

Career and College READI, Experiential Learning for Young Adults with Disabilities

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Program Content

- ❖ Mission
- ❖ Consumer profile
- ❖ Reconceptualize post-secondary learning program
- ❖ Key principles of futures planning
- ❖ Two curriculum tracks: Career or College Preparation
- ❖ Results from recent program completers



The Horizons School provides a community-based educational program promoting successful transition to independent living for young adults with learning disabilities, autism spectrum and developmental disorders.



Consumer Profile

Young adults ages 18 to 26 who:

Have a primary diagnosis of a specific learning disability, such as an autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, ADHD, etc.

Show evidence of psychological maturity and stability and no evidence of conditions that could interfere with successful program completion (such as a substance use disorder)

Are functionally literate with a high school diploma, GED, and/or a certificate of high school completion

Are capable of living in a shared apartment with minimal supervision

Have sufficient mobility to access the community

Are capable of managing own medication and other health needs with minimal prompting

Willing to fully engage in the program and respond positively to supervision

Does not require 1:1 intervention/interaction throughout the day and are capable of simple decision-making

Capable of self-care and activities of daily living with prompting

Be free from patterns of aggression or abuse toward self, others and property

Why Reconceptualize the Learning Program?

Original learning program substantially modified since inception in 1991, evolved to meet demands

WIOA and its emphasis on serving most vulnerable workers including youth who have limited skills and lack work experience prompted further change

Recognition of need to expand education and training options to overcome barriers to employment

Group and individual instruction, skills training, and practice with feedback occurs in authentic settings (worksite, home, community)

Additional emphasis on functional literacy (information and technology, reading comprehension, health and wellness, finances)

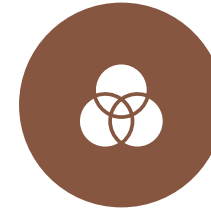
Enhanced partnerships with state VR agencies to better serve consumers

Person-Centered Planning: 5 Key Principles

(Dementia Australia)



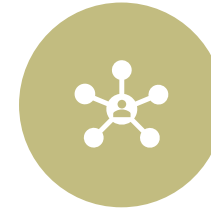
Valuing people - Treat each with dignity and respect; support personal perspectives, values, beliefs and preferences. Listen and work in partnership to design and deliver services.



Autonomy- Provide and respect choices made. Balance rights, risks and responsibilities. Optimize individual control through sharing of power and decision-making. Maximize independence by building on individual strengths, interest and abilities.



Life experience - Support the sense of self by understanding the importance of a person's past, present experiences and future hopes.



Understanding relationships - Collaborate among service provider(s) and the individual. Provide opportunities to engage in meaningful social and community activities.



Environment - A planned, organisation-wide effort to individual and organizational learning and support that is responsive to individual needs.

Toward Person-Centered, Away from System-Centered

(Institute on Community Integration UAP, 2001)

Recommended practices...

- Craft a desirable lifestyle
- Design unlimited number of desirable experiences
- Find new possibilities for each person
- Focus on quality of life
- Emphasize dreams, desires and meaningful experience
- Organize to respond to people

Do less of these...

- Plan a lifetime of programs
- Offer a limited number of usually segregated program options
- Base options on stereotypes about persons with disabilities
- Focus on filling slots, beds, placements, closures
- Overemphasize technologies and clinical strategies
- Organize to please funders, regulators, policies and rules

After a while, even the densest of us may have our eyes opened to that something which transcends all superficial distractions of disability: the unimaginable beauty of every person. That beauty is ours for the seeing if only we have the eyes to see, if only we pay attention.

Tim Shriver

SELF- DETERMINATION MEANS...



