilized the PEO model and qualitative measures. An emphasis was placed on advocacy by presenting the Workforce Program and relevant education to individuals, businesses, and community members. These two areas served as the foundation for my capstone project.

Site Description

This doctoral capstone project was conducted in a rural community in Tennessee. The majority of the project was completed at Shine Pediatric Therapy, an outpatient clinic that offers occupational, physical, and speech therapy services to youth aged 0-21. Shine Pediatric Therapy's mission is "to be a light in the lives of children and families by increasing the independence of the child within the dynamic family environment" (Shine Pediatric Therapy, n.d.). Other components of the project occurred at the YMCA, a local coffee shop, an event space, the local chamber of commerce, and other nearby businesses.

Population

Shine Pediatric Therapy serves a diverse population, any child aged 0-21 is eligible to receive services. The clients served present with a wide range of disabilities. However, the Workforce Program specifically limits participation to clients aged 15-20. During my capstone

experience, the workforce program included two clients aged 16 and 17. One client faced cognitive, social, and physical challenges following a stroke, while the other client had psychological and learning difficulties. Both clients were regularly receiving occupational therapy services.

The community engaged in my project comprised a diverse range of stakeholders, from small business owners to managers at larger corporations. Throughout the project, we established contact with over 40 community organizations spanning various industries. Among these connections, businesses partnering with Shine Pediatric Therapy primarily operate in the hospitality, beauty, restaurant, and technology sectors.

Site Mentor

Vanessa Sciotti, OTR/L, CIMI-2, Occupational Therapist, was the site mentor for this capstone project. Vanessa is the Clinic Manager, Student Fieldwork Coordinator, and Workforce Program Lead. She provided occupational therapy evaluations, treatments, training, recommendations, and support for adolescents with disabilities participating in the Workforce Program. Vanessa has been employed by Shine Pediatric Therapy for 5 years and has contributed significantly to many of their community integration and therapeutic initiatives. Her expertise and guidance were invaluable in shaping the capstone project idea, development, and implementation.

OT Definition and Scope of Practice

The overarching definition of occupational therapy is to enable people across the lifespan to do the activities they want and need to do while promoting health and helping prevent, manage, or adapt to injury, illness, or disability (American Occupational Therapy Association, n.d.). Occupational therapy plays a vital role in maximizing individuals' abilities to participate in

meaningful work activities. Occupational therapists achieve this by assessing individuals' functional abilities, interests, environmental factors, and barriers to employment. Through job exploration, tailored interventions, recommendations for adaptive equipment/assistive technology, workplace modifications, and task analysis, occupational therapists can enhance individuals' readiness for success in the workforce. Occupational therapy is inherently client-centered, with evaluations, treatments, and recommendations being highly individualized. Moreover, due to its holistic perspective, occupational therapy can address the needs of individuals, groups, leadership, and the broader workforce community. By promoting independence, productivity, and participation in rewarding work, occupational therapy empowers individuals to achieve vocational goals and maintain sustainable employment. This work performance is essential for people's health and well-being (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2017).

Workforce Program Overview

During my capstone project, two clients participated in the Workforce Program, with one placed at the YMCA and the other at a local coffee shop. According to the occupational therapist, these placements were pre-determined based on the complexity of job responsibilities and the individual's abilities. Both adolescents started the program a few weeks into my capstone experience, affording me the opportunity to understand how the occupational therapists prepared them for interviews and guided them through completing work-related documentation. While the coffee shop required the client to fill out an application, the YMCA did not have any specific paperwork. In collaboration with the occupational therapist, I helped create an application for the client to complete, aiming to familiarize her with real-world documentation. Our intention was to

ensure consistency across partnered businesses, standardize the process, and make the program as realistic as possible for the participants.

Before the program officially began, the clients submitted their paper applications and underwent on-site interviews with the supervisors from the partnering businesses. The interview process varied between the YMCA and the coffee shop. At the YMCA, pre-selected interview questions were used, as requested by the occupational therapist. In contrast, the coffee shop interview was more spontaneous and free-flowing. The client who interviewed at the YMCA found success in knowing the expectations and conversation flow beforehand. She brought her written responses to the interview questions as helpful notes. Conversely, the coffee shop interview required adaptability, and the client demonstrated the ability to handle unexpected conversation changes and answer a variety of questions seamlessly. Both participants succeeded in their interviews, effectively conveying the necessary information to the supervisors. As a result, both clients began their respective 6-week programs the following week.

The first week of the program commenced with a single 2-3-hour work shift, dedicated to familiarizing participants with the workplace, reviewing policies and procedures, learning job responsibilities, and establishing rapport with their supervisors. Throughout this initial week, the occupational therapist was present for the entirety of work shifts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the work culture, surrounding staff, environment, job tasks, and procedures. The occupational therapist emphasized the importance of having a holistic picture of the clients' vocational experience. Communication occurred between the supervisor and the occupational therapist before the clients' occupational therapy session. The supervisors' feedback directly influenced the treatment session plans. For instance, if the supervisor noted that the participant excelled in time management but struggled with handling cash, the occupational therapist would

primarily focus on growing their financial skills while acknowledging and reinforcing effective time management strategies. Consequently, clients' subsequent occupational therapy sessions were tailored to their job performance. The occupational therapist also highlighted the significance of debriefing participants' work shifts during their therapy sessions. This process encouraged participants to reflect on their experiences, identify areas of success, and articulate areas for improvement, thereby enhancing their awareness, introspection, communication, and self-advocacy skills.

As the weeks progressed at the coffee shop, the occupational therapist gradually reduced their presence to promote greater independence for the participant and increased leadership for the supervisor. This gradual withdrawal of support empowered the participant, fostering confidence and autonomy in their role. Conversely, at the YMCA, the participant required ongoing support from the occupational therapist during each shift due to their level of need. However, through the introduction of a visual checklist and consistent repetition, the level of assistance and cueing diminished over time as the participant's confidence and competence grew. This approach enabled the participant to gradually assume more responsibilities and work more independently, while still benefiting from the presence and support of the occupational therapist. By providing the right balance of guidance and independence, the occupational therapist helped participants build confidence, develop skills, and achieve their vocational goals. These tailored methods of supervision and assistance were instrumental in each participant's success in the program.

