

# Illinois Center for Transition and Work



INCLUSIVE WORK IN ILLINOIS

# Training and Supervision of Paraprofessional Job Coaches

**Stacy Dymond**

Director, Illinois Center for Transition and Work

Professor, Department of Special Education, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign



# Purpose

- Share literature about the role of job coaches
- Describe the challenges special educators in Illinois experience related to training and supervising job coaches
- Discuss ideas for addressing challenges



# Role of Job Coaches

# Paraprofessional Job Coach Activities

Brenner & Dymond (in preparation)

- Paraprofessionals support students at work sites by
  - teaching and reinforcing skills at the worksite,
  - sharing information regularly with certified staff back at school,
  - providing safety and supervisory supports,
  - collecting numerical or anecdotal data on student performance.



# Rural vs Suburban Work Sites

## Rural

- Paraprofessionals may work alongside special educators or vocational coordinators to identify and develop new worksites (Schutz & Travers, 2023).

## Suburban

- Paraprofessionals had little to no involvement in identifying and developing worksites (Brenner & Dymond, in preparation).



# Concerns About Training and Supervision of Paraprofessional Job Coaches

- Lack of training specific to supporting students with disabilities during work experiences (Awsumb et al., 2022; Rooney-Kron & Dymond, 2021).
- Lack of training on effective instructional practices (e.g., systematic instruction) that could be applied within community work settings (Brock & Carter, 2015).
- Limited to no ongoing supervision or evaluation of job coaches (Brenner & Dymond, in preparation).



# Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) Competencies

- Core values and principles of job coaching
- Individualized assessment and career planning
- Community research and job development
- Workplace and related supports





# Challenges in Illinois

# Job Coach Roles Study

- The purpose of this study was to understand
  - the qualifications and responsibilities of paraprofessional job coaches who are employed by schools,
  - the training these job coaches receive to perform their job, and
  - how school professionals direct the activities of job coaches



# Participant Inclusion Criteria

- School professional
- Work in the state of Illinois
- Directed or supervised the activities of at least 1 job coach in the last 12 months



# Job Coach Definition

- A paraprofessional/teaching assistant employed by the school who supports students with disabilities to learn work skills at businesses in the community



# Questionnaire

- 66 questions
- Sections
  - Job coach qualifications
  - Job coach responsibilities
  - Job coach training
  - Your role in directing the activities of job coaches
  - Demographics
- Online, anonymous survey



# Recruitment of Participants

- STEP Advisory meeting
- ICTW regional workshops and symposium
- ICTW TTA partners
- ICTW listserv
- Word of mouth



# Participant Demographics (N=110)

## ■ Position\*

- 59% SPED teacher
- 58% Vocational coordinator
- 12% SPED administrator

## ■ Type of school

- 40% Integrated
- 25% Separate
- 24% Transition center
- 11% Other

## ■ Location

- 70% Urban
- 30% Rural

## ■ Region of Illinois

- 48% Northeast
- 2% Northwest
- 9% West central
- 17% East central
- 6% Southern



# Questions about Challenges



What, if any, challenges exist to training job coaches at your school?



What, if any, challenges exist at your school to directing the activities of job coaches?



# Challenges to Training Job Coaches



# Not a Priority for the District or Organization

- [Lack of] school and district recognition of the importance of this position .
- District wide requirements that take precedent over job coach specific trainings.
- The job coaches at my school are a bit of a forgotten class and no school-wide trainings consider their responsibilities.



# Training Provided is Not Specific to Job Coaching

- Not a great distinction between the training needs or classroom para vs. job coaches.
- I would say the biggest challenges that exist are the generic natures of the actual training content provided.



## Formal Training Programs and Training Resources are Not Readily Available

- We have no formal training, all of the training comes from the special ed teacher.
- We have tried to look for economical trainings for our job coaches but have not found very much available for in person training.
- Difficult to find professional resources to use for training
- I wish we had a "curriculum" for job coaches.



# Insufficient Time Available for Training

- Lack of preparation time. Conflicts with other assigned duties.
- Job coaches are at work sites all day, which leaves little time for trainings.
- The ability to have all necessary parties meet together at an assigned time is difficult.
- Scheduling of common prep times with teachers or with the whole paraprofessional staff.