Knowing and believing in oneself



Knowing what I want my future to look like
and how to plan for that future



Knowing about supports needed to control
my life, e.g., actively requesting DSS on
campus



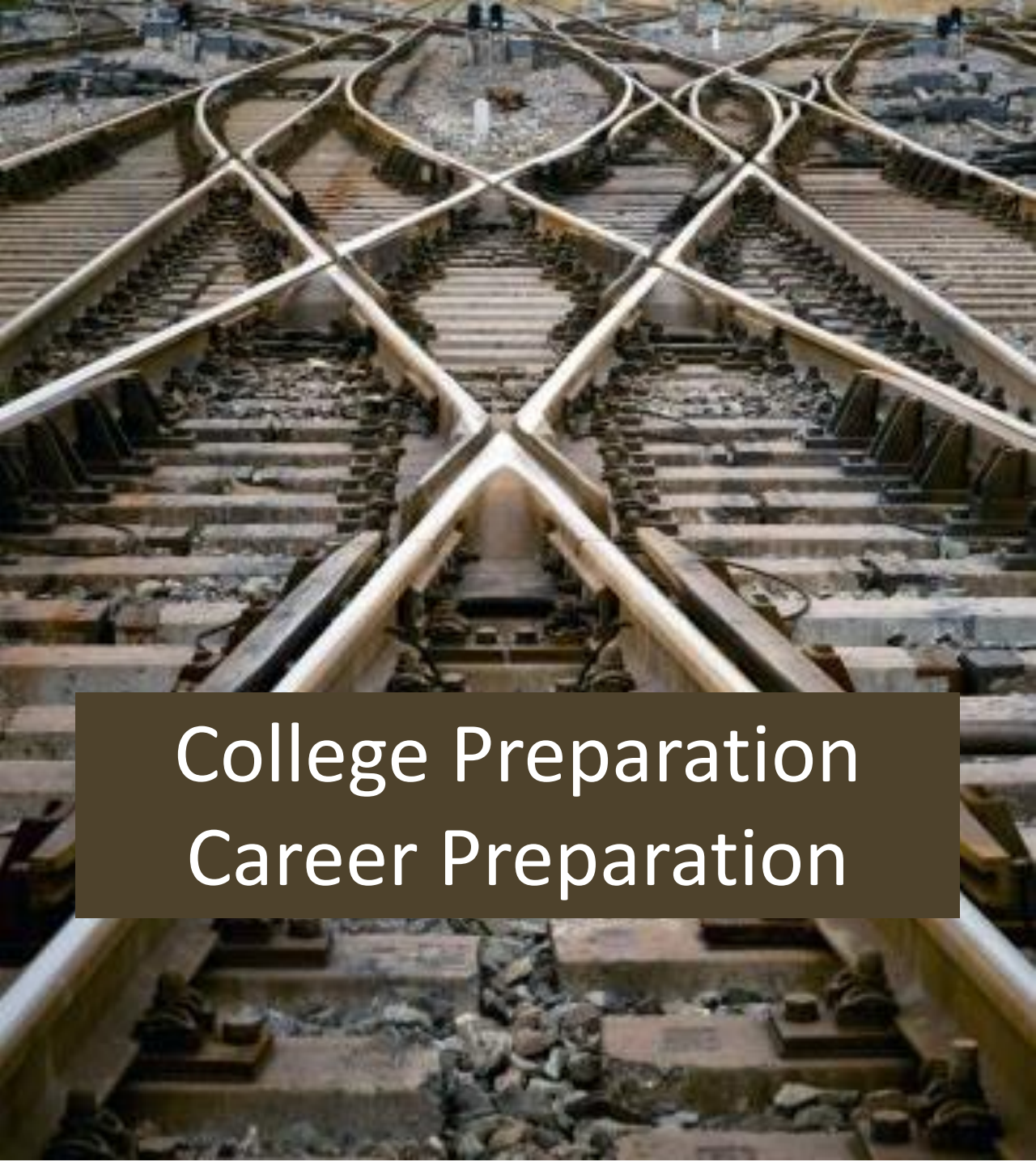
Learning from success and disappointment

- Involving youth in their Futures Plan builds self-advocacy skills and self-esteem
- Shifts responsibility from parent/professional to consumer
- Enhances abilities to make decisions and set goals
- Helps individual to communicate needed supports for home, school and work

Who Determines My Future?

Failure will never overtake me if my determination to succeed is strong enough –

Og Mandino



College Preparation
Career Preparation

Two Curriculum Tracks

READI Learning Program

Learning Goal: Each individual will master fundamental skills necessary for gainful employment and community living.

