### Executive Summary

“I got involved because I used to work in the restaurant business and when I was in the restaurant business somebody told me that 'well you're blind and you shouldn't have a job and I'm going to fire you' and I thought 'oh right, this is the eighties, this guy can't be that serious.' It was 1983 when the manager told me that . . . For two years, he worked at trying to fire me . . . I just said, 'well, heck with this.' I'm going to do my own business because attitude is the biggest barrier that people with disabilities face in the work force, in activities, in community, so that's why. I got fired in 1985 and I started my own business right around then.”

This individual started her own business in the community to educate individuals, employers, and employees about people with disabilities, their limitations, needs, and most of all their spirit. Fortunately, she did not let her initial experience with discrimination and disability bias in the workplace deter her determination or ruin her self-confidence. Although this situation occurred in the mid-1980s, disability bias and ignorance about the skills and value of individuals with disabilities in the workplace is still prominent.

Evidence of this divide is apparent. In the population of individuals with disabilities that are of adult working age, 70% are unemployed. Despite policy changes and more developed supports, the rate of unemployment for individuals with disabilities has hovered at around 70% for the past 12 years (New Freedom Initiative, 2001). Even with a postsecondary education, only 50% of individuals with disabilities are employed (Swenson & Richards, 1999). Furthermore, it the goal of this study to explore “work” in a holistic manner and looking at the importance of support transition from postsecondary education to the workplace, life in the work place for employees with disabilities, and the role of employers in this process.

Although the Presidential initiative seeks to promote equality for individuals with disabilities, it is limited in its scope to reduce unemployment for individuals with disabilities because the initiative tries to target a problem that has yet to be adequately defined. This study was designed to explore those issues from the viewpoint of individuals with disabilities.
disabilities. By focusing on the viewpoint of individuals with disabilities, the proposed study will also help to elucidate methods of improvement for preparatory, transition, and employment supports for individuals with disabilities.

This study was conducted by the National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports, a Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) based at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. The study was supported by the National Institute of Disability Rehabilitation and Research (NIDDR) and the Presidential Taskforce on the Employment of Adults with Disabilities.

**Research Questions**

1. In what ways can preparatory support services, transition support services, and workplace support services be improved to increase success in securing employment? In response to the agenda set forth by the New Freedom Initiative, some initial fieldwork will be done to assess the importance of proficiency in computer and Internet usage to securing employment for individuals with disabilities. In response to the agenda set forth by the New Freedom Initiative, some initial fieldwork will be done to assess the importance of proficiency in computer and Internet usage to securing employment for individuals with disabilities.

2. What disability-related reasons make securing employment difficult?

3. What role does education level play in one’s ability to successfully secure employment?

**Research Methodology**

Previous research has utilized large samples of individuals with disabilities and employers, sacrificing depth of information for breadth of information. This study is interested in going beyond breadth, and focusing on depth through the use of qualitative research. Current literature lists possible barriers to employment from the most common to the least common. However, these lists only provide a surface picture of difficulties for employment seeking individuals with disabilities, and do not indicate the reason(s) that individuals with disabilities are unemployed. It is the goal of this study to go beyond the superficial surface of the problem and look at the essence of the unemployment issue.

Qualitative research is concerned with the essence, nature or ambience of things, while quantitative research is concerned with amount (Berg, 1998). Using qualitative research methods is especially beneficial in this study because it will give depth to the issues defined by individuals with disabilities in the pilot study. Qualitative research methods will also be utilized to preserve the real life context in which events occur”, specifically the employment arena for individuals with disabilities.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Therefore, 8 individuals with disabilities were interviewed to ascertain their views about unemployment and/or employment experiences for individuals with disabilities and to get a collect a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) of unemployment, which “embodies an interpretive characteristic of description” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 161). All information was recorded and transcribed by the investigator, and anonymity and confidentiality was ensured. The consent forms, tapes, and transcriptions were stored in a locked drawer in the investigator’s office and
The group of interviewees with disabilities was utilized as “experts” in the arena of employment for individuals with disabilities. They are considered experts because of their ability to provide insight about unemployment and/or employment experiences through “detailed stories and personal accounts” (Morgan and Scannell, 1998, p.73). Interviewing individuals provided information on helpful strategies to secure employment, as well as contemporary barriers to securing employment. Interviewing was chosen as the qualitative method that would be most effective for this study because it allows the researcher to explore the contents of the mind and ascertain the reasons behind unemployment, rather than ask the individuals to rate prefabricated “barriers” to employment from most important to least important (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). It also provides a strong methodology that permits the investigator to explore the essence of the employment issues defined in the pilot study by individuals with disabilities.

Findings at a Glance

- **Focus on gaining independence:** Individuals with disabilities are committed to gaining independence, both financially and physically. Being able to travel independently and support themselves without assistance was a very important theme that came up in many of the interviews.

- **Dedication to the job:** Interviewees indicated that because positions are difficult to obtain for individuals with disabilities, they are often more dedicated to their jobs. They work harder and stay for longer hours than their fellow employees without disabilities.

- **Self-Employment:** Individuals with disabilities feel that self-employment and entrepreneurship may be more attractive options for employment because of the difficulties associated with obtaining and retaining employment.

- **Influence of Role Models:** Throughout the course of their development, individuals with disabilities indicated the important influence of role models with and without disabilities. Role models mostly included family, friends, and community members that the individual had regular interaction with.