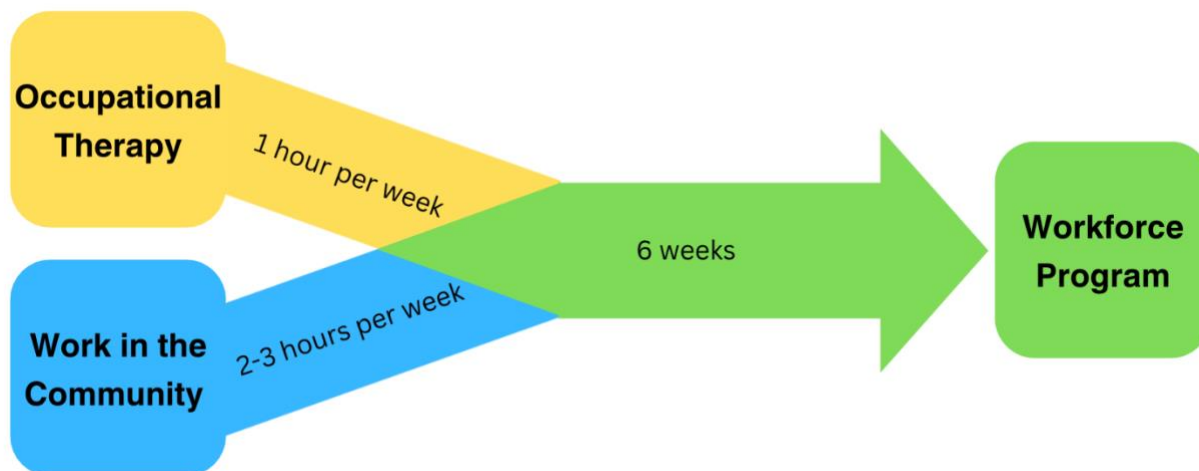


Figure 2. Workforce Program Pathway

The schedule comprising one work shift paired with one occupational therapy session per week proved to be beneficial for the clients' vocational development. This structured approach resulted in notable improvements in job proficiency and progress toward therapeutic goals. The combination of practical, hands-on experience in the workplace and targeted interventions during occupational therapy sessions facilitated a synergistic learning process. Participants were able to apply newly acquired skills and strategies from therapy sessions directly to their job responsibilities, resulting in enhanced performance and confidence in their vocational abilities. This integrated approach not only fostered skill development but also reinforced the connection between therapeutic goals and real-world application, ultimately contributing to the participants' overall success in the workforce.

Implementing the Person Environmental Occupational Performance Model

The Person-Environment Occupational Performance (PEOP) model, initially created by Baum and Christiansen in 1985 and revised most recently in 2015, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding individual function as a dynamic interaction among various systems and their components. At the core of this model lies occupational performance, which is

influenced by a multitude of factors. These include the characteristics of the person (physiological, psychological, neurobehavioral, motor, sensory, perceptual, cognitive, and spiritual), features of the environment (culture, social support, social determinants, social capital, health education, public policy, assistive technology, and physical and natural environments), and components of the activity, task, or role (Cho, n.d.). All these intrinsic and extrinsic factors collectively support or hinder an individual's occupational performance. Christiansen et al., 2015, define occupational performance as the point when the person, the environment, and the occupation intersect to support the tasks, activities, and roles that compose that individual. The PEOP model emphasizes the reciprocal influences between these components and highlights their interconnectedness. Recognizing that each factor influences the others, the model emphasizes the importance of fostering positive occupational performance to enhance participation, promote well-being, and improve overall quality of life (Christiansen et al., 2015).

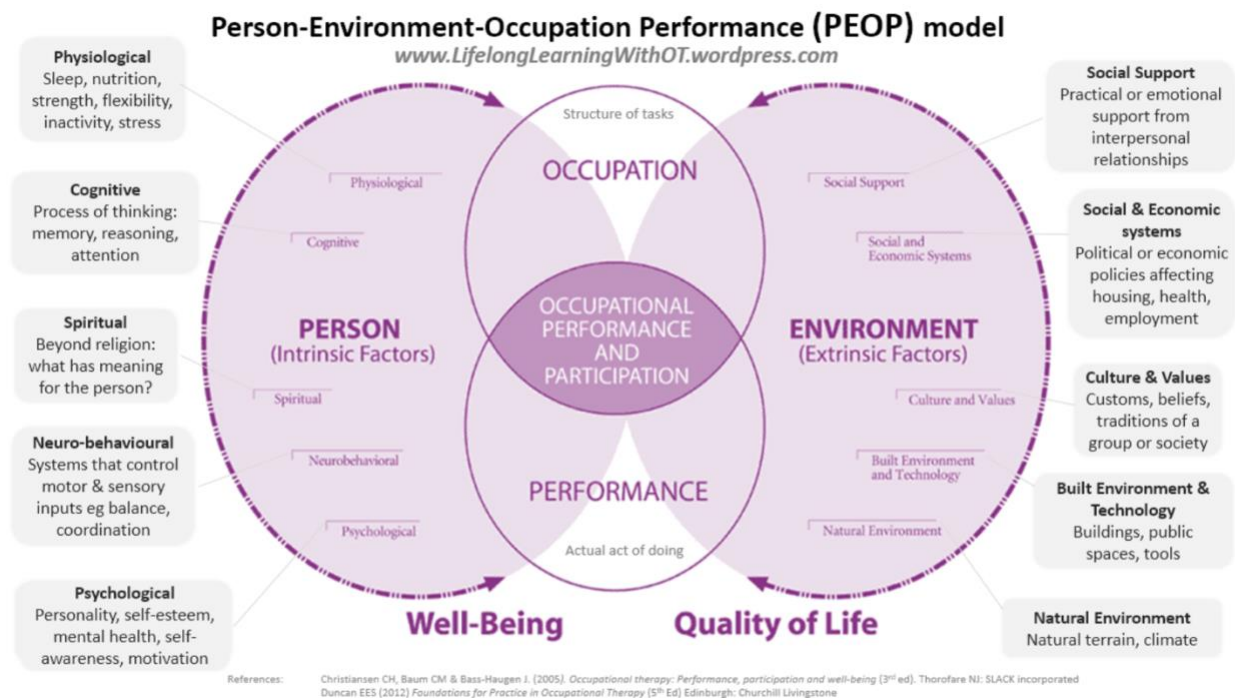


Figure 2. The Person Environment Occupation Performance Model

The PEOP is multifaceted, serving as an evaluation tool, guide for intervention, and plan to improve occupational performance and well-being. To utilize the PEOP as an evaluation tool, Smith and Hudson (2012) recommend identifying important occupational performance issues at the personal, occupational, or environmental levels that may limit participation and cause difficulty. This process requires collecting information from different categories and the pertinent factors, and then determining whether they serve as enablers or barriers to performance. Components that are insufficient or interfering can be further broken down to identify the subdeterminants or abilities required to perform the necessary activity or satisfy the role. Another advantageous aspect of the PEOP model is its compatibility with other assessments or instruments. Supplementary evaluations can offer more detailed information for specific components that make up the model, enhancing the overall assessment process.

In this capstone project, the PEOP model served as a guide for reviewing the Workforce Program review, employing interviews, observations, and research for data collection. The identified occupational performance and participation issue was the need to strengthen vocational development in adolescents with disabilities within the Workforce Program. Extrinsically, various factors were analyzed including social support, social and economic systems, culture and values, built environment and technology, and the natural environment. By utilizing the PEOP model, the project was able to comprehensively assess the interplay between these factors and their impact on the vocational development of adolescents with disabilities. Which informed recommendations and interventions to improve program outcomes.