Vision: Transform current beliefs about employees with disabilities in the workplace by creating employable and qualified candidates

Pre-Placement Readiness – comprehensive client assessment includes:

- Review of educational and work history
- Career Interest Inventory
- Assessment of Community Independence Skills
- Financial Literacy Assessment
- Computer and Functional Literacy Assessments
- College Readiness Assessment

Outcome and Objectives



The outcome is that all READI completers are career-ready!

We will achieve this through Prevocational Training, Vocational Preparation and Dual Enrollment for College Success

Individuals choose either Career Preparation *or* College Preparation Track



Objectives

Present curriculum in a relevant and purposeful manner

Place business and industry processes directly into READI Workplace Training

Incorporate foundational career-ready skill sets into classes

Emphasize how individual employee success leads to company profitability

Practice essential soft skills to secure and retain employment

3 Main Components of READI



PREVOCATIONAL
TRAINING



VOCATIONAL
PREPARATION



DUAL ENROLLMENT FOR
COLLEGE SUCCESS

3 Main Components

READI LEARNING PROGRAM

THE HORIZONS SCHOOL

Prevocational Training

- Provide students with engaging curriculum and relevant internships to earn paid employment
- Investigate occupational areas of interest
- Enhance basic literacy and social skills
- Explore job titles, roles, preparation and projected employment for DOL Career Clusters
- Promote positive work ethic
- Observe employee roles and responsibilities through community-based job shadows



Soft Skills Training for Workplace and College Readiness

- Basic concepts of time and weather
- Social skills for effective communication
- Basic literacy skills (reading, writing, math, and English) to obtain and retain employment
- Basic self-care, health and wellness, and independent living skills
- Financial literacy skills (monthly budgeting, bill payment, fraud prevention)
- Use different methods of transportation

Source: The Horizons School (2018)



Vocational Preparation

- ☐ Acquire important soft skills for job success (e.g., time management, customer and coworker communication, following supervisor directions, self-care, personal appearance and safety)
- ☐ Develop basic skills for listening, speaking, problem-solving and critical thinking in the workplace
- ☐ Prepare for interviews, a career plan and portfolio, job applications and request references
- ☐ Complete tasks assigned to individuals and cooperative workgroups
- ☐ Learn how individual performance leads to customer satisfaction and company profitability
- ☐ Consult with employers for job coaching and student direction



Dual Enrollment for College Success

- Complete admissions and financial aid applications and placement tests
- Develop skills for classroom success (active listening, participation, reading, memorization, note-taking, meeting deadlines)
- Navigate the campus and classroom
- Use online course management system(s)
- Enhance time management and organization skills to complete assignments
- Communicate with instructors and academic advisors

Success Story #1

Sam works for wages in a local coffee shop while pursuing a career certificate at Jefferson State Community College

He earned his Food Handlers Card as part of the READI curriculum

Sam learned essential job skills as an intern in the Education Department of Birmingham Zoo

He continues learning how to juggle part-time work and daily living while a college student





GUIDING YOUNG ADULTS

- Acknowledge any fear of failure
- **Family and professional expectations greatly influence the young adult's achievements**
- Identify gifts, talents & interests of other family members
- **Discuss role models who persist despite initial disappointment**
- Stress learning strategies and coping techniques
- **Provide corrective criticism when needed**

Inclusive Course Access - Non-degree

- Develop skills for classroom success and foundational knowledge
- Explore potential career interests
- Successful completion increases student's confidence
- Horizons offers career certification through AHLEI
- Free and fee-based options with minimal commitment (e.g., ALISON, Ed2Go, distance education programs offered by state and private universities)

Sample course titles: *Sales Techniques - Interacting with Customers; Intro to Communication Skills; Pre-Algebra Mathematics; Accounting Fundamentals; QuickBooks; Microsoft Excel; Grammar Refresher Series*



Inclusive Course Access - Degree

- Enroll students meeting academic and social criteria
- Regular academic advising essential! Begin with Orientation to College or Freshman Year Experience.
- Explore student resources on campus (e.g. financial aid and scholarships, DSS, tutoring, career guidance and job placement, campus housing, health services, parking, campus dining, childcare)
- Connect coursework to future career (work study, service learning, organization for young professionals, guest lecturers, summer internships)
- Provide individual support and fade over time as student shows competencies

Preparing for Integrated Paid Employment

- Develop a work-based learning plan guided by employment specialists and student's aspirations
- Foster partnerships with community business and industry
- Offer Disability Awareness training to employers
- Teach employee skills through simulation, service learning, job shadows, student internships with job coaching, and part-time paid positions



Horizons School Career staff partnered with the UAB Campus Recreation Center for pre-placement and on-the-job training of its students, who learned to assist fitness patrons.

