



Realizing Employment First for Youth



# **Sarah's Path to Community Employment**

Case Study of Multiple Disabilities

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## Sarah's Path to Community Employment

Sarah is a student educated in her local County Board of Developmental Disabilities (CDBB) school program. The program is located in a school building on the campus with other CBDD buildings and offices. The ETR (Educational Team Report) indicates that Sarah's educational identification is as a student with Multiple Disabilities (MD)

### Brief History

Sarah and her family have been connected to the County Board and received services since she was an infant born prematurely at 28 weeks. Her premature birth resulted in multiple challenges, both physical and intellectual. Sarah's health was fragile at several points during infancy and she experienced frequent hospitalizations for serious respiratory infections. Discussion of the future that included employment in the community was initially difficult for the team, especially the family, as they felt she would require too much support to be successful in employment and it would be too risky for her to be in the community. The family's main focus was on keeping Sarah healthy. The family was challenged to look beyond the day to day care that Sarah required.

### Early Discussions

Sarah participated in Early Intervention Programs through the CBDD. She was able to learn to communicate using AAC (augmentative and alternative communication). Initially, she communicated wants and needs by using a touch switch and picture light board. She began to develop some verbal language by age 6. Sarah's limited spoken vocabulary was easily understood by those having regular contact with her. Over the years, speech therapy assisted Sarah to increase both her vocabulary and the intelligibility of her speech. Sarah is very motivated to interact with other people and she far exceeded all expectations in this area. Emphasis for Sarah has always been on health and safety, with no real expectation that Sarah would be capable of or welcomed to work in the community. With service options prioritizing integrated settings and vocational outcomes, Sarah's family and school team are unsure of what to expect for her future.

### In School Support

Because of Sarah's multiple challenges, she was provided intense support in the school setting. An aide was assigned to Sarah and one other student in her class. Sarah was educated in a self-contained environment, where the curriculum focused on functional skills and health and safety. Sarah received assistance in all areas of the school day. This included hand-over-hand assistance with academic and functional tasks, personal care needs and eating. She received speech and language services and occupational and physical therapy (OT and PT).

As Sarah moved through the school program, she became increasingly independent of in-person supports needed to participate in academic and functional activities through using technology. She expressed the desire to do as much as possible on her own. She responded well to therapy services, gaining core strength, balance and maximizing use of her hands and arms. She was able to move herself in a motorized wheelchair around the classroom and short distances around the building. She continued to require a one-on-one aide for personal care needs and some academic activities. School nurse services provided Sarah her daily medications and breathing treatments. Her academic progress was hampered by frequent absences and hospitalizations for respiratory issues.

It was anticipated that Sarah would remain in the school program until age 22. When she was younger, everyone expected that Sarah would transition to a CBDD day program after aging out of school. However, with her increased independence and her desire for more, those expectations have changed and her family is now willing to explore more integrated environments, and possibly employment in the community, for Sarah after graduation. Her health has also stabilized.

In response to higher expectations for Sarah's future, additional partners from Sarah's home school district, OOD (Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities) and other CBDD staff assigned to work with youth in transition were invited to come together to plan with Sarah and her family for her future.

The following chart reviews the information gathered by multiple agencies to inform transition assessment and to develop the postsecondary goals for her IEP. Highlights of the services and supports that were identified as necessary through multi-agency planning are also reviewed in the information on the following pages.

## Transition Assessment:

Information was collected by a multi-agency team using the following tools and methods:

### Transition Assessment Tools and Processes Included:

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- Student interest inventories using easy read materials, pictures and videos- multiple opportunities, short sessions
- Structured observations in multiple environments – school, home, community – data gathered for skills such as: Independent living skills, social competencies, level of independence, problem solving, communication.
- CBDD assessments with a focus on functional skills such as communication, personal care, mobility, meal prep and feeding.
- Employment and functional skills inventory- Repeated yearly from age 10, parent and teacher.
- Interview with parents/family members and teachers from previous years. Includes information identified using LifeCourse Tools
- Review of records from past several years to assist in the identification of PINS (Preferences, Interests, Needs and Strengths/Skills) and supports, interventions and strategies for success

