



# Career Pathway Coordinators

## Critical Links in Career Pathway System

### STRATEGY GUIDE

Career pathway coordinator is a key component of Project CASE. This guide provides **strategies on how to hire, train, and support CPCs**. It also **describes the CPC's work in action** including the outreach strategies they used and tips they provided, helpful resources, and a success story.

## What are Career Pathway Coordinators?

**C**areer Pathway Coordinators (CPCs) work to increase the capacity of all vocational rehabilitation (VR) staff in Kentucky's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and assist individuals with disabilities in accessing job opportunities in targeted sectors: manufacturing, business services/ IT (information technology), and healthcare. The CPC's role is to serve as an expert navigator of workforce system programs (for example, Kentucky Career Centers (KCCs) and resources.

They bring sector expertise to support individuals with disabilities in accessing

opportunities to enter career pathways in high-demand sectors. CPCs **reach out to employers who can provide work experiences** such as job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, which can lead to job placement. They play a critical role in connecting VR consumers to workforce partner initiatives for sector-based training, work experience opportunities, advising, and employment. They also **work with local community colleges, high schools, and industry professionals** to increase the delivery of supportive services to individuals with disabilities that enhance training completion and job acquisition in high-demand, skilled professions.

### About PROJECT C.A.S.E.

Funded by the U.S. Rehabilitation Services Administration, the Creating Access to Successful Employment (CASE) Project in Kentucky intends to **increase participation in Career Pathways for individuals with disabilities** in three targeted sectors: Information Technology, Manufacturing and Industrial Technology, and Healthcare/Nursing & Allied Health. To learn more, visit <https://kcc.ky.gov/Vocational-Rehabilitation/projectcase>

## Project CASE Success Story: JONATHAN VANOVER

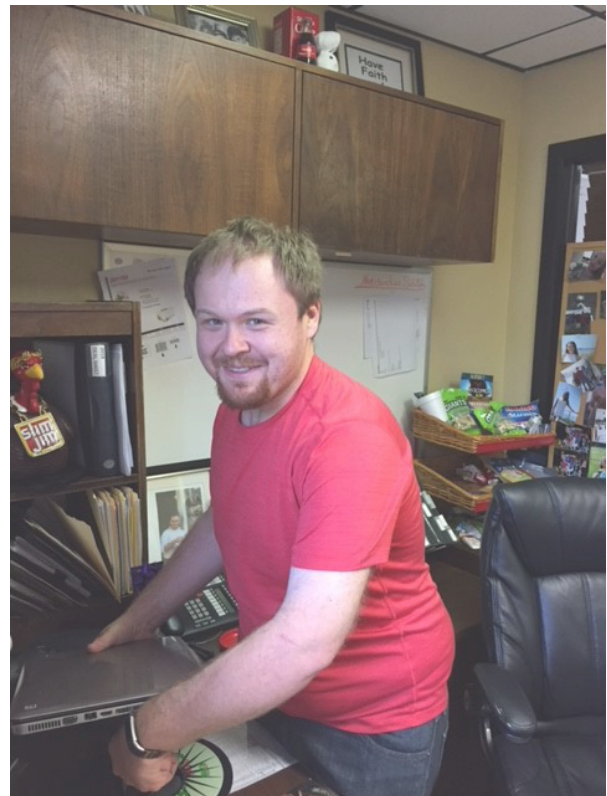
**Career Pathway Coordinators (CPCs) use the Career Pathways model at all points along the vocational rehabilitation (VR) continuum, from application to job placement.** This success story is about a young man who had received VR assistance with his education, and possessed all the necessary training and credentialing for his career choice, but could not break through some remaining barriers to become employed in the information technology (IT) sector.

**Jonathan Vanover** graduated from Big Sandy Community and Technical College in 2009 with an Associate of Science degree as well as certifications in A+ Computer Repair, Cisco Networking Basic, and Cisco Networking Enhanced. He continued in his career pathway in the IT sector, and obtained a bachelor's degree in Computer Information Systems from Morehead State University in 2014. He added certifications and skills, such as HTML, Java, C++, Visual Studio, Microsoft Office, Apache, CSS, JavaScript, and Alice, to his toolbox.