The PEOP model is client-centered and is most effectively applied when developing a plan aimed at enhancing occupational performance. To leverage the PEOP model, a collaborative relationship between the occupational therapist and the client is essential. Through meaningful

dialogue, the therapist guides the client through a series of questions to identify their abilities, constraints, and environmental factors that enable or hinder their performance in daily life. This collaborative approach ensures that the intervention plan is comprehensive and tailored to the client's specific goals and needs. By adopting this top-down approach, occupational therapists gain deeper insights into their clients, enabling them to deliver more effective therapy. One of the unique strengths of the PEOP lies in its ability to provide both a macro and micro perspective, allowing therapists to evaluate the Workforce Program's performance too. This comprehensive perspective enhances the interventions and supports delivered to clients, improving their outcomes.

Analysis of the Workforce Program through the lens of the Person Environmental Occupational Performance Model

One of the strongest enablers for the Workforce Program was the robust social support network. Interpersonal relationships played a pivotal role in fostering success within the program. The team at Shine Pediatric Therapy, including physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, administrative staff, and leadership exemplified open and effective communication, providing practical and emotional support. They offered encouragement, shared treatment ideas, explained strategies, collaborated during sessions, and demonstrated altruism through their words and actions. This cohesive team dynamic at Shine Pediatric Therapy was evident, contributing to the positive atmosphere within the Workforce Program. Additionally, the relationships between Shine Pediatric Therapy staff, families, and individuals involved in the Workforce Program were characterized by trust and mutual respect. Families entrusted the therapists to provide the highest quality of care, further strengthening the bond between them. Furthermore, interactions between Shine Pediatric Therapy staff and business partners were

positive, marked by encouragement and support. A tangible example of this collaboration was seen at the conclusion of the YMCA Workforce Program when Shine and the YMCA collaborated to host a celebration for the participant. The YMCA supervisor generously offered their space, encouraging Shine to decorate and invite others to join in the festivities. Following the event, the participant demonstrated her newly acquired job skills by assisting in tidying the space and expressing gratitude to the YMCA team. These mutually beneficial relationships underscored the significance of social support in fostering the success of the program and contributing to the vocational development of Workforce Program participants.

The analysis of social and economic systems revealed a complex dynamic of components being barriers, while others were enablers. While specific facets, such as the school system, were expected to facilitate the transition of adolescents with disabilities from school to the workforce, reality proved to be different. The two participants in the Workforce Program were students within the public school system who encountered significant limitations. Despite having Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), neither participant had access to pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS), vocational rehabilitation, or vocation-driven goals. The lack of support was particularly concerning given that both clients intended to enter the workforce upon graduation. Per the family report and the client's IEP, the family expressed interest in setting up Pre-ETS, however, the school indicated a lack of knowledge on how to set up these essential services. The neglect on the part of the school system not only hindered the participants' vocational development but also posed challenges in maintaining consistent care.

In contrast, the local Chamber of Commerce and other businesses demonstrated exceptional support for Shine Pediatric Therapy's Workforce Program. The Chamber actively engaged the occupational therapist and myself in their Workforce and Education Committee,

fostering collaboration strategies to spread awareness, forge additional partnerships, and explore avenues through which the community could support adolescents with disabilities in developing job skills. Recognizing the importance of community involvement, we took the initiative to present the program to the Kiwanis Club and Small Town Start-Up's Networking Event. Both audiences were very engaged and receptive, eager to support Shine Pediatric Therapy's efforts in enhancing vocational skills among adolescents with disabilities. This enthusiastic response from the community underscores the importance of collaborative partnerships in promoting inclusive employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities to thrive in the workforce.

Culture emerged as a significant factor impacting the success of individuals with disabilities, presenting both enablers and barriers within the community. The prevailing culture in town hindered people from accessing competitive employment opportunities. Statistically, the town's culture inhibited people with disabilities from gaining competitive employment opportunities. A study by Cornell University found that only 34.5% of individuals with disabilities were employed in Tennessee, leaving almost two-thirds of the disabled population isolated from the workforce (Cornell University, 2017). As I advocated for increased program partnerships within the community, I encountered resistance from some businesses who expressed disinterest or skepticism about further integration of people with disabilities. Despite these challenges, there were businesses genuinely interested in collaborating, offering hope for progress and change over time. Overcoming deeply entrenched beliefs and attitudes may require time and the demonstration of success stories from other organizations, but the commitment of a few supportive businesses signaled the potential for positive transformation within the community.

The built environment and technology aspect emerged as a significant support to the Workforce Program. Both business partners provided accessible facilities, facilitating easy maneuvering for individuals with physical disabilities and enabling them to fully engage in their job experience. This accessibility played a crucial role in enhancing the participation of Shine Pediatric Therapy's clients in the program. Additionally, several nearby organizations could provide adaptive equipment and assistive technology to the clients in the program, further improving their ability to succeed in the workplace. One non-profit organization, Star Center, frequently works with the clinic and expressed interest in strengthening their partnerships to ensure these adolescents would have the devices they need for success in the workplace. This resource and others proved to be a large support to both the program and its participants.

Situated in the southeastern United States and primarily driven by the agricultural industry, the town benefits from a climate and terrain that generally act as support to the Workforce Program. With little occurrence of extreme weather, the town is well-prepared to handle inclement or dangerous conditions when they arise. Consequently, the natural environment is not expected to significantly impact employment skills and opportunities within the community. The stability in the natural environment provides a conducive setting for individuals to engage in vocational activities and pursue their career goals without major disruptions.

The intrinsic factors of the Workforce Program present unique challenges and opportunities, as they involve multiple individuals and structures. Despite this complexity, it was possible to discern which aspects of the program acted as barriers and which ones served as supports. First, from a physiological perspective, the program was characterized by high levels of activity for participants, therapists, and partners alike. Everyone involved was frequently on their

feet during occupational therapy sessions and work shifts, completing the necessary work-related tasks and activities. Even though there are high activity demands, the program was adaptable to participants who experienced fatigue or low energy. Flexibility emerged as a crucial quality of the program. The Workforce Program demonstrated adeptness in navigating unexpected changes while ensuring that participants did not spend excessive amounts of time in it. It prioritized adequate rest and minimized stress levels. These physiological aspects proved to be beneficial to the overall success of the program.

The cognitive aspects of the Workforce Program played a pivotal role in facilitating the success of the participants in their work roles. The program emphasized cognition, attention, judgment, memory, and thoughtfulness, equipping participants with essential skills necessary for effective job performance. Through structured activities, guidance, and support from occupational therapists, participants were able to improve their cognitive abilities, maintain focus, make sound judgments, and approach tasks thoughtfully. These cognitive skills empowered clients to navigate the complexities of their work roles with confidence and competence, ultimately contributing to their success in the program.