Rec Center staff assisted, *Peter*, a male Horizons student to practice responses to required interview questions, resulting in paid employment as a Facility Attendant.

In fact, *Peter* earned a Rising Star Award as a new UAB Rec Center employee, the first Horizons student to achieve this recognition. Soon after, he was promoted to a supervisory role!

He has since added a second part-time paid job in a local restaurant.

Success Story #2



Outcomes

Evaluation Results

- Thirteen alumni (31% return rate) completed surveys summarizing student achievements, current residence, employment, volunteer service and self-determination.
- A second survey with parallel items was completed by 20 parents/guardians (25% return rate).
- This report presents data from completed alumni and parent surveys, comparing responses to similar items across groups.
- In a few cases, parents and alumni responded from the same family.
- Results are presented in four sections: **Demographics, Career Independence, Community Independence and Overall Satisfaction.**

Figure 1. Seven Job-Related Skills Learned by Horizons Graduates (n=13)

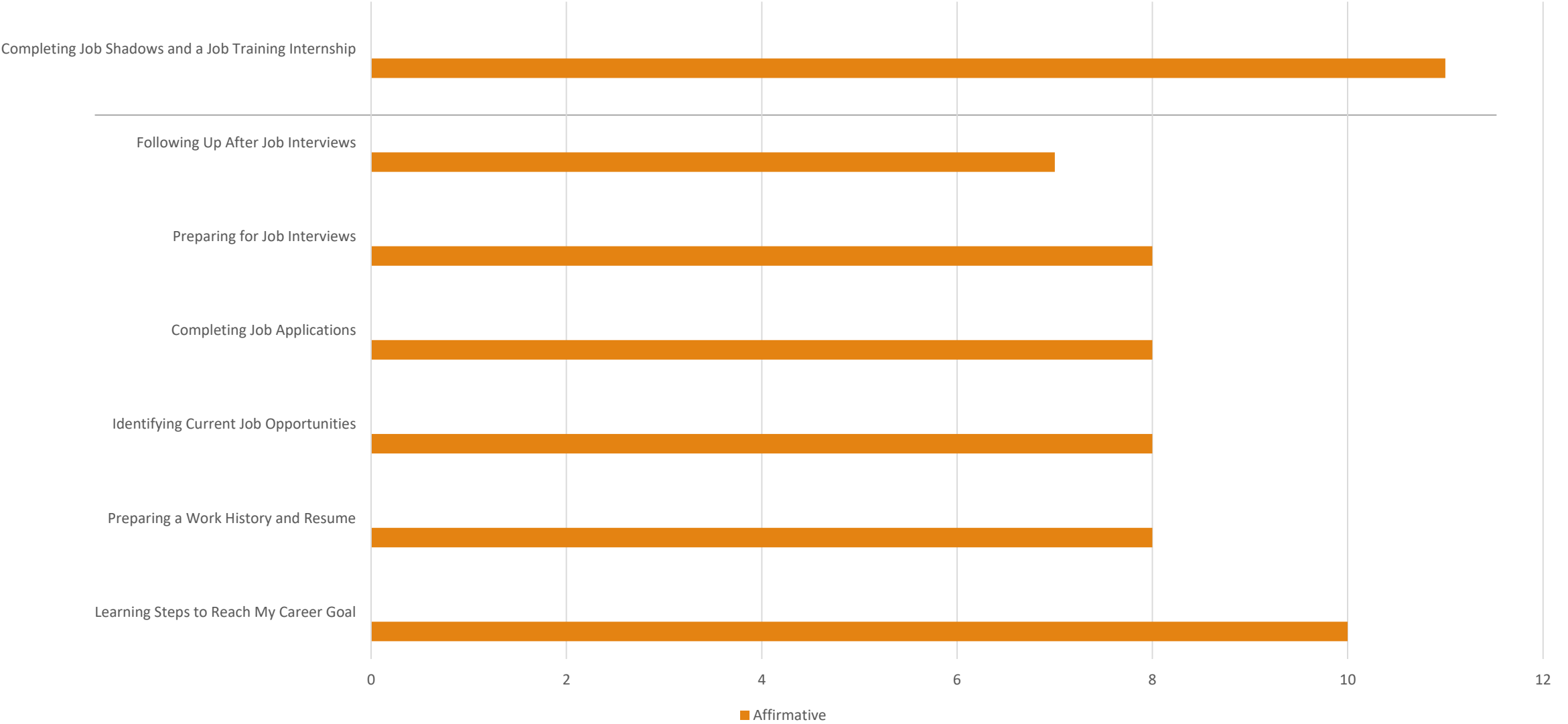


Figure 2. Length of Current Employment as Reported by Alumni and Parents.

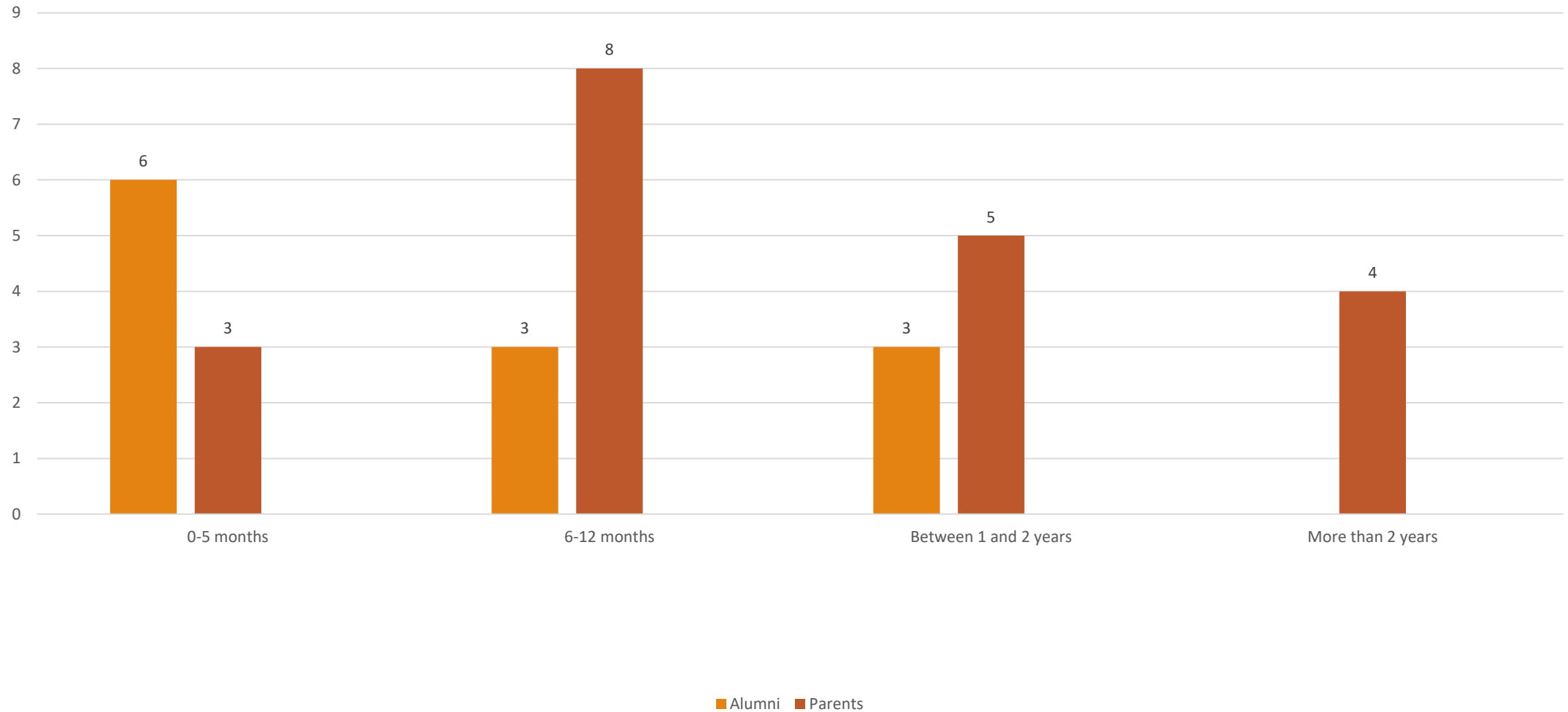


Figure 3. Frequency of Performance of Job-Related Skills (n=12)

