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Transition Works

Where your future begins

Nebraska VR

Nebraska Department of Education

Learning to Earn: Taylor O'Neil

Taylor O'Neil, a Blair High School student, is interested and excited to gain more skills and try new work options. She was introduced to Nebraska VR Pre-Employment Transition Services Coordinator Aubrey Gutierrez in 2023 during her sophomore year. The benefit of Pre-Employment Transition Services is to help students explore different jobs as a high school student. She had a good first impression, found the experience very helpful, and says she wishes she would have started working with Nebraska VR earlier in school. Taylor experiences a learning disability that sometimes makes it difficult to understand what is expected in social settings and in the workplace.

While participating in several Pre-Employment Transition Service activities during school, Taylor received job exploration counseling from her Coordinator. Activities to understand her work interests, skills, and abilities helped her learn more about herself. Discussions and practice exercises helped her learn when and who to ask for help in a job setting. She also worked to build skills in completing job applications, writing résumés and cover letters, choosing reliable references, and using good manners in a business setting. They also completed mock interviews.

Out in the community, Taylor visited several businesses to learn and explore more about specific jobs and to be introduced to a variety of workplaces. She toured Pizza Hut, Subway, Jeanette's Animal Shelter and Little Blossoms Daycare and Pre-School. During the summer of 2023, she participated in a work-based learning experience (WBLE) at Goodwill in Blair. This was one of ten innovative short-term Transition Summer Programs available across the state that year. During the experience, she helped in salvaging, separating, and sorting of donated items. Taylor liked the work environment and job duties. She gained real work experience

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~Taylor O'Neil

Tools for Learning, Earning, and Living

Notability

This is a free app with in-app purchases available for iOS and Android devices. This easy and versatile app helps with note-taking and annotations that you can share. It may be useful for students who need help remembering or retaining information. The app captures audio and automatically syncs to notes.



BeWarned

This free app is available for iOS devices and has a sound monitor to detect loud sounds and notify you by vibration and/or flashing light. This app may be useful for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. A dialogue screen allows the user to communicate with others using speech to text and/or typing and has other features for emergencies.





Employers Speak

Strong partnerships with businesses and organizations in communities across Nebraska are key to providing opportunities for students to explore career choices and develop employability skills. We've asked one of these partners to provide some insight from the employer's perspective as a work-based learning experience host.

How were you introduced to Nebraska VR?

Nebraska VR reached out to the previous Park Superintendent to set up Work-Based Learning Experience with several different candidates through-out the years.

How were you introduced to the student?

Had the students come in to do interviews.

What were some of the work duties during the work-based learning experience?

Painting, weed eating, mowing, office work, and janitorial work.

What did the student do well from the beginning?

One student excelled at janitorial duties, mowing, and general grounds keeping duties. We ended up hiring this student as a seasonal employee for several years. Another was good at painting. We also had a young man that did well with simple horticulture work like mulching, trimming, and watering trees.

What surprised you about the experience?

I enjoyed working with and teaching several of the students, and have remained in contact with two of them.

How do you feel about your role in preparing a student for the future?

I like seeing people learn new skills that they can use in the future. One student that I have kept in contact with used the skills he learned here to get a job running a forklift in manufacturing and has started working his way up the managerial ladder. I do enjoy trying to find a position that fits the student's interest, skill, and comfort level.

Jennifer Bose, Park Superintendent III
Nebraska Game & Parks Commission – Johnson Lake SRA, Elwood, NE

FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions from parents, students, and educators

Q: What is Nebraska VR (Vocational Rehabilitation)?

A: Nebraska VR helps people with disabilities prepare for, find, and keep employment while helping businesses recruit, train, and retain employees with disabilities. In addition, Nebraska VR Pre-Employment Transition Services Coordinators work with schools and other organizations across the state to help students, aged 14 to 21, plan for the future and prepare for careers that match their skills, abilities, and interests.

Q: What are Pre-Employment Transition Services?

A: The scope of Nebraska VR Pre-Employment Transition Services is to provide students with exposure to various jobs and career paths through exploration activities. In coordination with your school and businesses in your community, you will gain skills and abilities to be successful after high school.

Q: What services are available in Pre-Employment Transition Services?

A: There are five services available:

- Job Exploration Counseling
- Workplace Readiness Training
- Work-Based Learning Experiences
- Counseling on Comprehensive Transition or Post-Secondary Educational Programs
- Instruction in Self-Advocacy



Learning to Earn: Taylor O'Neil

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and confidence. She also shared she thought her supervisor would say she was hard working, reliable, and on time for work.

Taylor will help with childcare and engaging children in activities at another WBLE arranged for her in the summer of 2024. The experience is hosted by Little Blossoms Daycare and Pre-School in Blair. Taylor's Coordinator Aubrey shared, "Working in childcare was not even a consideration until touring the day care. Because of that experience, Taylor was able to see she was interested in the work and she was willing to explore this specific job."

Taylor's parents are appreciative of the information and guidance available to help their daughter succeed. Nikki O'Neil, Taylor's Mom, had positive things to share about the activities and services available through Nebraska VR to her daughter. Nikki said, "My daughter participated in this program last summer and came out of this program with more confidence and better self-esteem. She made some friends along the way. These are opportunities that you as a parent need to take advantage of. These work experiences helped my daughter mature and grow into an adult and to learn more about what is expected of her in the workforce."

Resource Spotlight

PTI Nebraska (Parent Training and Information) is a resource for helping families who have children and young adults with disabilities and special health care needs.

To learn more about PTI Nebraska visit <http://pti-nebraska.org/>



The Facts About Benefits and Working

Preparing and planning for employment while still in high school is important. After graduation, holding a job is good for overall happiness, fosters connection in communities, builds confidence, and contributes to financial stability. Exploring jobs, interests, and abilities can set a student on the path to finding a job that gives a sense of purpose. Nebraska VR Pre-Employment Transition Services Coordinators partner with schools, parents, and communities to provide opportunities to explore work that is meaningful to the individual student and learn about how work effects benefits and quality of life.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) encourages young people who are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits to go to work. Here are some important things to keep in mind:

- SSI beneficiaries under age 22 who are regularly attending school can earn up to \$2,290 in monthly income, up to \$9,230 annually (in 2024) without jeopardizing their SSI benefit or eligibility under the Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE). This amount is updated each year.
- An SSI beneficiary who is working will always come out ahead financially by working.
- Earned income of youth receiving SSDI as a Childhood Disability Benefit (under a retired, disabled or deceased parent's record) is counted differently than for SSI recipients, but such youth can still work and retain needed Social Security Disability and other related benefits.

It is important to have a thorough understanding of how you can work and keep needed benefits. For more information about these work incentives and more, go to the Social Security Administration Red Book publication.

• <https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-64-030.pdf>

Your Nebraska VR Pre-Employment Transition Services Coordinator can also provide information and referral resources so you can learn more about how you can try working and earning income while retaining needed benefits.



Summer Transition Programs

Nebraska VR funds short-term programs to provide career exploration, job readiness, and work-based learning opportunities in the summer. Programs are proposed by community partners and approved through a Request for Proposal process. Students who receive Pre-Employment Transition Services are eligible to participate. The experiences are unique and innovative. Ask your Pre-Employment Transition Services Coordinator if a Summer Transition Program is available in your area.

Nebraska VR

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Connect with Us

Nebraska VR provides Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with disabilities. We partner with parents, schools, and employers to help students prepare for the future. Transition Works, published by Nebraska VR, is intended for students with disabilities and their families, as well as educators.

Find additional resources for students at:
vr.nebraska.gov/students

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Nebraska VR - Where your future begins