The PEOP provides valuable guidance when considering the spiritual component, extending beyond religious affiliations to explore what holds meaning for each individual. In the context of the Workforce Program, efforts were made to ensure that activities and work placements resonated with participants on a personal level, aligning with their individual values and interests within their capacity. However, the limited number of business partners was a notable barrier, restricting participants from accessing work placements that felt truly meaningful and desirable. Moving forward, the program has an opportunity to seek out additional partnerships that offer more tailored opportunities for participants to engage in work experiences

that align closely with their interests and aspirations. By expanding the range of available placements, the program can enhance the overall relevance and impact of vocational activities, further enriching the participants' experiences and fueling their fulfillment.

The neuro-behavioral and psychological aspects represent crucial intrinsic factors within the Workforce Program. The therapists involved in the program were well equipped to address these components and improve clients' motor and sensory systems, balance and coordination, self-esteem and self-awareness, and motivation. Through targeted interventions and support, therapists worked collaboratively with participants to address neuro-behavioral challenges and psychological barriers that may impede their success in the workforce. By focusing on improving these areas, participants were better prepared to navigate the demands of their work roles, build confidence, and achieve their vocational goals. The expertise of the therapists played an important role in empowering clients to overcome their unique obstacles and thrive within the program.

Recognizing the intricate dynamics between extrinsic and intrinsic factors is essential for effectively supporting adolescents with disabilities in their journey toward success within the workforce program and beyond. By understanding how these factors interact and influence each other, occupational therapists and program partners can tailor interventions and strategies to address specific challenges and capitalize on existing strengths. The holistic approach ensures that participants receive comprehensive support that considers both their individual characteristics and the external environment. By fostering a supportive and empowering environment that acknowledges the interconnectedness of these factors, the Workforce Program can maximize opportunities for clients to develop essential skills to achieve their vocational goals, improve their well-being, and enhance their quality of life.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Workforce Program Expansion & Recommendations

The Workforce Program review culminated in several recommendations and tangible deliverables aimed at enhancing the program's effectiveness and impact. One key outcome was the development of a comprehensive Workforce Program Guide for pediatric occupational therapists. This guide encompassed evidence-based interventions, tools, and resources designed to improve therapists' practices across various areas, including vocational exploration, pre-vocational development, soft and social skill enhancement, workplace safety and ergonomics, as well as self-advocacy and energy conservation. These topics were identified as needs throughout the program and were addressed systematically in the guide to provide therapists with valuable guidance and support.

Additionally, a Workforce Program candidacy screening tool was created to assess prospective client eligibility, ensuring that individuals suitable for the program are identified and enrolled appropriately. Other components of the initiative included the development of a contract aimed at improving compliance, educational flyers for parents and adolescents to increase awareness of available resources, and the implementation of new communication forms and methods to streamline dialogue among stakeholders.

Furthermore, the findings from the program review, along with the aforementioned deliverables were presented in an in-service to Shine Pediatric Therapy's occupational therapists. This presentation served as an opportunity to share insights, best practices, and lessons learned, ultimately fostering continuous improvement in practice approaches and enhancing the overall quality of care provided to participants in the Workforce Program.

In addition to the program review and development of tangible resources, another significant aspect of the capstone project involved advocacy work aimed at promoting the Workforce Program within the broader community. Leveraging insights gained from research, discussions, and observations, efforts were made to disseminate knowledge and raise awareness regarding the program among local stakeholders, particularly business owners. This advocacy work took the form of local presentations and conversations, where the benefits and opportunities offered by the Workforce Program were highlighted and discussed.

As part of these advocacy efforts, specific deliverables were created to facilitate engagement and partnership with community businesses. These included a program partnership resource designed to provide businesses with valuable information about the Workforce Program and the benefits of collaboration. Additionally, contact forms were developed to streamline communication and facilitate the process of establishing new partnerships. Through these efforts, seven new partnerships were successfully forged, expanding the reach and impact of the Workforce Program within the community and creating additional opportunities for participants to gain valuable vocational experience and skills.

The results of the Workforce Program review and advocacy efforts yielded several significant outcomes, aimed at empowering adolescents with disabilities, enhancing their vocational skills, and fostering greater inclusivity within the workforce.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Impact

Adolescents with disabilities often encounter unique hurdles when navigating the transition to the workforce and securing competitive employment (Lindsay, 2011). In this context, occupational performance can be influenced by various intrinsic and extrinsic factors. By applying the Person Environmental Occupational Performance model, occupational therapists can gain valuable insights into the individual strengths and challenges of their clients, as well as the broader program dynamics (B, 2015). This holistic framework enables therapists to identify barriers, capitalize on strengths, and develop tailored interventions to enhance vocational readiness and success (Christiansen et al., 2015). By addressing all contributing factors from the PEOP, occupational therapists can empower adolescents with disabilities to overcome obstacles and achieve their vocational goals.

In addition, the importance of developing a holistic understanding of a client was emphasized throughout the capstone project. It's crucial to recognize that an individual's vocational experience extends beyond the specific tasks they perform on a job, as it profoundly affects their success and fulfillment in the workplace. The PEOP was helpful in considering the various aspects that impacted the individual, their performance, and their interactions within their surrounding environment when focusing on their vocational development. By adopting a holistic perspective, both occupational therapists and stakeholders collaboratively developed comprehensive plans aimed at maximizing the client's ability to engage in meaningful work.

It is important to reiterate the significant impact of the Workforce Program on clients' vocational development. Throughout their participation, clients strengthened existing skills and acquired new ones. Central to this progress was the structured approach adopted in occupational

therapy sessions, which played a pivotal role in facilitating clients' growth. The occupational therapists encouraged the clients to reflect on their weekly work shifts during sessions. By providing a safe space for discussion and guidance, therapists enabled clients to delve deeper into their experiences, identifying successes, challenges, and areas for improvement. This consistent debriefing process was instrumental in fostering adolescent's self-awareness, introspection, communication, and self-advocacy skills. As Cho S. J. (2015) states, debriefing is widely accepted as the "heart and soul" of simulation or real-life experiences. These outcomes were evident through observable changes in client behavior. Over time, occupational therapists noted a decreased need for prompts during sessions, indicating clients' growth in independence and confidence in articulating their thoughts and experiences. Moreover, the demonstrated actions of the clients throughout the program such as taking initiative in seeking feedback or addressing workplace challenges, underscored the effectiveness of the debrief intervention.

An additional key aspect of the Workforce Program was the personalized approach to supervision. Recognizing the importance of fostering independence in clients, occupational therapists implemented tailored methods of supervision to gradually transition clients towards more independence in their tasks (D'Arrigo et al., 2020). In the beginning, clients received respective assistance and guidance from occupational therapists, ensuring they understood their job responsibilities and felt confident in completing them. However, as clients gained proficiency and familiarity with their roles, the level of assistance from the occupational therapists gradually diminished. This fade was a deliberate strategy aimed at empowering clients to take ownership of their work tasks. By allowing clients to gradually assume more responsibility and make decisions on their own, occupational therapists facilitated the development of crucial skills such as problem-solving, planning, and decision-making. Through this process, clients gained

confidence in their abilities but also demonstrated tangible improvements in job performance. As their need for direct supervision lessened, clients embraced their roles with greater independence, contributing to a more efficient and productive work environment.

