Case Study 1: Emily

Emily is a 14-year-old ninth grader who is totally blind. She is a Braille reader. She has had some exposure to assistive technology through school, and uses these tools to complete schoolwork and personal projects. She lives with her family, and is responsible for a certain amount of household chores just like her siblings. She has babysat her younger siblings, and wants to get an after-school job at a store or restaurant once she turns 16. Emily wants to be a fiction writer.

QUESTION: Is Emily an appropriate referral for VR?

ANSWER: Yes, goodness yes, absolutely yes, all the above

Emily’s teacher sends a referral to the local VR agency. Rehabilitation counselor Melissa attends her IEP in order to learn about Emily and to talk about transition services. She schedules an intake appointment with Emily and her Mom for another day. At the intake, Melissa makes sure all of the paperwork is completed and signed, including a consent form for Emily’s school. They talk more in-depth about Emily’s life and career aspirations, and make an initial plan to begin services once Emily is determined eligible.

QUESTION: What information can the school or family provide for eligibility?

ANSWER: Vision or Audiology report, ETR, IEP, all the above

Melissa is able to make Emily eligible for services quickly because she has all of the paperwork she needs to collect records from the school. Melissa describes the first services that are available to Emily and helps Emily choose a provider of these services. Melissa explains that most students begin with learning about self-advocacy. Emily and her Mom agree that it would be good for Emily to learn about how to more effectively speak up for what she wants. She begins to receive self-advocacy education and moves on to Career readiness module, she discovers that it would be difficult to earn a consistent living as a fiction writer.

QUESTION: What should we do with Emily’s VR case now?

ANSWER: Close her case - she won't be successful, change her job goal to fast food, teach her how to donate plasma, start looking at other job goal options

The provider helps her to research some other career goals which are closely related. Her plan is written with a tentative goal of journalist because she likes books with journalists, and wants to continue learning more about the industry. This plan is written with the understanding that her goal or the services could change. During the planning meeting, Melissa works with Emily and her Mom to try to anticipate the services she will need in the future. Even though Emily does not yet know which college she will attend, she learned through her research that she will need at least a BA in journalism to become employed in this field.

TRUE OR FALSE: Now that Emily’s plan (Individualized Plan for Employment – IPE) is written, nothing can change – EVER!

That Summer, Emily attends a Career exploration program. She is exposed to a number of industries. One of the shadowing opportunities occurs at a local newspaper office. Emily meets a reporter who is eager to answer her questions about the industry. She stays in contact with this individual throughout the rest of high school and periodically calls and emails them to ask questions about the journalism field.

TRUE OR FALSE: Now that Emily has found a mentor, she no longer needs VR, and her case will be closed.

The following Summer, Emily participates in a work experience program. Through this she learns about important work behaviors and attitudes like showing up on time, teamwork, appropriate work attire, and accepting and learning from constructive criticism. She did so well in the program that the provider thinks she's ready for a part-time job. Emily begins this service, and within a few months, she is working part-time in a local bookstore.

TRUE OR FALSE: Now that Emily has found a part-time job, she no longer needs VR, and her case will be closed.

As Emily’s senior year approaches, she receives counseling on post-secondary options. She chooses to take her core courses at the local community college. She and her family complete the financial aid paperwork, and her plan is amended to reflect the amounts which VR will contribute for tuition and books.

TRUE OR FALSE: When VR is involved in college, completing the FAFSA and applying for scholarships is optional.

Emily starts courses at the local community college, and participates in unpaid internships during the Summer arranged by her contact at the local newspaper office. In her second year at community college, Emily is accepted at the local state University.

QUESTION:

What kind of support can Emily expect when she transitions to a new campus?

ANSWER:

a. Emily is coached to live at home – Blind people can’t live on their own.

b. Emily is told to grow up – she’s 20 years old now, and she needs to learn to live on her own.

c. Emily's VR counselor and the college coordinate with Emily to determine the kind of supports she will need to navigate safely on campus and in her home.

She participates in mobility and ADL training so that she can navigate the campus and live independently in an apartment.