## Transition Assessment surfaced the following information (selected items):

### Preferences/ Interests

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- Prefers to spend time with familiar people and in familiar environments as noted by observing her increasing anxiety and behavior when not prepared for new situations.
- Interested in music. Frequent request and will move to the rhythm of the music
- TV and movies - Excited to attend the local movie theater
- Enjoys visiting the local stores to explore the merchandise. Does not expect to purchase, enjoys looking.
- Prefers to do as much as possible for herself, as independently as possible, however, prefers to work as part of a team rather than alone.
- Toy stores - Children’s toys and games
- Prefers to wear bright colors.
- She indicates that she is unsure of future employment (family is unsure as well).
- Likes working with technology
- Prefers to be shown how to do something rather than having spoken or written directions alone

### Skills/Strengths

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- Can independently communicate needs and wants using augmentative communication device
- Vocabulary and spoken language continue to develop
- Can use the joystick to move short distances in wheelchair without tiring or taxing her breathing
- Emerging abilities using adapted keyboards to access Internet and other programs
- Is able to eat finger foods independently and some other foods using adapted eating utensils
- Persistence. Will attempt a task independently for long periods of time prior to requesting or accepting assistance to complete the task

## Needs/Challenges

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- Predictability and structure in her day
- Communication support - AAC
- Mobility - Uses an electric wheelchair - Although can navigate the chair minimally with a joystick for short distances (around a room), she generally needs assistance to move around a building or in the community
- Community experiences to better identify level and types of supports required for maximum independence
- Needs total assistance in personal care (although does as much as possible for herself)
- Harsh weather is difficult for her to navigate (mobility-wise) as well as challenges her health status.
- Assistance with medication
- Community employment has been a recent consideration; she needs work experiences to identify career interests

**Post-Secondary (Adult Life) Goals:** Ongoing Transition Assessment and resulting information assisted to develop and confirm the following Post-Secondary Goals

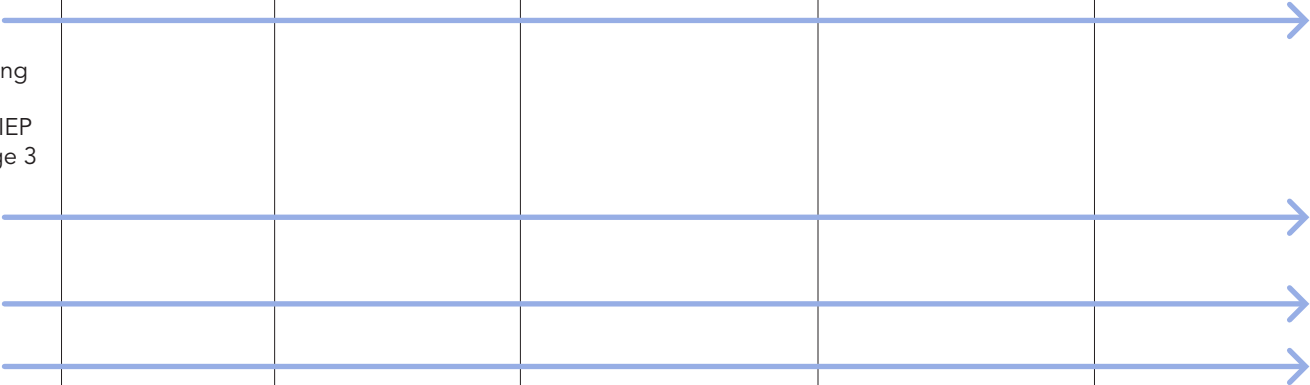
<b>Postsecondary Goals</b> From her current IEP	<b>Supporting Transition Assessment Data</b> Below are examples of Transition Assessment data that support the identified goals
<p><b>POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION/TRAINING GOAL</b>  <b>Sarah’s Initial PS Education Goal</b></p> <p>Following graduation from high school, Sarah will continue her career development and participate in individualized post-secondary job training with the supports/services needed for skill development success and personal safety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likes working with technology</li> <li>• She indicates that she is unsure of future employment (family is unsure as well).</li> <li>• Prefers to be shown how to do something rather than having spoken or written directions alone</li> <li>• Can independently communicate needs and wants using augmentative communication device</li> <li>• Vocabulary and spoken language continue to develop</li> <li>• Community experiences to better identify level and types of supports required for maximum independence</li> </ul>
<p><b>REFINED PS EDUCATION/TRAINING GOAL</b>                      As Sarah, her family and Team gained more information and insight, the PS Education Goal was refined as she moved through school.</p> <p>After graduation from high school, Sarah will participate in postsecondary career exploration and job training programs that match her PINS.</p>	
<p><b>POSTSECONDARY EMPLOYMENT GOAL</b>  <b>Sarah’s Initial PS Employment Goal</b></p> <p>Following graduation from high school, Sarah will participate in a postsecondary employment program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prefers to do as much as possible for herself, as independently as possible, however, prefers to work as part of a team rather than alone.</li> <li>• She indicates that she is unsure of future employment (family is unsure as well).</li> </ul>
<p><b>REFINED PS EMPLOYMENT GOAL</b>                      As Sarah, her family and team gained more information and insight, the PS Employment goal was refined as she moved through high school.</p> <p>Following graduation and post-secondary career exploration, Sarah will work in CIE (Community Integrated Employment), several hours a week, in a retail environment related to toys and games using individualized supports and services needed for employment success and personal safety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prefers to do as much as possible for herself, as independently as possible, however, prefers to work as part of a team rather than alone.</li> <li>• She indicates that she is unsure of future employment (family is unsure as well).</li> <li>• Community employment has been a recent consideration; she needs work experiences to identify career interests</li> <li>• Enjoys visiting the local stores to explore the merchandise. Does not expect to purchase, enjoys looking.</li> <li>• Toy stores - Children’s toys and games</li> <li>• Emerging abilities using adapted keyboards to access Internet and other programs</li> <li>• Persistence. Will attempt a task independently for long periods of time prior to requesting or accepting assistance to complete the task</li> <li>• Vocabulary and spoken language continue to develop</li> <li>• Likes working with technology</li> <li>• Predictability and structure in her day</li> </ul>