Importantly, the wide variety of interventions implemented throughout the program fostered a sense of accomplishment and self-sufficiency among clients. The benefits of their enhanced occupational performance extend beyond vocational development, potentially influencing various aspects of clients' lives. Improved self-awareness and communication abilities, for instance, can positively impact personal relationships and other pursuits, fostering holistic growth (Eurich, 2018). By experiencing success through their own efforts, clients have a stronger belief in their capabilities, which can positively influence their engagement in meaningful activities. These skills have the potential to enrich multiple facets of the clients' lives.

A large component of the capstone project involved community education and advocacy aimed at enhancing work opportunities for adolescents with disabilities to strengthen vocational skills. By presenting to the Kiwanis Club and local businesses, vital information regarding the role of outpatient occupational therapy in vocational development, the benefits of fostering a diverse workplace, the significance of community integration, and actionable ways for community involvement in providing job skill development opportunities for adolescents with disabilities were disseminated. Engaging in intentional conversations by directly visiting businesses was well received, resulting in a substantial impact on the community and the number of partnerships secured for the Workforce Program. Additionally, advocating for the distribution of flyers through the chamber of commerce proved effective in raising awareness of the Workforce Program. The capstone project facilitated outreach to over 40 businesses, resulting in

7 partnerships with Shine Pediatric Therapy for future Workforce Programs. This outreach and advocacy work not only increased awareness of important topics but fostered tangible collaboration, paving the way for improved vocational opportunities and inclusive practices within the community.

This capstone project also had a profound impact on the clinic's operations and the quality of care provided to adolescents with disabilities participating in the Workforce Program. The comprehensive guide equips therapists with evidence-based interventions, tools, and resources to enhance their practices in relation to vocational exploration, pre-vocational development, soft skill treatments, and more. This resource improves therapists' ability to deliver effective interventions and support program participants, ensuring a higher standard of care. In addition to the guide, the implementation of a screening tool will also improve the clinic's ability to identify appropriate clients for the program. By facilitating a more targeted selection process, this tool optimizes program effectiveness and ensures alignment between clients' needs and program objectives.

Another impactful outcome of the capstone project was the creation of the compliance contract. This contract establishes clear expectations and responsibilities for both participants and their parents/guardians, promoting accountability and adherence to program requirements. Bosch-Capblanch (2007) highlights that contracts between healthcare providers and patients can potentially contribute to adherence. By fostering a structured and supportive environment with the implementation of the contract, it enhances the likelihood of participant success (Empiraa, 2024).

Furthermore, the development of educational resources has helped increase awareness and understanding of the program and its benefits to families. Supplementing this resource,

another flyer was developed detailing additional supports and resources to educate and empower families to actively engage in their child's vocational development journey. Increasing knowledge and promoting collaboration is likely to result in increased employment success for the client (Castruita Rios et al., 2023).

Lastly, the implementation of new methods of communication has streamlined the dialogue between stakeholders involved in the program. Improved communication enhances coordination and collaboration, leading to smoother program operations and better outcomes for participants. Overall these deliverables from the capstone experience contribute to Shine Pediatric Therapy's ability to deliver high-quality, comprehensive services to adolescents with disabilities seeking to strengthen their vocational skills. By providing occupational therapists with the necessary tools and resources and promoting effective communication, the clinic can better forge stronger connections with the community and support participants in achieving their full potential in the workforce.

Limitations

The 14-week time constraint represented a significant limitation of this capstone project. Within this short timeframe, there were only two clients and two different businesses participating in the Workforce Program. This small pool provided valuable but restricted insights into the Workforce Program. While beneficial for this review, the findings may lack generalizability for future business partners or participating clients. This limitation underscores the need for further research with more clients, businesses, and occupational therapists to enhance the applicability of the findings.

The time constraint posed challenges to the scope and effectiveness of the capstone project. Limited time hindered additional resource creation and the ability to engage in more advocacy efforts. Given more time, the capstone project could have identified and collaborated with other beneficial entities to support adolescents with disabilities, their parents, and occupational therapists. Additionally, the project's timeline constrained the outreach efforts, limiting the ability to engage an even broader range of businesses. With more time, the capstone project could have expanded its reach and forged additional partnerships with local organizations, thereby enhancing the project's impact and value.

Another limitation pertained to shortcomings in the methods used for data collection and analysis within the Workforce Program. Relying solely on the Person Environment Occupation Performance Model for program review may have prioritized specific aspects while potentially overlooking other crucial elements. Additionally, the data collected from observations and conversations with key stakeholders may have introduced biases. This methodological constraint highlights the need for a more comprehensive and diverse approach to data collection and

analysis to mitigate potential oversights and biases, ensuring a more nuanced understanding of the program's effectiveness.

Sustainability Plan

The Workforce Program sustainability plan has 4 core components: vision and goals, assessment and appointment, plan, and outcomes.

Vision and Goals:

Establish a shared vision of the Workforce Program for the business and clinic. Then identify specific goals considering the input of occupational therapists, business partners, clients, families, clinic leadership, and community members.

Assessment and Appointment:

Evaluate prospective businesses, available resources, qualified staff, and potential gaps. Identify community opportunities and stay connected with stakeholders. Then appoint personnel to manage different aspects of the program: acquiring new partnerships, evaluating clients, updating resources, assessing program effectiveness, etc.

Plan:

Identify a minimum of four new prospective businesses per calendar year. Organize resources and presentations to pitch partnership opportunities to community businesses. Continually seek ways to educate the community on the benefits of integrating and hiring individuals with disabilities.

Outcomes:

Conduct a minimum of one Workforce Program per calendar year. Expand digital reach by utilizing Shine Pediatric Therapy's social media and website. Establish a minimum of two new partners per calendar year. Re-evaluate Workforce Program processes, resources, goals, and plans, to form appropriate plans and address the sustainability of the program.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the transition from full-time student to the workforce presents unique challenges for adolescents with disabilities, underscoring the crucial role of occupational therapy in this transition. Shine Pediatric Therapy's Workforce Program stands as a holistic approach to delivering vocational development and empowerment to individuals with disabilities. By utilizing the Person-Environment Occupational Performance model, the program underwent a thorough review, revealing notable strengths and areas for improvement.

Key strengths identified within the program include robust social support, accessible built environment, available technology, natural environment, and consideration of physiological, cognitive, neurobehavioral, and psychological factors. These aspects contribute to a supportive and conducive environment for participants to develop vocational skills and achieve success in the workforce. However, the review also uncovered barriers such as limitations within social and economic systems, cultural values, and spiritual factors. These challenges highlight the need for continued advocacy and intervention to address systemic issues and promote inclusivity and equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

In summary, Shine Pediatric Therapy's Workforce program exemplifies the potential of occupational therapy to empower adolescents with disabilities in their transition to the workforce. By leveraging the insights gained through the PEOP model, the program can continue to enhance its effectiveness and provide meaningful support to participants on the vocational journey.

