

In-Home Learning System:

Technology for delivery of education and training

to individuals with disabilities in southwestern Connecticut

Introduction

It's no secret that in today's economy many people are having difficulty finding a job or remaining employed. But imagine for a moment being out of work while also having a disability. All job seekers must advocate for themselves and prove their talents and abilities to a potential employer but for a person with a disability, it is often a much harder task.

According to a study done by the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, employers are more hesitant in hiring a disabled worker versus a non-disabled one. The study found that employers believed there to be three main obstacles in hiring a disabled person:

1. Negative perceptions: "Employers fear that disabled workers will generate more work for their bosses."
2. Lack of external hiring support: "Even a large employer who lacks negative perceptions about the disabled will find few resources, outside the company, to recruit them."
3. Lack of internal hiring support: "Companies often lack the in-house ability necessary to seek out disabled workers. Often this is a budgetary problem..."

It is not surprising then, that in a study conducted in 2005 by the United States Census Bureau, found that only 46% of people ages 21-64 who had a disability were employed. Compare that to the employment rate of people without disabilities, which was 84%. They further found that the poverty rate for people with a disability ranged from 12-27% depending on the severity of their disability. The poverty rate for a person who wasn't disabled was 9%.

In 2012, The Workplace, Inc of southwestern Connecticut, in partnership with Business Access, launched an In-Home Learning System (IHLS) Program that sought to better prepare those with disabilities to enter employment, as part of the federal government's Add Us In program. Add Us In is a project sponsored by the U.S. Department

of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). The purpose of the program is to identify and formulate strategies to boost employment opportunities in small businesses for people with disabilities.

The Program

The Business Access In-Home Learning System is a self-sufficiency development program. Individuals, or "Achievers" as they are called, are guided every step of the way so that they can reach the end goal of increased employment and long-term self-sufficiency. Achievers are given laptop computers preloaded with learning modules and internet access for 12 months, so that they can complete their curriculums from anywhere. Achievers receive across the board work readiness training and individually assigned curriculums. Upon successful completion of the program, Achievers earn ownership of their laptops.

Goals

The three main goals of the IHLS Add Us In Program are:

- Complete the digital literacy and work readiness curriculum within the first 30 days
- Meet monthly participation hours
- Secure Unsubsidized employment

Eligibility

In order to enroll in this IHLS program, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy, individuals are required to be both unemployed and have a disability.

Results

Since its inception in November of 2012, 32 individuals have been admitted into the program. To date, 2,047 classes and 264 curriculums have been completed. Participation hours are at 4,525!

A Closer Look: Steven K., Scott D., and Gina M.'s Successes

Steven K. has flown through the program and graduated within months of enrollment. With the help of the





Business Access In-Home Learning System,, Steven was able to find employment in just four months time! While working full time, Steven continued his courses and completed more than 30, expanding his skills in his chosen area of employment. During his time in the program, he regularly requested more challenging courses in order to improve his skills even further! No wonder he was able to graduate so quickly!

Steven isn't the only Achiever who has found success in the IHLS program. Scott D. is a model participant and has exceeded every expectation. He is pleasant and highly motivated. Since joining the program 9 months ago he has completed more than 220 courses. His mentor reports that she has seen an increase in his communication skills and he has become active and engaged with his peers. He credits the BA program with helping him win an award in his community and continues to make excellent progress.

Another Achiever, Gina M. has completed more courses than any other participant – a whopping 350 in just 9 months! She is very motivated and way ahead of schedule as a result. With encouragement, she is committed to obtaining her GED and has completed over 150 courses towards that goal, as well as more than 150 in various areas including customer service and administrative assistant!