Emily graduates, and receives help looking for work. There is an opening at the local newspaper office, and her job developer helps her to craft an excellent cover letter and tailored resume. Since Emily is known at the office, she feels very comfortable and confident during the interview. This shows, and she is hired.

TRUE OR FALSE: Now that Emily has a job, VR wishes her luck and closes her case.

OOD and Emily’s new employer work together to make sure she has all of the reasonable accommodations she will need, and Emily’s case is eventually closed successfully after Melissa has ensured that Emily has everything she needs to continue being successful. Melissa assures Emily that if she needs anything in the future for this or a different job, she can reapply for services.

Case study two: Jonathan

Jonathan is a 16-year-old 10th grader with congenital visual and hearing impairments, a mild intellectual disability, and is of short stature. He wears hearing aids. While he has had some exposure to assistive technology and low vision aids, he struggles with reading and writing. He lives with his family and mainly helps with folding and sorting laundry. Jonathan was referred by his Support Services Administrator at the County Board of Developmental Disabilities following a conversation in which Jonathan expressed interest in working in a nursing home. He is close with his grandparents, and enjoys being around older people.

TRUE OR FALSE: Jonathan is not a good referral – he has too many significant disabilities.

Rehabilitation counselor Melissa attends his IEP in order to learn about Jonathan and to talk about transition services. She schedules an intake appointment with Jonathan and his Dad for another day. At the intake, Melissa makes sure all of the paperwork is completed and signed, including a consent form for Jonathan’s school and the local County Board of Developmental Disabilities. They talk more in-depth about Jonathan’s life and career aspirations and make an initial plan to begin services once Jonathan is determined eligible. Melissa is able to make him eligible for services quickly because she has all of the paperwork she needs to collect records from the school and the County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

QUESTION:

What information can the school or family provide for eligibility?

ANSWER:

a. Vision or audiology report, ETR, and IEP

2. Forms from the county board of Developmental Disabilities

3. Medical records about his short stature

4. All the above

Melissa helps Jonathan choose a provider who specialized in working with people with multiple disabilities including intellectual disabilities, and explains that most students begin by learning more about self-advocacy. Jonathan, his Dad, and his Support Services Administrator agree that it would be good for Jonathan to learn about how to more effectively speak up for what he wants. He then moves on to career exploration where he learns that work in a nursing home often involves being around older people who are sick or struggling in some way. Jonathan determines on his own that this might upset him too much. Jonathan also enjoys hotels, and thinks he might want to work at a hotel as a laundry worker one day.

TRUE OR FALSE: Jonathan's case is closed because VR only works with consumers who want advanced careers.

His plan is written with this tentative goal. Jonathan knows that he would like to transition straight into working from high school. Melissa helps Jonathan and his team to anticipate all of the services he might need to reach this goal. Orientation and mobility, ADL training, help looking for work, and job coaching are included.

Jonathan participates in a summer Career exploration program where he is exposed to different industries. He learns a lot by talking to one of the workers at a warehouse with a large loading dock where boxes are moved and sorted. Jonathan likes to exercise and is physically strong, so he wonders if perhaps this might be a good goal for him as well. He has the opportunity to try both the laundry facility and warehouse jobs the next Summer as part of a Work Experience program. Jonathan gets distracted easily when given too many opportunities to socialize in the laundry facility.

TRUE OR FALSE: Jonathan can't be successful in work. Case closed.

He finds he gets distracted less moving boxes, so his plan is amended. As Jonathan begins his senior year, he begins job development. He works for a while on building his confidence during interviews, but eventually gets a job at the local Amazon distribution center. Mobility training helps him to be confident going to and from work, and his job coach helps him to learn the job. Rehab tech is also involved to determine if there are any modifications that can be made for his short stature. The job coach works on a communication plan to accommodate Jonathan's hearing loss on the job. Jonathan’s case is eventually closed successfully.

Two years later, the management team changed completely at Amazon. This threw Jonathan off, and he needed some extra supports to make it through the transition. His case was reopened with documentation from his former case and updated medical information, and Melissa was able to approve job coaching to get Jonathan acclimated to his new manager.