

Confirmation in Progress

After 17 years of working one-on-one with students under Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Michael found himself out of a job. The school district that employed him as a Teacher Associate eliminated his full-time position. He lost his benefits.

“Devastated.”

That’s how Toni, a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with the Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB), described Michael when his position was eliminated. His duties had been to perform instruction and delivery of direct services to students under IEPs. He is good at it. It’s what he loves. He was anxious about stable employment, how a new employer would adjust to his vision and the interview process. After nearly two decades of helping students realize their potential, Michael was in need of counseling, guidance and rehabilitative technology to help him to confirm his own.

Michael was forced to explore other opportunities. He sought the services of both the Iowa Department for the Blind and Iowa Workforce Development (IWD). Additionally, he would end up receiving services from Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) and a Title I Case Manager and Disability Resource Coordinator. Staff from these agencies formed an Integrated Resource Team that included a VR counselor, a workforce advisor, an employment specialist and a case manager. As a team, they sat down and discussed where Michael needed support and how they could work in collaboration to help him achieve his goal.

Tonya, an Employment Specialist with IWD, helped Michael apply for unemployment benefits and connected him with employment resources. Terry, a Workforce Advisor at IWD, provided Michael with job-search assistance. Toni, his VR counselor, gave Michael guidance and counseling on meeting and/or attaining essential job skills, including access to rehabilitative technology and transportation. Brian, his Title I Case Manager, assisted him with necessary disability benefits planning and advisement.

As a standard practice, Tonya encourages jobseekers on an individual plan for employment to register with IWD to access resume writing and other training and classes to help with career changes. Michael attended a reverse job fair and visited IWD weekly to take classes. He was also in constant communication with Tonya and Toni and the three of them would meet regularly at a local library to work on job-search strategies. Toni and Tonya were able to access IWD’s employer networks and community connections. While the collaboration led to some employment leads and he became interested in a few, full-time customer service positions and training opportunities, Michael was still struggling with the career change.

It was clear that he still wanted to be a Teacher Associate, so Tonya and Toni focused on engaging with another school district. They helped Michael apply and land a position as a part-time Teacher Associate, working primarily with elementary school students. While he enjoys the work, the position does not offer the benefits he needs. The district told him that they don’t



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tend to hire full-time teacher associates. Michael also takes substitute teaching assignments when they become available, but he's worried about the sustainability of his current employment and making it through the summer months when school is not in session.

Michael continues to seek guidance from Toni, who has advised him to continue to excel in his current job and to continue talk to Tonya at IWD about part-time or seasonal work that can help him supplement his income. During the process, Tonya directly assisted him with interview skills. Michael would then share Tonya's tips and assessment of his interview skills with Toni. He was seeking confirmation. It was further confirmation of another sort that has helped him to stay positive.

Three teachers that Michael works with have told him they would serve as his references for a full-time position and that they are hopeful that one will open up. They want him to stay at that school and don't want to lose him.

Toni has not closed Michael's case. She will make sure the employment is sustainable and meets his career objective. He is working through the process, but probably won't change his objective because his coworkers support him and he has the cross-agency support resources to help him to achieve his goal.

Summary:

- Michael's Career Outcome: Teaching Associate
- 33 to 36 hours a week, \$13.00 an hour currently, but is still seeking to move to a full time position.
- Michael will likely exit once he moves into a full-time, permanent position.

Agency	Services Provided
Iowa Department for the Blind (Title IV)	Career Counseling (Counseling and Guidance), Case Management, Job Search Assistance
Iowa Workforce Development (Title III)	Job Search Assistance
Des Moines Area Community College (Title I)	Case Management, Benefits Advisement

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