Jonathan successfully completed an internship but struggled to find a job in the IT sector. He began to feel like finding a job was hopeless with each passing year following his college graduation. Jonathan decided to work with Project CASE to crack the code to finding an IT job in his area of eastern Kentucky. After meeting and talking with Jonathan, his CPC determined that he would benefit from improving his communication and interviewing skills and having better access to local employers. The CPC referred Jonathan to work with partner staff at the Kentucky Career Center in Paintsville to ensure that he was doing everything he could to develop strong job readiness skills, understand the local labor market, and tap into job openings. The CPC and Jonathan's VR counselor provided other supports for Jonathan, like assisting

with transportation to attend resume building and interviewing classes at the Kentucky Career Center, and purchasing interview-appropriate clothing.

The CPC attended area business events and job fairs, looking for IT-related job positions, and speaking with company representatives. When the CPC noticed a job opening for an information technical assistant at Double Kwik Stores, she reached out to the human resources director she had met numerous times through her networking activities. She was able to share Jonathan's resume, and secure an interview for him. He has been working with Double Kwik since October 2017, handling their IT needs since 2018. This job has allowed him to not only work in a field he loves and was trained for, but to move out of his parents' house, get married, and start a family!



**Jonathan Vanover** working at Double Kwik Stores in Kentucky.

## Tips for Hiring CPCs

**P**roject CASE applied different models in hiring CPCs in Metro Louisville and Eastern Kentucky regions (a total of six CPCs for the project). Each of the three CPCs hired in the KentuckianaWorks region (Louisville and six surrounding counties) specializes in a specific career pathway (manufacturing, IT, or healthcare).

In contrast, each of the three CPCs in the Eastern Kentucky region handles all three career pathways. The following tips can help in hiring a Career Pathway Coordinator.

- **Note regional differences** and nuances to help frame the desired qualities of the CPC position in your announcement, and in developing interview questions.



- **Be prepared to customize strategies** and approaches to hiring and training CPCs in specific regions and industry sectors.
- **Decide which hiring model would best suit your context.** For example, each of the three CPCs hired in Metro Louisville specializes in a specific career pathway (manufacturing, IT, or healthcare). In contrast, each of the three CPCs in the Eastern Kentucky (EKCEP) region handles all three career pathways.
- It may not be possible to find all required qualities of a CPC in one individual. Each individual might have an area or two where they are stronger or need more training. **Taken collectively, CPCs can complement each other.**

## Strategies for Hiring CPCs

### Desired Qualities in CPCs

**T**he following desired qualities were identified through interviews conducted with implementation staff, CPCs, program staff, and stakeholders, and are associated with successful CPC activities across regions. Including desired qualities in a job announcement can be helpful in attracting the right applicants as well as help guide the development of interview protocols.

- **Industry knowledge:** Knowledge on which companies are hiring, skills being sought, types of jobs available in the specific industry sectors that Project CASE targets.
- **Disability awareness:** An understanding of different types of disabilities and awareness of disability-related matters to be able to best help clients.
- **Knowledge of workforce development:** Knowledge on how employment is connected with school systems and education and training; understanding hiring processes, etc. An understanding of the public workforce system.



- **Community awareness:** An understanding of the community and its available resources, while also understanding that small businesses are as important to utilize as large businesses.
- **Communication skills:** Good communication and public speaking skills with the ability to communicate within multiple levels of an organization.
- **Initiative:** A “self-starter” or “go-getter” who takes initiative. A CPC should be someone “willing to knock on doors and open doors” to help make meaningful connections.
- **Purpose:** A passion for serving people with disabilities and their community.
- **Project management skills:** An ability to address multiple details simultaneously to plan events and engage partners.
- **Teamwork:** An ability to work as a team member with other CPCs and project partners.

## Resources Needed for Hiring

- An **interview team** comprised of VR staff and workforce partner staff who would be regularly working or interacting with CPCs, and could help develop and ask relevant questions during the interview process.
- An **interview protocol** to help streamline the process and make sure that each candidate will be asked the same questions, making it easier to compare and select candidates.
- **Advertisement and recruitment:** ‘Help Wanted’ advertisements to use for announcing the position(s) being filled, and through different outlets such as online (agency website, employment websites), in the local newspaper, or physical handouts.

