

Bryce's Story – Maine

“Bryce” is a 21-year-old graduate of Mt. Ararat High School in Topsham, Maine, and has completed a certificate program at SMCC in construction. He spent last summer in Wyoming, helping his uncle with construction work to gain experience into Bryce's chosen field. He came to Vocational Rehabilitation seeking help with finding a job, as he was about to complete training in the construction trades and he was struggling to fit in based on past work experiences.

Bryce chose the construction trades because he is a “hands-on” learner. His strengths involve spatial orientation, visual memory and visual motor skills. He earned mostly B's and C's in high school, but consistently earned A's in physical education and participated in soccer and basketball. Intellectually, Bryce tested as mostly average, but he isn't always able to express what he knows. He's always been determined to do things right to the extent that he will “sacrifice speed for accuracy.” He had perfect penmanship. His approach is slow and methodical to ensure he does a task well. He does best with things that he can see and experience directly. He is concrete rather than abstract in his thinking and problem-solving.

Bryce's initial difficulty in developing his potential was due to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), inattentive type. He received this diagnosis while in the eighth grade, and he was able to improve his attention and focus with medication. However, Bryce also was found to have non-verbal difficulties that make expressive communication difficult. He tends to appear detached to others socially. He struggles with the “organization of complex expression” and has difficulty following oral directions. This caused him to be terminated from one job after high school because he was not “enthusiastic enough for the job” and his coworkers didn't know how to react to him. Bryce's difficulty in expressing his feelings makes him appear “reticent” to others. He also has difficulty assessing others' social perspectives and needs. In work environments prior to his training after high school, Bryce was picked on by coworkers because he didn't understand underlying social cues and couldn't readily participate in the natural back-and-forth of adolescent communication and humor.

Bryce met with his Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRCII) Audrey, and it was immediately obvious to Audrey that he would be an ideal candidate for vocational rehabilitation's apprenticeship program. Through ongoing vocational counseling and guidance with Audrey, Bryce shared as best he could about his frustration with the jobs he lost and his understanding of what he might need in order to be successful. He had already demonstrated that he was able to independently prepare for his interviews and follow through to placement in a job, but he was experiencing low self-confidence and some trepidation as to how he could keep a job. Many people in his past did not understand him. Therefore, they were not helpful to his developing of work hardening skills. In keeping with a solutions-focused approach in guidance and counseling rather than simply overcoming his barriers,



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Audrey helped Bryce visualize what he wanted work to be like. Apprenticeship was a natural solution to supporting his vision and his goals.

Since some of the features of the apprenticeship program is a “schedule of work” with a qualified mentor while onboarding and learning the tasks and demands of a new job, it was clear that the one-on-one approach and structured learning on the job would be a huge benefit to Bryce, given the way he learns and interacts socially. It also allows for him to get to know people and the expectations of his coworkers as an inclusive member of a team, with a mentor to guide and advocate for him as needed. This is much more socially appropriate in the trades than having a job coach who might not understand Bryce’s needs or the specific onboarding needs of the employer. Bryce immediately feels like a valued member of the team so he can develop work relationships that are satisfying to both he and his employer.

Bryce has been working at Reed and Reed Construction since the fall. He likes his job and he thinks he is doing well. He is applying his training from Southern Maine Community College and working at a pace he finds fulfilling. His employer can teach him hands-on, with structure and immediate, specific guidance in a way Bryce can understand. It is exactly what Bryce needs to continue his career trajectory in the construction trades.

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