**POSTSECONDARY INDEPENDENT LIVING GOAL**


Following graduation, Sarah will continue to live in the family home and will direct and participate in aspects of her hygiene, dressing, and meal preparation. She will also participate in community activities and experiences during the day when not working, with individualized supports and services needed for enjoyment, success and personal safety.

- Prefers to spend time with familiar people and in familiar environments as noted by observing her increasing anxiety and behavior when not prepared for new situations.
- Interested in music. Frequent request and will move to the rhythm of the music
- TV and movies - Excited to attend the local movie theater
- Enjoys visiting the local stores to explore the merchandise. Does not expect to purchase, enjoys looking.
- Prefers to wear bright colors.
- Predictability and structure in her day

Agency	Early Years (Up to 10 years)	Early Middle School Years (11-12 years)	Late Middle School Years (12-14 years)	Early High School Years (14-16 years)	Late High School Years (16+ years)	After Graduation
<b>Department of Developmental Disabilities</b> County Board of Developmental Disabilities	Early Intervention Services (to age 5)  Family Support Services Program  Child Service and Support Administration (SSA) (age 6 – 15)  Educational Program	Visual schedules provided as ongoing support when needed Task Analysis (step by step directions) embedded in her schedule	Transition SSA (age 14)  Ongoing Transition Assessment to uncover interests and skills on which to build career development and community integration  Instruction in OMJ website tools and how to build resume with specially designed instruction / support from Intervention Specialist and Transition Coordinator	SALT (Student Adult Life Transition) Series  Eligibility Process (OEDI) Ohio Eligibility Determination Instrument  Specially designed Instruction in self-determination  Job Shadows in selected local businesses focused on areas of interest including retail clothing, cosmetics and cosmetology, retailer of cook-wear and small appliances	Self- Advocacy Program  Career Boot Camp  Person Centered Planning Process  Assistive Technology Assessment  Vocational exploration of job tasks in the retail store (folding clothing for display, organizing clothing by size and style for display, etc.) using chaining, prompting with gradual fading of verbal and gestures.  Referral to OOD (following career goal development and initial career development services from school transition coordinator and Intervention Specialist)	Job Development - Customized Employment  Individualized Employment (under a waiver service?)  Transportation? Other Employment and Independent Living Services through a waiver  Personal Care services?  Job Coaching?  Remote job coaching?