## Training and Support for CPCs

### Helpful Training and Support for CPCs

**Part two of this series describes different types of training and supports that Project CASE has provided to Career Pathway Coordinators (CPCs), to help enhance their professional capabilities and ensure that they are meaningfully connected to resources and leadership.** This guide includes information on how Project CASE has provided training and support to CPCs, practical tips to note, and helpful training resources.

These types of supports can help CPCs provide the most up-to-date information on resources, opportunities, policies, and professional connections within multiple industries relevant to their consumers’ interests and needs. The following examples can help vocational rehabilitation offices and professionals with developing action steps on how best to support their CPCs or similarly supportive staff.

- **Periodic** or (at a minimum) **quarterly meetings** for all CPCs with Project CASE leadership to provide updates and networking opportunities with other CPCs
- **Targeted one-on-one training and onboarding** focused on individual CPC needs to help identify and provide specific and unique support relevant to a CPC’s needs.
- **Orientation** to their local workforce board and the American Job Centers (for example KCCs).
- **Training on documenting and monitoring referrals,** consumer progress on job opportunities and job placements, including follow-up to help ensure procedural fidelity and effective CPC services.
- **Communication with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselors** regarding consumer progress to help keep CPCs up to date on any current needs and to help plan for future support.
- **Training on a system for tracking** business and education contacts and activities to help streamline information gathering and building relationships with different sectors.
- **Training on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)** provided through the state to all OVR and OFB personnel to understand what is expected from school systems and VR and OFB counselors.
- **Information on existing VR and partner initiatives** related to WIOA requirements and information on apprenticeships and work experience.
- **Training on financial empowerment** for Project CASE consumers so that consumers are equipped with knowledge about how to maximize economic assets without risking disability benefits.
- **Training on benefits counseling** using DB101 which involves knowledge of benefits such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and other benefit programs for individuals with disabilities.

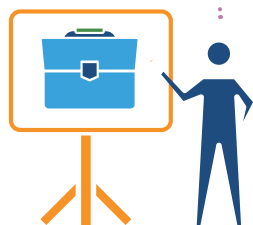


## Training and Support for CPCs con't.

- **Training through Local Workforce Board.**
- **Information on making connections with the one-stop operators and established partners.**
- **Information on making connections** and ongoing participation with the local Business Services Team (BST).
- **Grounding in labor market information.**
- In addition to basic orientation received by all OVR staff and training indicated above, **training for CPCs** include or should include the following content:
  - **Roles and duties** of CPCs and roles of vocational rehabilitation counselors.
  - **Orientation** to interacting with people with disabilities, different types of disabilities (including cognitive disabilities), and the work environment.
  - **College and career readiness** for alternate assessment students.
  - **Strategies** for industry sector outreach.
  - **History** of vocational rehabilitation, including legal and ethical issues.
  - **Disabilities and accommodations**, including local and federal policies and types of accommodations.
  - How to **conduct mock interviews** with students with visual impairments.
  - **Orientation to benefits** for people with disabilities such as Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

## Tips on Optimizing Training and Support

- **Note regional differences and nuances** and be prepared to customize strategies and approaches to training CPCs in specific regions and industry sectors.
- **Ensure that communication is ongoing** and create opportunities for all regions to come together for teamwork and collaboration. For example: hold regular meetings to foster CPC engagement.
- **Make marketing materials**, such as pamphlets, readily available to CPCs and ensure that there is an updated social media presence.
- **Offer training** that is interactive and provide hands-on experiences on a variety of topics with concrete examples that CPCs can apply when helping consumers. For example: Provide CPCs with training on disabilities in the work environment.
- **Communicate** and highlight to CPCs and program staff (e.g., counselors) consumer success stories to show how they can achieve their own successes and to help promote.
- **Support CPC attendance** at relevant conferences and events to foster professional development, such as helping to provide transportation, covering conference/event fees, building time into their schedule, etc.
- **Develop strategies** for sustaining CPC activities when grant funding ends, such as alternate funding streams, use of employment specialists to undertake activities similar to CPC activities, etc.
- **Training from Louisville Alliance for Development through Diversity, Empowerment, and Resources** (LADDER Financial Empowerment Group) about financial literacy and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) benefits.