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Appendix 1

Learning Objectives

List of Objectives Achieved during the Capstone Experience

Objective 1: The student will investigate different factors that impact job acquisition and integrate knowledge to produce educational resources for Shine Pediatric Therapy and their clients.
1a. The student will have a greater understanding of the process of obtaining employment.
1b. The student will understand what documents and materials are needed to apply and secure employment in the state of Tennessee.
1c. The student will gain a broader understanding of the social, emotional, psychological, and communal impacts of employment.
Objective 2: The student will create and implement a best practices packet for businesses when employing people with disabilities.
2a. The student will interview disability-run businesses to gain a better understanding of the work culture, processes, and practices.
2b. The student will read 10 research articles about inclusive work environments and vocational accommodations. This will provide a deeper understanding of best practices when making environmental and vocational accommodation recommendations
2c. The student will identify specific areas/components how occupational therapy can benefit businesses (hospitality, recreation, retail, dining, etc.) in relation to implementing accessibility improvements and accommodations.
2d. The student will understand legislation impacting the employment of people with disabilities.
2e. The student will develop a criterion/evaluation tool for workforce program candidacy.

Objective 3: The student will gain a better understanding of vocational rehab interventions.
3a. The student will research different compensatory strategies, modifications, and adaptations for specific job tasks.
3b. The student will research relevant interventions for interpersonal communication, attention, social skills, and task completion.
3c. The student will research different universal strategies for businesses.
Objective 4: The student will analyze the role of occupational therapy supporting vocational skill development and disseminate findings to appropriate stakeholders.
4a. The student will gather expert opinion of vocational skill OT sessions and workplace hours.
4b. The student will identify, plan, and organize presentations for appropriate stakeholders.

Appendix 2

Supervision Plan

	Student: Jordan	Site Mentor: Vanessa	Faculty Mentor: Dr. Buchman
Topic	Description	Description	Description
Roles & Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update literature review with completed background, introduction, and methods sections. • Submit IRB, Informed Consent, and Protocol. • Create Pre-Post Surveys. • Complete assignments defined in <i>Capstone Projected Timeline</i>. • Interview disability-inclusive businesses. • Observe 6 OT treatment sessions & complete associated assignments. • Observe 6 Internship sessions & complete associated assignments. • Administer Pre-Post Surveys. • Complete Informal Interviews with Client's Caregiver. • Compile all final documents to create: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessibility recommendations to improve business's internship documents. - Vocational Interest Matching Assessment & Internship Candidacy Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the student of any changes to the schedule for the internship and OT session. • Provide occupational therapy services to clients. • Create initial goals and outcome measurements based on evaluation. • Attend the weekly recap meetings with student. • Provide guidance and expertise wherever it can be helpful. • Read over and edit necessary documents given by the student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance on research related questions. • Keep the student informed of any requirements for ACOTE standards, research deadlines, publishing work, presentation dates etc. • Give feedback on literature review and manuscript.

	<p>Tool</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - OT Holistic Employment Document & OT's Role/Importance in Vocational Realm - Comprehensive Document for Best Practices for Accessibility & Inclusivity for Businesses (Including current literature, legislation/policies, strategies, accommodations, etc.) - Employment/Internship Handout for Adolescents - Comprehensive Guide for Vocational OT related recommendations and evidence-based interventions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze data and report findings. • Write a Capstone Research Project Paper. • Presentation for Shine Pediatric Clinic, local businesses, GSU OTD, and Community Businesses 		
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Tracking Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular feedback sessions during weekly meetings • Address goal and assignment completion each week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give feedback to the student on assignment completion, collaboration, treatment plans/HEP, and overall program status. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the bimonthly meetings, student will communicate all goals achieved and status of project as well as literature review and manuscript draft.
Communication Methods	<p>Meetings are in-person.</p> <p>Resolving Disputes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open communication • Active listening • Define common goals. • Acknowledge contributions. • Brainstorm solutions • Compromise • Document agreements • Have regular check-ins 	<p>Meetings are in-person.</p> <p>Resolving Disputes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open communication • Active listening • Define common goals. • Acknowledge contributions. • Brainstorm solutions • Compromise • Document agreements • Have regular check-ins 	<p>Meetings are via Webex or phone call.</p>
Scheduled Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bimonthly meeting recap <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Purpose: discuss project status, timeline, documentation, etc. • Weekly check-ins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Purpose: go over project progress that week and any needed changes to schedule. • Student will attend OT sessions for client at Shine Pediatric Therapy 1x per week and Internship sessions 1x per week. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly check-ins with student at Shine Pediatric Therapy • Weekly OT sessions at Shine Pediatric Therapy 	<p>Bimonthly check-in with student to go over manuscript and progress of the program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January: 2 meetings • February: 2 meetings • March: 2 meetings • April: 2 meetings

Project Specific Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature Review, Background, Introduction, and Methods • IRB submission with Informed Consent and HIPAA Authorization • Comprehensive Guide regarding OT's Role in Developing Vocational Skills in Adolescents (All documents included) • Comprehensive Document for Best Practices for Accessibility & Inclusivity for Businesses with Final Presentation • Final PowerPoint & Poster Presentation • Completed Research Manuscript 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review documents created for the program and provided suggestions/feedback for improvement. • Provide occupational therapy to client for 6 weeks at Shine Pediatric Therapy. Conduct necessary evaluations and assessments. • Work with the student to collect data and then aid in creating a deliverable for the program's results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide feedback on deliverables for research (IRB, Literature Review, Manuscript, Poster, PowerPoint Presentation)
Outcome Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregiver Pre-Post Survey • Weekly Informal Interview with Caregiver • Observation of OT session • Observation of Internship session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site mentor will allow the student to administer the forms, conduct interviews, and observe sessions. • The site mentor will oversee and collaborate with student to gather relevant data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The faculty mentor will support the student as needs arise with data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Appendix 3

Sample Flyers



WORKFORCE PROGRAM

What is Shine Pediatric Therapy's Workforce Program?

This 6-week program provides individuals with disabilities, 15+ years of age, with meaningful, realistic, and therapeutic opportunities to develop job skills. The program applies the individual's occupational, physical, or speech therapy to focus on vocational development. The goal is to simulate a real-world job experience in a safe and supportive environment.

How does it work?

-  The therapist will collaborate with the patient to identify their job interests, strengths, skills, and goals. This information will be used to match the individual to an organization.
-  The therapist and patient will work on job application and interview preparation in the clinic. They will coordinate with the organization to schedule a time for an interview.
-  The patient will interview with the organization. If both parties agree that the partnership is a good fit, the patient will begin a 2-3 hour shift, 1 time per week, for 6 weeks.
-  The therapist and organization will collaborate to form an appropriate supervision plan. The patient's work challenges will be addressed each week in therapy and on-site.
-  The goal of the 6-week program is that the patient will have more confidence and competence in their job skills, empowering them to be successful in the workforce.