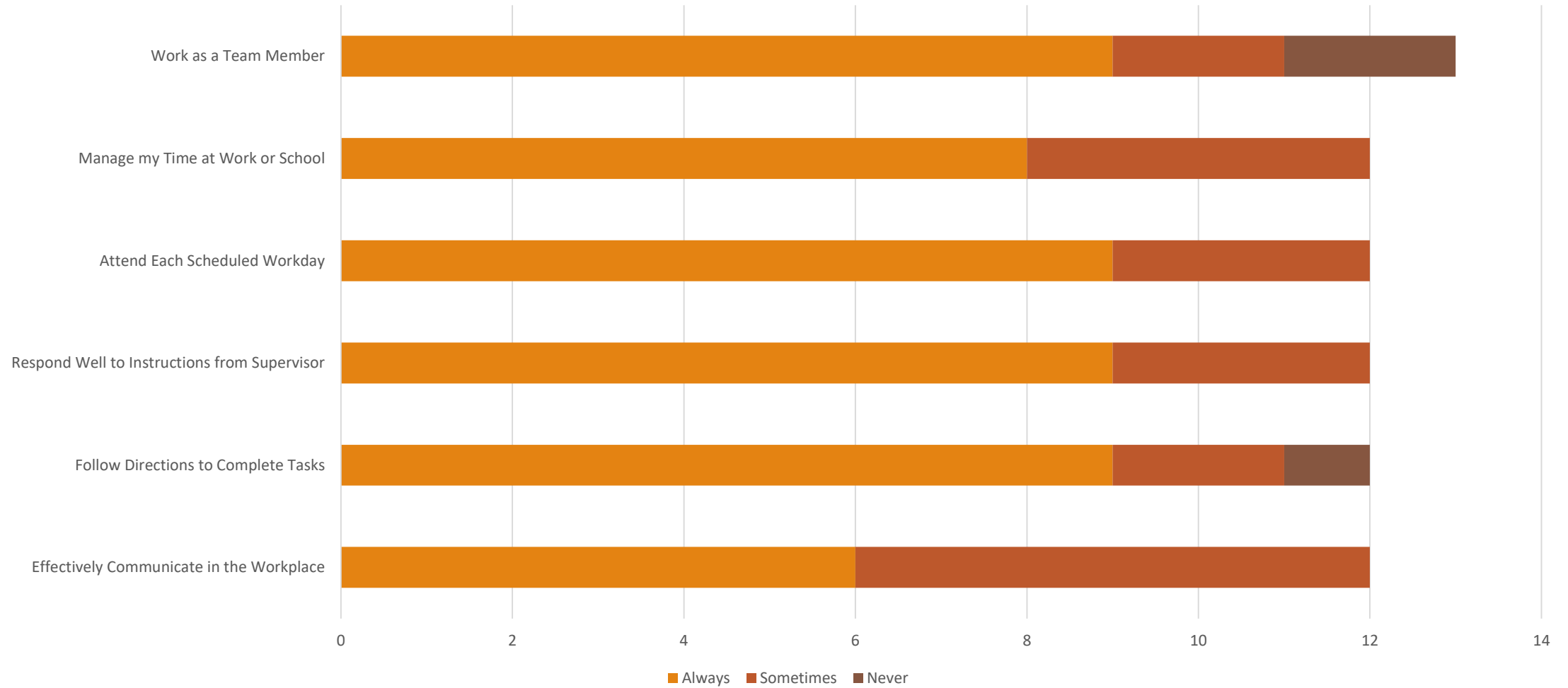
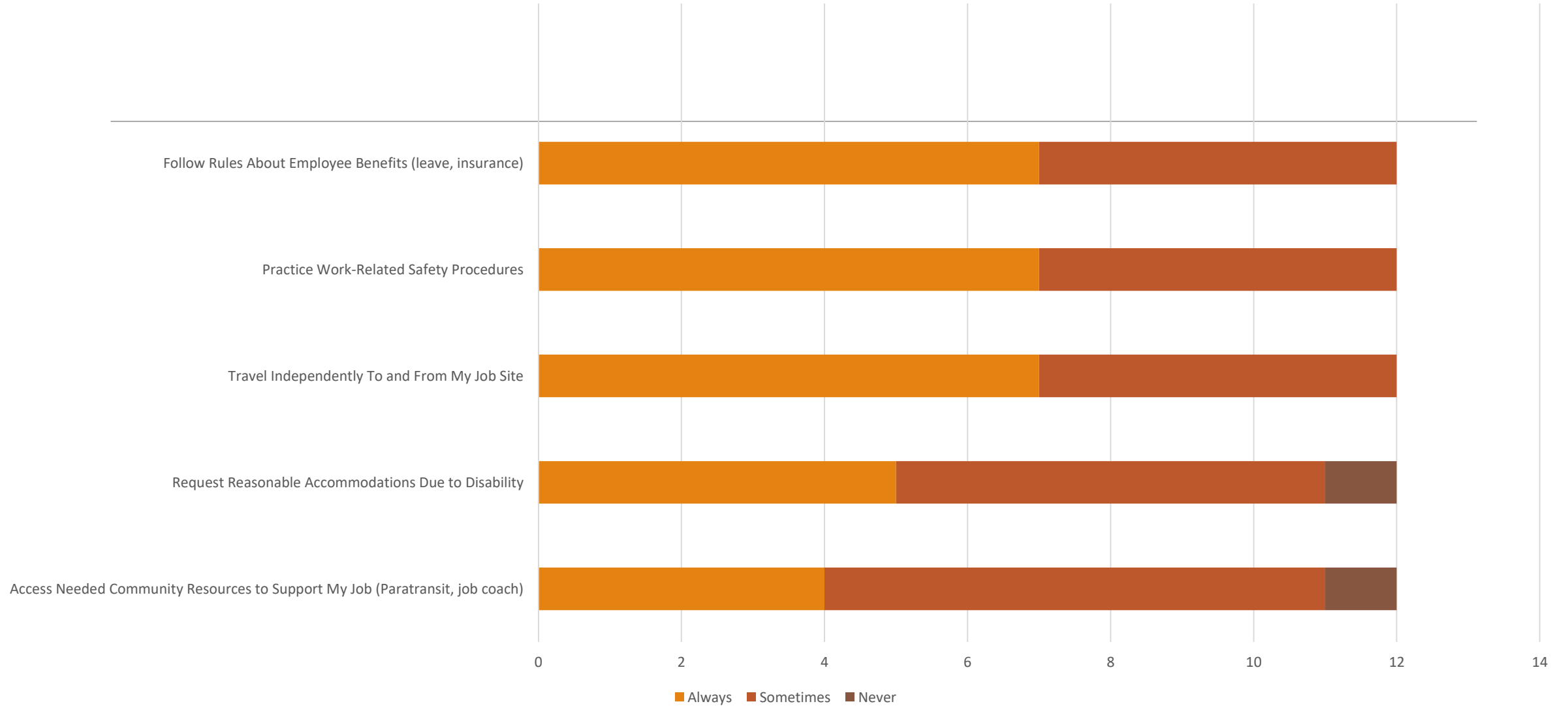


Figure 4. Frequency of Performance of Job-Related Skills (n=12)



In Summary

- 73% live independently
- 75% hold paid jobs
- 23 alumni reported to be working in the same position for 6 months or longer
- 28 alumni report satisfaction with their current job or training program

Parent feedback

- They have learned to “be punctual, responsible, appropriately dressed and always do your best.”
- They show “good work ethic and dependability.”
- Learned “how to ask questions when needed and be more independent.”
- How to “perform a thorough job and ask for help if needed.”
- “Improved communication skills to better understand coworkers and avoid quitting a position because of miscommunication.”



Questions and Contact Information

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