## Tips on Optimizing Training and Support con't.

- **Workforce coalition meetings** (information on employer needs and jobs)
- **Skills to Pay the Bills Resources** (this is a curriculum developed by the U.S. Department of Labor for transition youth, ages 14 and up, including youth with disabilities that focuses on work readiness U.S. Department of Labor has developed a curriculum focused on work readiness and interpersonal skills)
- **One Stop Center Partner Trainings** (training for job seekers is provided and resources are provided to assist employers in locating and screening job seekers)
- **Jodie Sue Kelly Series on Career Advising** (includes Customer Journey Mapping, Motivational Interviewing, post placement retention, advancement, and income improvement)
- **National Career Pathway Network Conference**
- **Incorporate CPCs** into ongoing trainings and orientations to Business Services Teams and One-Stop Centers.
- **Introduce CPCs** to core partner staff such as youth program providers and career center staff by having CPCs attend such meetings.

## CPC's Work in Action

### Outreach Strategies and Activities

**P**art three of this series provides examples of how **Career Pathway Coordinators (CPCs)** have helped consumers connect to opportunities, through trainings, arranging school or industry tours, setting up interviews, and collaborating with community groups. These strategies show how CPCs have supported vocational rehabilitation offices and professionals in serving consumers interested in targeted employment sectors.

### How CPCs Can Support Vocational Rehabilitation Work

The following are specific examples of 'CPCs in action' and helps to show how they can be crucial in connecting VR specialists and consumers to the right opportunities:

- **Outreach strategies and activities** conducted by CPCs such as arranging tours to businesses and coordinating interactions with business owners and HR staff for consumers and their families.
- **Attend workforce partner meetings**, and serve as active members on business service teams and industry specific career center advisory teams.
- **Connect VR consumers and staff to workforce partner initiatives** for industry training, advising, job readiness classes, and employment.
- **Attend Coalition for Workforce Diversity events** and other community rehab provider employer outreach meetings and activities.
- **Setting up interviews** for consumers with employers.
- **Collaborating** with community rehabilitation providers, advocacy groups, and state workforce partners to coordinate job fairs for individuals with disabilities.
- **Keep VR staff apprised** of Workforce Development Board initiatives and labor market information.



## Tips/Steps for Maximizing the Benefits of CPCs

- **Place CPCs** in the vicinity of stakeholders and partners (when feasible) to build relationships and foster collaboration.
- **Ensure that outreach efforts** involve the complete educational span that is available at the local level, from high school to adult education to post-secondary. This will help ensure that services are as inclusive as possible.
- **Form strong partnerships** with VR Branch Managers and Regional VR Leadership so that they are aware of career opportunities for individuals with disabilities including the latest advances in assistive technology and workplace accommodations.
- **Engage small and large business employers** through different means: request tours of their businesses, request involvement in job fairs specific to individuals with disabilities, request as a speaker at an employability training event hosted by Project CASE.
- **Work with assistive technology** and other specialists by inviting them to Project CASE employer events and business tours to better support participant needs.
- **Ensure that partners have the resources and support** they need to improve their services to individuals with disabilities (for example, an employer resource packet).
- **Form strong partnerships** with core partners (for example American Job Centers such as KCC).

## Resources Needed

- **Classroom training materials** such as games and activities with a career pathways focus.
- **Materials describing Project CASE**/tablecloth with logo for events/handouts about services.
- **Event flyers** to VR counselors about Project CASE upcoming tours, camps, etc.
- **Employer Packet** with resources (described above).
- **Development of local flow chart/VR and Partner guide** on the process of working together. For example, VR consumer to adult ed/community college bridging program. Or VR consumer to Youth Career Center Internship Program.
- **Communications/materials:** Coordinate with state and local boards to ensure continuity, workforce system branding.

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