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Against All Odds Ministry, Inc.

Capstone Proposal

Carolynne Mather

LDSL- 9013-90

Training Curriculum for Students with Disabilities (ESE)

DSL Capstone Project Proposal Form

Student Name: Carolynne Mather

Date: October 28, 2022

Title: Training Curriculum Career Experiences for Students with Disabilities (ESE)

Abstract: Against All Odds Ministry, Inc. (AAOM) is a non-profit organization created by CEO and Founder Carolynne Mather. Carolynne's passion for serving the at-risk population dates to her years as a Preschool Owner providing moral and spiritual counseling to the young mothers of the children her facility provided care. Carolynne desired to mentor these women in a monthly meeting and guide them to see if they could move beyond their circumstances against the odds that faced them. The desire was to use the group meetings to write a book on women's success from this mentoring group. The group produced two parents who went back to school and received their degrees and became a teacher. The other victory was a parent who decided to leave an abusive relationship and seek professional counseling and help to move her and her children on to the next level of their life. After the closure of the Preschool, Carolynne decided to continue the book, which she titled Against All Odds. The manuscript of the book is still in progress. Carolynne formed a not-for-profit organization in 2014 to continue her work with at-risk women. She provided a three-week course to the women at Lighthouse Ministry.

A dream was born after having the opportunity to teach a class for my daughter on a commitment she had made. Against All Odds Ministry Inc. transitioned from a not-for-profit to a non-profit 501c (3) organization to obtain a Vendor status with Vocational Rehabilitation to service youths ages 14-21 years of age, preparing them for the workforce, postsecondary educational opportunities, and transitioning to becoming productive citizens of their communities.

As CEO of the company, this project allows me to provide a 60-hour training (three weeks) curriculum to ensure students with disabilities have essential workforce preparation and post-school transition opportunities. The curriculum will consist of Job Exploration Counseling, Peer Mentoring, Postsecondary Educational Counseling, Self-Advocacy Training, and Work-Readiness Training. VR provides vendors with training topics and forms to monitor the student's success.

Research shows students with disabilities (SWDs) are finding jobs, becoming independent, and attending colleges in increasing numbers (Orr & Hammig, 2009). According to the National Center for Education Statics (2002), 9% of U.S. undergraduates reported in 1999-2000 had a disability. The reasons for the increase in enrollment are numerous. They include better academic preparation, improved transitioning planning, and opportunities for non-profit organizations to become vendors via VR and provide services to their clients.

Keywords: disabilities, socialization, transition, workforce

Major Deliverables: A three-week curriculum and a syllabus will be designed to address each topic requirement from Vocational Rehabilitation. Each participant will leave with a portfolio consisting of a resume, two reference letters, and a certificate of completion. Each participant will complete a job application based on the skills identified during the Camp Sessions.

Problem Statement

During the evaluation of our program by students and parents, there is a need for a deeper understanding of how students can use their skills to meet their needs of finding the right job, trade, or organization that can assist them with their transitioning to different phases of their life. Our curriculum will offer the students a week of one-on-one counseling to provide them in

helping them to move to the next level. We will also offer monthly Zoom meetings for three months after course completion.

Considering the concern for unemployment in the United States, those who wanted work found work. Employers have expressed concerns over finding enough workers following COVID-19 and have tapped labor pools that generally would not be considered. Despite the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, employment rates for people with disabilities (PWD) remain far lower than those without disabilities. PWD is considered a risk or not trained for the workforce. Training and hiring of people with disabilities, especially youth, is under-utilized.

According to Lengnick-Hall et al. (2011), there are many reasons employers should hire SWD. PWD represents an available trained labor supply. The hiring of PWD often has organizations look at the role of coworkers, supervisors, organizational practices, and proactive employee behaviors when integrating the team. The ability to blend in with the socialization process often is thought to be a challenge for PWD.

Research Literature

For students with disabilities, preparing for the workforce requires a comprehensive transdisciplinary vocational assessment and post-school planning (Levinson & Palmer, 2005).

One of the central parts of adult life is work. Jobs provide a sense of accomplishment and pride or can be a source of frustration and dissatisfaction, especially for PWD. Students with disabilities experience unemployment or underemployment, lower pay, and job dissatisfaction more than their nondisabled peers (Dunn, 1996).

According to the Twenty-First Annual Report to Congress of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (U.S. Department of Education, 1999), one-fourth of students with disabilities graduate from high school with a diploma; however, these students are less likely to drop out of school and be competitively employed providing they receive adequate training in high school.

Mandated Vocational Services for students with disabilities

Two vital legislative acts addressing students' workforce preparation are Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Perkins Act aims to provide technical training and education to students who do not necessarily plan on going to college. The Perkins Act also requires schools to give parents and students Vocational opportunities and eligibility requirements for enrolling in vocational education (Levinson & Palmer, 2011). Students with disabilities are also entitled to receive an assessment of interests, abilities, special needs, and other services designed to help students enroll in vocational education and transition into post-school employment or training.

The idea requires schools to provide services to students with disabilities that will help students make a successful transition from school to post-school activities, such as work, training or education, and other community living.

Florida Department of Vocational Rehabilitation

In Florida, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program began in 1925. Florida's first director was Harold Corpening, who served as director and counselor. He identified 2,000 known adults and 1,500 children with disabilities in the first year. By the end of the second year, there were 300 active clients on his caseload, and he achieved 17 successful closures, most of whom had been rehabilitated through training. Corpening spent 178 days in the field and logged 19,360

miles. The first person rehabilitated (1928) was W.M. Turner, a 26-year-old lineman for a utility company who crushed his foot on the job. Gangrene developed, and he lost his leg and his career at the same time (rehabworks.org).