Agency	Early Years (Up to 10 years)	Early Middle School Years (11-12 years)	Late Middle School Years (12-14 years)	Early High School Years (14-16 years)	Late High School Years (16+ years)	After Graduation
<p><b>Local Education Agency (LEA)</b></p> <p>Public school district where parents reside</p>	<p>District Representative Responsible for Developing and overseeing implementation of IEP; attend, at least annually, IEP meeting (beginning at age 3</p> <p>Speech and Language Services</p> <p>Occupational Therapy</p> <p>Physical Therapy</p>					
<p><b>Vocational Rehabilitation Agency</b></p> <p>Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD)</p>				<p>With parent consent, OOD/OTSP Counselor (Ohio Transition Support Program) attends IEP meeting to explain OOD and Pre-ETS (Pre Employment Transition Services) services to Sarah, family and Team</p>	<p>Job Exploration Counseling (Pre-ETS)</p> <p>OOD Eligibility Process (case opened)</p> <p>Summer Career Exploration Program with individualized job coaching</p>	<p>Summer Youth Work Experience Program with individualized job coaching, sites based on transition assessment data and information gathered from Career Exploration and Vocational Exploration. To take place during the school year.</p> <p>Job Placement with individualized in-person and technology supports</p> <p>Personal care attendant</p> <p>Look at services definitions – customized employment falls where?</p>



Agency	Early Years (Up to 10 years)	Early Middle School Years (11-12 years)	Late Middle School Years (12-14 years)	Early High School Years (14-16 years)	Late High School Years (16+ years)	After Graduation
<b>Mental Health and Addiction Services</b>  Local Mental Health Services	No services identified as needed					
<b>Ohio Job and Family Services</b>  Workforce Development Ohio Means Jobs					Used tools from Ohio Means Jobs website to develop and post resume	Given resources about CCMEP, in partnership with OOD

# Sarah's Path to Community Employment

Sarah's preparation for employment did not begin in earnest until late in her high school years. The following information discusses Sarah's Path to Employment through her education years and is intended to narrate the previous graphic.

In her **Early Years (up to age 10)** Sarah's services were primarily focused on health and safety. There were a number of serious health challenges related to her premature birth. Her family also benefitted from services that began at birth.

- Early Intervention Services – through Help Me Grow in her county, Sarah and her family were referred to early intervention services at the County Board of Developmental Disabilities (CBDD). Through age 3 she and her family received assistance with developmental assessments and an individualized plan to address delays in cognition, mobility, communication and health services. Her family also received coaching to incorporate functional skills development into Sarah's typical daily routines and activities.
- Family Support Services Program – locally funded through the CBDD, the family received some respite and day care services (to age 5) and some latchkey services once Sarah entered school-age programs. The family was also able to access home modifications for Sarah's wheelchair and adaptive switches for toys and communication.
- Child Service and Support Administration (SSA) (age 6 – 15) - Sarah was assigned a SSA at 6 who assisted the family with accessing and coordinating needed services.
- Sarah was educated in her local County Board of Developmental Disabilities (CDBB) school program. The program is located in a school building on the campus with other CBDD buildings and offices. The ETR (Educational Team Report) indicates that Sarah's educational identification is as a student with Multiple Disabilities (MD)
- Through age 10, Sarah's program focused on communication, health and safety. Frequent absences due to serious respiratory infections interrupted Sarah's progress.
- Sarah's home school district was responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of her IEP. The district provided Speech and Language Services, Occupational and Physical Therapy with goals to improve functional communication skills, such as choice making, responding to requests, using switches and AAC, stamina, mobility and maximizing muscle control (core strength).

As Sarah moved into **Middle School** her health began to stabilize and she was better able to benefit from therapies and interventions provided in her school program. She exceeded expectations to use technology to communicate and demonstrated that she wished to try more and more academic and functional tasks on her own, without personal assistance.