What are the benefits?

The patient will benefit from onsite modifications and the use of adaptive equipment and/or assistive technology if needed. By targeting skill deficits noted in the workplace, the therapist will tailor therapy treatment in the clinic to directly enhance work performance. The therapist will assess progress and appropriately adjust the level of assistance to facilitate greater independence for the patient throughout the program. The level of support would decrease as the patient becomes more independent over time.

The program maximizes the patient's independence in:



What are the expectations?

Parents/Guardians:

- Provide safe and reliable transportation.
- Consistent and timely attendance to work shifts and therapy sessions.
- Support your child's vocational development by continuing their therapy plan of care during the workforce program.

Patient:

- Arrive on time, ready to work.
- Abide by the organization's dress code/appearance requirements.
- Attend scheduled therapy sessions.



Time

Commitment:

Work Shifts:
2-3 hours,
1 time per week,
for 6 weeks

Therapy Sessions:
1 hour,
1 time per week



CONTINUING VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As your child continues to develop life skills, engage in broader social roles, and become more independent. Shine Pediatric Therapy encourages you to continue investing in their vocational development. The following resources contain helpful information to better equip your child as they enter the workforce.



Advocate for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) during your child's IEP or 504 meeting:

If your child is aged 14-22 and has a documented disability (IEP, 504, or physician note) they are entitled to FREE transition services. Pre-ETS prepares students transitioning from high school to postsecondary education, training, or employment.

Pre-ETS Include:

- Job Exploration Counseling
- Work Based Learning Experiences
- Postsecondary Counseling
- Workplace Readiness
- Self-Advocacy

<https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/ds/vocational-rehabilitation/transition-services/pre-employment-transition-services.html>



Consider Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation professionals collaborate with each person to develop an individualized plan for employment to achieve their career goals. Any person with a physical, mental, or sensory impairment that results in a substantial barrier to employment is eligible.

Tennessee's Department of Human Services Provides:

- Counseling and Training
- Transportation
- Job Placement
- Supported Employment Services
- Transition Services
- Personal Care Assistance
- Rehabilitation Tech Services
- Independent Living Services

OTHER LOCAL RESOURCES



Project SEARCH

1-year transition program that helps prepare high school students with disabilities to gain competitive integrated employment through structured curriculum and internships at community businesses. High school students who have an IEP and are in their final year of high school OR are out-of-school youth/young adults who are beyond school age and desire to achieve competitive employment.

<https://www.projectsearch.us>

Project SEARCH Provides:

- Extensive skills training
- Career Exploration
- Innovative Work Adaptations
- Long-term job coaching from teachers, skills trainers, and employers



TN Step

TN Step provides FREE in-person and online training resources, education, and professional development services. Their supports are aimed at helping families and individuals with disabilities.

<https://tnstep.info/transition/>



Transition Tennessee

FREE online home training and resources that prepare students and families with disabilities for life after high school.

<https://transitiontn.org>



Tennessee Disability Coalition

Tennessee Disability Coalition is a group of organizations that promote equal participation for people with disabilities in all aspects of life. One of their agencies is WorkAbleTN. They provide one-on-one counseling regarding employment, benefits, and finances for Tennesseans with disabilities. <https://www.tndisability.org>



WORKFORCE PROGRAM

Shine Pediatric Therapy offers a 6-week Workforce Program that provides individuals with disabilities, 15+ years of age, with meaningful, realistic, and therapeutic opportunities to develop job skills. The program applies the individual's occupational, physical, or speech therapy to focus on vocational development. The goal is to simulate a real-world job experience in a safe and supportive environment.

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The goal of the 6-week program is that the patient will have more confidence and competence in their job skills, empowering them to be successful in the workforce.

Partnership Plans:

Considerable research reports that individuals who enjoy their work are more likely to be successful in their job. By partnering with Shine, more meaningful and diverse work opportunities will be available to our patients, increasing the likelihood of success in a simulated employment experience. In order to achieve this goal, we need the help of community businesses.





“IF WE WANT TO INCLUDE EVERYONE, WE HAVE TO HELP EVERYONE DEVELOP THEIR TALENTS AND USE THEIR GIFTS FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMUNITY. THAT’S WHAT INCLUSION MEANS—EVERYONE CONTRIBUTES.”

—MELINDA GATES

ORGANIZATIONAL BENEFITS

- Greater Workforce Diversity
- Increased Productivity
- Improved Morale
- Greater Community Involvement
- Overall Business Growth
- Tips and Resources for Workplace or Job Task Modifications
- Opportunity for Specific Ergonomic Recommendations
- Opportunity to Make a Difference in the Life of a Teen/Young Adult



QUICK FACT: ONLY 30.5% OF PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY ARE EMPLOYED IN TENNESSEE. YOU HAVE THE POWER TO HELP CHANGE THIS STATISTIC

By targeting skills required in the organization’s workplace, the therapist can tailor the patient’s treatment in the clinic to directly enhance work performance. The therapist will assess progress and appropriately adjust the level of assistance to facilitate greater independence for the patient throughout the program. The level of support would decrease as the patient becomes more independent over time.

The program maximizes the patient’s independence in:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Career Exploration | • On-The-Job Performance |
| • Job Application | • Work Task Proficiency |
| • Work-Related Documentation | • Self-Advocacy |
| • Interview Competence | • Social Abilities |
| • Time Management | • Responsibility & Accountability |
| • Organization & Planning | • Specific Therapeutic Goals |

IF INTERESTED IN PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES, PLEASE SCAN THE QR CODE OR CONTACT VANESSA:



Appendix 4

Sample Deliverables

Program Eligibility Resource

Minimum Eligibility Requirements:

	Patient is 15 years of age or older
	Patient is interested in working now or in the future
	Patient's caregiver is supportive of their vocational development
	Patient's caregiver can provide safe & reliable transportation
	Patient has good attendance & would likely have good adherence to the workforce program
	Patient is an appropriate candidate per therapist's clinical judgement and reasoning

The following skills can be developed before and/or during the workforce program. Helpful to identify the patient's acquired skills to find a position that is a good fit, while also considering opportunities for growth in remaining skills.