<b>Frequency of Job Coach Training</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Weekly</b>	5	4.5
<b>Monthly</b>	9	8.2
<b>Quarterly</b>	11	10.0
<b>Twice a year</b>	10	9.1
<b>Once a year</b>	29	26.4
<b>When hired</b>	4	3.6
<b>As needed</b>	11	10.0
<b>Never</b>	12	10.9
<b>Not sure/don't know</b>	18	16.4



<b>Methods Used to Train Job Coaches</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>On the job training</b>	76	69.1
<b>Staff/team meetings</b>	68	61.8
<b>Job shadowing</b>	47	42.7
<b>Workshop/Inservice</b>	44	40.0
<b>Online or app-based modules</b>	21	19.1
<b>None</b>	10	9.1
<b>Not sure/don't know</b>	1	0.9



<b>When Job Coaches Receive Most of Their Training</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>On the fly (i.e., provided quickly, as needed, without prior planning)</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>46.4</b>
<b>Professional development days</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>26.4</b>
<b>Regularly scheduled meetings before, during, or after school</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23.6</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.6</b>



# Challenges to Supervising Job Coaches



# Staff Availability to Supervise

- Voc coordinators are in the classroom more and more and do not have time to visit worksites.
- I do not have enough time with teaching, completing case manager duties to devote the time needed for the job coaches.
- As a special education teacher, I am not given leave to supervise or direct job coaches at work sites.
- Having enough staff to support those at school while going to observe in different job sites.
- We don't have prioritized time to support our job coaches outside of actually working together at the job site with students present.



# Providing Appropriate Support to Each Job Coach

- Each site has a unique set of circumstances.
- We have such a large group of job coaches, it is hard to give everyone individualized tips.
- Sometimes being "on an island" without enough support on site for what they are tasked with achieving.



# Collaboration and Communication

- Lots of different team members are giving feedback to paraeducators/job coaches. Often this feedback is not consistent between providers.
- Clarify between paraprofessional vs. job coach.
- There is no official program for job coaches. They just get assigned to a job site based on schedules and are expected to do things. Teachers have to figure things out on their own.



# Maintaining Program Integrity and Job Coach Accountability

- Job coaches have a more flexible schedule where they are coming and going through out the day. This has caused some challenges with making sure that everyone is responsibly managing their time. Some job coaches in the past have taken advantage of the flexible schedule.
- A challenge is ensuring that the program is running the same as if a teacher was there but a teacher is not there.
- The job coaches have no oversight beyond the Special Education teacher, which is me. I am expected to direct all activities, but I cannot be there to supervise off campus sites and I am not part of any evaluation process.
- There isn't an established procedure for evaluating or directing the activities of job coaches. This leads to no evaluations at all.



<b>Frequency of Meetings with Job Coaches</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Daily</b>	33	30.0
<b>Once a week</b>	42	38.2
<b>Once a month</b>	12	10.9
<b>Once a quarter</b>	7	6.4
<b>Once a year</b>	5	4.5
<b>As needed</b>	5	4.5
<b>Never</b>	3	2.7
<b>Prefer not to respond</b>	3	2.7



<b>Frequency of Observations of Job Coaches at Work Sites</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Daily</b>	5	4.5
<b>Once a week</b>	18	16.4
<b>Once a month</b>	28	25.5
<b>Once a quarter</b>	23	20.9
<b>Once a year</b>	9	8.2
<b>Never</b>	17	15.5
<b>As needed</b>	9	8.2
<b>Prefer not to respond</b>	1	0.9

<b>Methods Used to Gather Information About Job Coach Performance</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Observations at the WBL site</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>69.1</b>
<b>Review of student data collected by job coach</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>51.8</b>
<b>Feedback from business partner where job coach is assigned</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>46.4</b>
<b>Student feedback about the work experience</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>33.6</b>
<b>I do not gather information about job coach performance</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16.4</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.6</b>



# Challenges to Training and Supervising Intersect with Personnel Challenges

Job coach shortages, retention,  
and turnover

Job coach commitment, buy in,  
and quality



**How do the findings relate to  
your experience?**

**How might we address these  
challenges in Illinois?**

# Potential Solutions

- Define job coach roles and responsibilities, including how they differ from classroom paraprofessionals
- Clarify educators' roles and responsibilities for training and supervising job coaches
- Allot time in staff schedules for on-site supervision of and collaboration with job coaches
- Provide job coaches with ongoing job-specific training



# Questions

**Stacy Dymond**

**Director**

Illinois Center for Transition and Work  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

[sdymond@Illinois.edu](mailto:sdymond@Illinois.edu)

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