- Visual schedules were introduced to Sarah using a tablet mounted on her wheelchair. Adaptive switches gave her independence with accessing the schedule, which used a combination of icons and words.
- Sarah's confidence and desire to 'do for herself' grew with the ability to see her entire day. The visual schedule reduced anxiety about what was to come next and served to maximize her attention and ability to use her skills.
- Staff embedded more detailed schedule information for some activities Sarah could do with little in-person support. A task analysis of steps to be performed maximized her independence and she was consistently accurate.
- Her performance using visual directions was more accurate and efficient than when she was given verbal directions. Too much verbal language frustrated her, negatively impacting her performance. For new tasks, she responded well to task analysis, accompanied by a demonstration (with minimal verbal) of what to do.
- As Sarah had higher expectations for herself in school and at home, her team similarly began to consider that Sarah may be able to function safely and competently in more integrated environments.

- With assistance from the LEA Transition Coordinator and her CBDD SSA, the team began to assess Sarah for career interests and skills. Sarah was able to engage in transition assessment using online career interest surveys modified for her, based on Ohio Means Jobs (OMJ) tools.
- Her intervention specialist assisted Sarah to begin populating a resume template on OMJ with assessment results.
- Sarah was able to view videos of various jobs she was interested in at the website. She was able to indicate those she liked and disliked. The team noticed a pattern in Sarah's responses and realized she seemed to be ruling out jobs she felt she didn't have the physical or mobility skills to do. They also noticed she preferred indoor to outdoor work, jobs that used computers/technology in some way and those providing interaction with others, work colleagues as well as customers.

As Sarah moved into **High School** her program began to include skills necessary for Sarah to safely and competently participate in community integrated environments. Transition Assessment activities revealed that higher expectations for Sarah's future were possible. Still, Sarah would need individualized assistance and thoughtful planning to consider her needs for personal care and ongoing assistance while honoring her skills and her interest in more independence.

- At age 16, Sarah was determined eligible for adult services through the CBDD and she and family engaged in a Person Centered Planning Process and an assistive technology assessment, especially to explore newer technology for communication and more independence in using the internet and software programs.
- Her county board had begun a series of informational sessions (SALT) for families that were accompanied by sessions for youth to develop skills related to career development. Sarah looked forward to these sessions, as she was able to interact socially with teenagers from other schools. Participation with her family in SALT continued throughout her school years.
- Her school program included specially designed instruction in self-determination skills. She practiced choice making skills and used a PowerPoint program to develop a brief presentation about her PINS, with the assistance of an aide.
- Sarah participated in individualized job shadows, coordinated by the LEA and SSA to selected local businesses in areas where career assessment revealed interests. These were brief outings, an hour or so each to retailers including clothing, cosmetics, hair salons, cook wear and small appliances. Staff were able to gather additional transition assessment data by observing Sarah's reactions and interactions in the various environments. Sarah communicated what she liked and didn't like about the various retailers using some verbal language and her communication device.
- She continued to receive Speech/Language services with new goals to increase her speech intelligibility so she could use voice to text functions on her tablet. New goals for OT/PT including increasing her stamina so that she could independently travel longer distances and navigate new environments
- An OOD/OTSP counselor attended her IEP meeting at age 14 to explain OOD services and referral process and Pre-ETS Sarah might benefit from, before being determined eligible for OOD.
- At age 18, Sarah's preparation for Community Integrated Employment began in earnest. Sarah participated in a Self-Advocacy program offered by her CBDD where she learned skills to speak up for herself, personal safety, how to respond in an emergency, navigating the internet safely, using social media and decision making.
- Sarah attended a Career Boot Camp offered by her CBDD that included sessions for clarifying career interests, identifying leisure and hobby interests, resume building, mock interviews, dressing for success, work habits and employability skills, using online job applications, among others.
- Sarah expressed anxiety about attending this event, that would include a larger audience of youth, families and caregivers, most of whom she did not know. Her family and her school team prepared her in advance by using a visual schedule and recalling with her how she enjoyed the SALT series interactions and job shadows. They also bolstered her confidence about what she could gain from the day by reminding her she already had begun a resume, had a good handle on her own PINS and a keen sense of fashion.