Since then, many laws have been enacted to enhance the lives of persons with disabilities. On July 26, 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law. The ADA has made a tremendous impact on American life and culture. It is an important civil rights act to ensure that individuals with disabilities enjoy the same freedoms as everyone else. Additionally, the 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ensure consumer choice in career opportunities (rehabworks.org).

The latest amendments are incorporated in Public Law 113-108, enacted on July 22, 2014, as Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA is designed to give job seekers easier access to employment, education, training, and support services needed to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy (rehabworks.org).

Vendor Status with VR

Against All Odds Ministry, Inc. became a contracted vendor with VR approximately six years ago. We have served over 200 students and will use this capstone opportunity to build a system curriculum for staff to follow to meet the needs of the clients and the requirements of Vocational Rehabilitation. The curriculum will be delivered daily within three weeks.

Trustworthiness and Transparency

AAOM serves its clients with complete transparency to build and maintain trust. Trust must be established between AAOM and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) for clients to know we will deliver the curriculum and stipend we offer for their participation. Leaving equipped with a resume, the ability to complete an application and utilize online job boards along with a certificate of training to add to their portfolio and a monetary stipend to begin their financial journey not only builds trust but allows them to know they can perform on a job or in their community sufficiently.

Peer Support

Support from their VR counselor, parents, peers (within the 50-hour curriculum course), and training instructors are critical components to establish hope, collaboration, trust, and utilization of our curriculum and career guest experiences to help clients attain lived experiences on what to expect from your career.

Projected Curriculum

Week One will consist of introducing the mandated forms required from VR, introduction to three-week objectives, defining and setting long and short-term goals, getting to know yourself activities, and identifying your skills. (Videos will enhance students' understanding of the subject matter).

Week Two will consist of building a resume, properly completing a job application, introduction to online job boards, how identifying a reference, defining and building a portfolio, mock interviews, and the value of volunteering.

Week Three will consist of utilizing a life skills checklist to determine what the students can or can not do, where and how to ask for help, the definition of the different acronyms that apply to them, their rights and responsibilities, and how to self-advocate for themselves.

Significance of the curriculum

The proposed project is to expose and teach students with disabilities (communication skills, social and interpersonal skills, occupational and vocational skills) to transition from school to work, postsecondary educational opportunities, and community life skills in post-school life. The students receiving a referral to take our 60-hour course are referred to our organization at the parent, student, or counselor's request. We service students virtually from all seven area districts over the State of Florida. We also provide services face-to-face in Polk, Orange, Lake, and Hillsborough Counties. The people-first language and approach align with the mission of Southeastern University.

Southeastern's s mission statement is "equipping students to discover and develop their diving design to serve Christ and the world through Spirit-empowered life, learning, and leadership" (Southeastern University, 2021). Against All Odds Ministry, Inc. (AAOM) equip the clients with an understanding of what skills they possess, jobs, careers they can qualify for, and life skills needed to be productive community citizens. The benefits of participating in the 60-hour course are to educate and inform the students on their impact on the workforce, whether they are disabled or not.

Teaching and preparing clients with the necessary tools to enter the workforce helps eliminate some differences between PWDs' experience and non-PWDs. Yelin & Trupin (2000) found that PWDs 18-24 were six times more likely to enter jobs than those aged 55-64. The race also compounds the difficulties of PWDs in gaining employment. Yelin & Trupin (2000) found whites with disabilities were 40 percent more likely to enter jobs when unemployed than nonwhites. Consequently, employment barriers to PWDs seem to be exacerbated by age and race.

Timeframe

Often goals and timelines are not conducive to the ability of individuals who have disabilities. More attention is needed for teaching skills that result in successful outcomes and calibrating the delivery of skill instruction including a timeline that begins early in the student's educational journey and progressively continues throughout their transition years. There are some timelines published in the literature (Irving, 1988; Loyd & Brolin, 1997), that primarily target the vocational and career readiness of students with moderate disabilities. Our project will use SMART goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timebound to complete our curriculum project (Bowman et al., 2015).

- ❖ **Course Description and Intended Learning Outcomes:** A vital part of a curriculum is to have a compelling description and a few outcomes listing what the learner will walk away with from the course. The course description and learning outcomes are due by November 15, 2022.

- ❖ **Syllabus and Appendix A:** The syllabus will consist of the required forms by VR, the Zoom link for the course, all meeting dates and assignments and due dates, and contact information for the trainer and CEO. Completing the final syllabus and appendix A on or before the due date will allow 15 days before the course is accepted and goes live on December 18, 2022. The syllabus and Appendix A are due by the end of class.
- ❖ **Project Defense:** The objective of the comprehensive exam is to demonstrate and apply the information that was taught and apply the teachings practically (Stephenson et al., 2020). Similarly, the objective of the capstone project defense is to prove that the learner completed the project and is well informed to speak on what the project is, why it is necessary, and how it will further both the instructional and workforce for students with moderate disabilities.
- ❖ **Submit for graduation:** The expectation is that every phase is approved on or before the designated due date, allowing more than enough time to submit for graduation. The submission for graduation is due.....
- ❖ **Graduation:** Spring Commencement 2023.

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