Personal Skills

Able to complete personal hygiene	Able to manage time well	Has desire to learn job skills/work
Honest	Responsible	Flexible/Adapt to Change
Able to complete work despite interruptions	Able to complete work despite distractions	Able to initiate tasks/activities
Organized	Efficient	

Social Skills

Comfortable in public settings	Able to work with others	Able to communicate appropriately with familiar people
Aware of others' feelings	Able to ask for help	Able to communicate appropriately with unfamiliar people
Teach Others	Able to advocate for self and others	Able to follow directions

Movement

Safe and controlled functional mobility	Motor Coordination	Motor Planning
Dexterity	Endurance/Activity Tolerance	Strength

Visual Perception Skills

Visual Attention	Visual Memory	Visual Sequential Memory
Visual Discrimination	Visual Spatial Relationships	Figure Ground

Form Constancy	Visual Closure	
----------------	----------------	--

Situational Skills

Able to remain calm during stressful situations	Appropriate behaviors in the workplace	Able to tolerate repetition
Able to tolerate various odors	Appropriate conversations in the workplace	Able to tolerate various tactile inputs

Cognitive and Processing Skills

Able to follow multi-step directions	Able to keep a record/ summarize task completed	Able to self-monitor
Group/organize items that are similar	Able to inspect items/tasks and identify if needs work or if it's done correctly	Able to effectively problem solve
Able to use math to solve problems	Able to correctly measure	Able to attend to a task for a prolonged period
Able to self-evaluate	Able to plan a task	Able to apply new information to a task
Able to organize tasks	Able to give directions	Able to make decisions

Workforce Program Profile

Name: _____

Date: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____ Grade/Year in School: _____

Important Information About Me

Create a list of activities you enjoy doing. Check the boxes that describe the activity.

Activity:	Alone	With Others	Active	Creative	Words or Numbers	Quiet	Loud

Make a list of activities you do not enjoy doing. In the box next to the activity, write why you don't like the activity.

Activity:	Why you don't enjoy it:

Make a list of activities you would like to learn or become better at doing.

Special Skills:

--

How do you learn best? Check the boxes below that describe you.

Environment:

Quiet	Loud	Notes:

Instruction:

One-on-One	With Others	Reading	Listening	Watching	Trying it Yourself	Other:
Notes:						

Supervision:

Female Teacher	Male Teacher	Friend/Peer	Other Preference

Language:

English	Spanish	Other

Time:

Morning	Afternoon	Evening

Structure:

Quiet Breaks	Movement Breaks	Rest Breaks	No Breaks	Other:

Write words or phrases that best describe you. See next section for suggestions.

Strengths/Qualities:

Friendly	Responsible	Hard Worker	Dependable	Honest
Energetic	Helpful	Flexible	Creative	Persistent
Leader	Organized	Team Player	Problem Solver	Thorough
Follows Instructions	Confident	Good Communicator	Sensitive to Others Feelings	Likes Challenges
Patient	Caring	Calm	Cheerful	Controls Anger
Smart	Likes Learning	Polite	Self-Starter	Strong

Ask someone to describe the kind of person you are:

--

What is one quality you would like to improve:

--

Life Experiences

List some events or accomplishments that happened in the past that made a positive impact on your life.

When?	What happened?	Who was involved?	What did I learn or accomplish?
Example: In Science Class	A classmate & I accidentally broke a glass. I got help from the teacher. We cleaned up & tried the experiment again.	Classmate & Teacher	I learned it is okay to make mistakes and ask for help. It's important not to give up.

Future Events: Identify personal, academic, vocational, family, or other meaningful goals. Fill out the associated sections.

When?	What?	Who?	Why?
Example: In 2 years	I want to graduate high school.	I need help from my teachers and parents	It is important to finish school, so I have the knowledge needed to be successful in a job and in life.

Work Goals

What is your dream job? What work have you wanted to do?

--

What kind of job would you like to have now? What makes you want to do that job?

What do you hope to get from a job?

--

What preferences do you have for a job?

--

What worries you about a job?

--

Workforce Program Contract

I, _____, certify that I am the parent/guardian of
_____, who is receiving services at Shine Pediatric
Therapy. By signing this document, I give permission for my child to complete Shine Pediatric
Therapy's Workforce Program. I understand that I am responsible for the following:

- I will provide safe, reliable, and timely transportation to and from all workforce program days at _____.
- I will provide safe, reliable, and timely transportation to and from all therapy appointments at Shine Pediatric Therapy.
- I will ensure my child attends ALL scheduled therapy sessions throughout the course of the program.
- I will support my child's therapeutic plan of care.

I agree to the following Workforce Program schedule:

Every: Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday

Beginning at: _____ : _____ AM/PM Ending at: _____ : _____ AM/PM

Start Date: ____ / ____ / _____ End Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Patient Signature

Date

Shine Pediatric Therapist Signature

Date



Date of Interview: _____



Time of Interview: _____



Location of Interview: _____



Interviewer Name: _____

Checklist:

Appearance

	Appropriate Attire & Shoes
	Neatly Styled/Brushed Hair
	Fresh Breath
	Good Hygiene

What to Bring

	Completed Job Application
	Personal Resume
	List of Questions to Ask Interviewer

Things to Remember

<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Show Up 10 Minutes Early○ Be Confident○ Be Honest○ Be Yourself○ Keep Conversation Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Good Posture & Smile○ Be Polite / Use Manners○ Silence Phone○ Ask Questions○ Try Your Best
--	--

Sample Communication Deliverables

This form is to be filled out by the patient's treating therapist & discussed with the community partner supervisor to provide necessary information. Shred or store in locked confidential file after use in order to protect patient health information.

Age: _____

Important medical or diagnostic information about program participant:

Reason for receiving services at Shine Pediatric Therapy:			
Circle Services Receiving:	Occupational Therapy	Physical Therapy	Speech Therapy

Program participant's home life, including familial and social support:

Program participant's schooling and extracurricular activities:

Program participant's culture, spirituality, and values:

Barriers to success:

Skills and qualities to champion:

Specific areas to grow:

Goal of the program participant's workforce experience:

Other Important Notes:

Post-Program Report Card

This form is to be filled out by the patient, treating therapist & community partner supervisor to help evaluate program experience. This Shred or store in locked confidential file after use in order to protect patient health information.

Name: _____

Age: _____

Patient Strengths:

Opportunities for patient growth:

Site/Site Supervisor Strengths:	
---------------------------------	--

Opportunities for site/site supervisor growth:

Learned Skills:

--

Program Goal Status:

What's Next:

Other Important Notes:

Workforce Program Weekly Progress Form

- 1) Did Not Address
- 2) Needs Improvement
- 3) Satisfactory
- 4) Excellent

Job performance

	1	2	3	4
Sequencing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Memory Recall	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organizing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Problem Solving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Time Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Work-Related Documentation

	1	2	3	4
Time Sheet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Resume	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cover Letter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Self Advocacy

	1	2	3	4
Communicating need for task modification	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognizing need for environmental modification	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Social Communication

	1	2	3	4
Appropriate Greetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appropriate Spatial Awareness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Additional Comments:

Your answer

Submit

Clear form



Workforce Program Partnership

Email *

Your email

First and Last Name:

Your answer

Organization Name:

Your answer

Organization Address:

Your answer

Best Phone Number for Contact:

Your answer

Would you be interested in learning more about or partnering with Shine in the future?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Submit

Clear form