- Sarah did enjoy the day and shared that she learned a lot, with one glitch. Even with preparation, the Mock Interview did not go well. The questions had been rehearsed with her and she gave appropriate responses in practice. But when facing a person she did not know, she froze, becoming anxious to the point of hyperventilating.
- Her team debriefed with her after the Boot Camp, documenting new transition assessment data and incorporating new skills into her school program, especially interviewing skills with unfamiliar people.
- At age 17 she participated in Job Exploration Counseling (Pre-ETS) offered by OOD. During this year she was referred to OOD and subsequently found eligible for services.
- During the summer when she was 18, Sarah participated in the OOD Summer Career Exploration Program with individualized job coaching and selected work sites that matched her PINS. She spent time at 3 sites, an animal shelter, a retail clothing store and a garden center. A personal attendant went with her, to assist with personal care needs and lunch. The job coach and attendant assisted in gathering transition assessment data about her reactions and interactions in the various environments and talked with Sarah about what she did and did not like about each experience.

In her last years in **High School** before she aged out of school, Sarah's preparation for working in an integrated environment continued to ramp up, based on previous positive experiences, her motivation to work and her parent's support. Concerns about her safety and health were alleviated. The family was prepared to hire a personal attendant, if waiver funds were not approved. Transportation remained a concern.

- A job developer started working with Sarah to explore various jobs in the community, looking to customize a position for her in a job that matched her skills and needs.
- Sarah participated in vocational job exploration and tried a number of different tasks in a retail store that included folding clothing for display, organizing clothing by size and style for display and tidying up clothing areas. A job coach used chaining and prompting with gradual fading of verbal and gestural cues, which assisted Sarah to complete the tasks. Sarah used a reach stick to place items on higher shelves or on display racks.
- Sarah found the physical tasks tiring and needed frequent breaks, making her work pace very slow for the employer and frustrating for her. Sarah found she didn't get much interaction with customers or other staff, which she also disliked.
- Sarah was then able to participate in Youth Work Experience Program, during the school year, even though it is usually provided during the summer by OOD,. She participated in some other retail experiences in a pet store, an office supply store and an art supply/framing shop.
- Sarah very much enjoyed being in the pet store, and playing with the kittens and bunnies, but the work tasks assigned to her were less appealing. Her task was to use a scanner to input shipments received at the store. Another employee opened the cartons and Sarah scanned individual items, which automatically populated to a spreadsheet used to compare with the original order. With some practice, the job coach felt Sarah could perform all these tasks with adequate speed and accuracy. However, the area where the shipments are received was away from the animals and customers, drafty and dimly lit, none of which Sarah found satisfactory. The work area was neither well heated or cooled, also raising concerns about how it may aggravate her respiratory issues.
- The tasks in the office supply store site was similar, giving Sarah a chance to use her technology and software skills and the shipment area was more to her liking, but still she was away from other employees. Both of these experiences helped Sarah to build her resume.

- The art supply/framing shop turned out to be a very positive experience for Sara, even though her interests did not necessarily point to this type of business. The shop is a small enterprise with the owner, who also does the framing, and one other employee. They needed assistance with inventory control. The shop recently gained attention when it was spotlighted by local media and business has been very brisk, leaving little time for the staff to attend to details. Sarah's skills were in demand. The shipping area in this business was carved out of a makeshift office space, separated from the rest of the store by some display shelves. The location offered a full view of the store, great lighting and temperature control. Sarah's duties were similar to the other situations and offered her some other opportunities to shine. She was able to navigate the entire store space, and put some of the items on shelves, after she added them to the inventory. She loved all the colors of paints and papers. The owner and other employee were thrilled to have some competent help and quickly bonded with Sara, interacting and communicating with her came very naturally. Staff learned quickly that they could ask Sarah questions such as 'Did the shipment of oils come in yet?' and she always had a response.
- The job developer worked with the owner to hire Sarah for 15 hours a week. She thrived and blossomed in this environment, earning minimum wage. During this time, Sarah also obtained a waiver that included covering costs for a personal attendant and transportation via Uber.
- A job coach initially spent the entire first 4 shifts Sarah worked. She needed little assistance with the job tasks, but did need some prompting to ask questions of the staff when something unusual came up. After this initial period, Sarah was able to contact the job coach through her tablet for some advice or assistance.
- Sarah is still interested in exploring jobs in clothing retail or somehow working around pets, and the job developer will continue to explore positions that match Sarah's skills and interests.