- **Internal Motivation:** In order to successfully obtain a position of employment, individuals indicated that an element of internal motivation must be present. Self-confidence, persistence, and an internal drive to be successful in seeking employment were aspects of this internal motivation. However, interviewees were not able to articulate how to instruct or encourage this internal motivation.
• **Importance of Education:** Interviewees indicated that education was an important asset when seeking employment. Many individuals felt that their options for employment were limited by their disability and that education helped to level those limitations and make individuals more competitive for employment.

• **Value of Personal Relationships:** Most of the individuals interviewed indicated that they were able to secure their current job, in part, because of personal relationships or contacts within their place of employment. Individuals with disabilities may rely more on personal relationships than on traditional job seeking methods.

• **Attitudinal Barriers to Employment:** Disability bias and ignorance of disability were still prominent for individuals seeking employment. Employers and other employees did not seem to understand the needs or abilities of individuals with disabilities.

• **Lack of Accessibility:** Individuals with disabilities still have problems with accessibility in the workplace. Many places of employment and their facilities are not accessible for individuals with disabilities. The lack of accessibility limits the variety of potential work environments for individuals with disabilities that are seeking employment.

• **Ideal Workplace:** Interviewees indicated that their idea of an ideal workplace includes individuals with disability understanding and acceptance, total accessibility, excellent medical benefits, competitive salary, and an embracing environment.

• **The Power of the Positive:** When seeking and successfully retaining employment, individuals with disabilities recognized the importance of a positive attitude. Confidence and self-awareness are critical to obtaining and retaining a job.

• **Family Support:** The encouragement and acceptance of families was very important to the success of individuals with disabilities. Although a supportive family was not an essential element for all individuals, families that did not underestimate an individuals’ potential were an important component in the self-confidence and persistence of individuals with disabilities seeking employment.

• **Computer Knowledge:** Computer knowledge was considered an essential aspect of education. Computers often assist individuals with and without disabilities to successfully fulfill their job duties. Access to and understanding of computers was viewed as an important skill for individuals with disabilities to be
competitive in the current job market.

- **Experience:** A recurrent need that was not met for individuals with disabilities was prior job experience. Internships, volunteering, and other work experience was not offered to or encourage of individuals with disabilities. However, most individuals indicated the importance of prior experience for obtaining their current job.

- **External Motivation:** Several interviewees indicated the value of college career counseling and job coaches when looking for, obtaining, and retaining employment.

- **Be Better:** Individuals with disabilities indicated their desire and need to be more competitive than their non-disabled counterparts. In order to obtain employment, individuals with disabilities feel they must not only be equal to other candidates, but also better.

**Transition to Work**

**Background**

According to data released by the Commerce Department’s Census Bureau on March 16, 2001, approximately 1 in every 5 Americans has some type of disability. With 20% of the population disabled, these numbers have an impact on the United States both economically and socially (United States Census Bureau, 2001). Economically, the individuals with disabilities find themselves working at non-professional jobs that pay less, are associated with less prestige, and have little room for advancement. Less than one half of one percent of employed persons with disabilities are pharmacists, lawyers, judges, physicians, dentists, health workers, firefighters, or fire prevention workers (Stoddard, Jans, Ripple, & Kraus, 1998). Furthermore, 33% of individuals with disabilities live in a household with an annual income of less than $15,000, a number more than twice as high as individuals without disabilities (New Freedom Initiative, 2001; Burkhauser and Daly, 1994).

While these figures may seem startling, it is even more distressing if you look at the entire picture of individuals with disabilities. Much of the current literature on individuals with disabilities and employment focuses on individuals with disabilities who are employed. However, of the population of individuals with disabilities that are of adult working age, 70% are unemployed. Despite policy changes and more developed supports, the rate of unemployment for individuals with disabilities has hovered at around 70% for the past 12 years (New Freedom Initiative, 2001).

Recently, President George W. Bush passed the New Freedom Initiative to tear “down the remaining barriers to equality that face Americans with Disabilities today” (New Freedom Initiative, 2001). The mechanism to increase equality for individuals with disabilities includes increasing access to assistive technologies, expanding educational opportunities, and promoting access to the social realms of the workplace and community. Promoting
access to social realms for individuals with disabilities is a difficult task. The New Freedom Initiative proposes such solutions as telecommuting, innovative transportation, and promoting home ownership. Increasing accommodations via assistive technologies for individuals with disabilities will only aid a portion of population with disabilities. Two-thirds of employed individuals with disabilities work without accommodations or were unaware of specific accommodations that would benefit them (The Urban Institute, 2001). Therefore, increasing access to accommodations for individuals who do not need them, or do not know how to use them, may have little impact on the decreasing the number of unemployed.

Expanding educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities also seems like a good mechanism to reduce unemployment for individuals with disabilities. However, even with a postsecondary education, only 50% of individuals with disabilities are employed (Swenson & Richards, 1999).

While these strategies do promote equality for individuals with disabilities they are limited in their scope to reduce unemployment for individuals with disabilities because they try to target a problem that has yet to be adequately defined. Descriptions of work behavior from the past were based on roles, tasks, and activities of people without disabilities. These descriptors have been presented in standardized reference works, such as the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, and are defined by the structure and content of occupations (United States Department of Labor, 1991). People with disabilities may or may not accomplish or perform work in similar ways to those descriptions, and this study may be able to shed some light on divergences.

What is Work?
“What is work? No definition is satisfactory because work relates to all human activities, and one would have to exhaust all such activities to exhaust the provinces of work. Modern terminology uses the word occupation to identify work activities. It is a functional term describing what people do to ‘earn a living,’ emphasizing that it is work which sustains life (Applebaum, 1992, p. 36).” Work has progressed through history with changing responsibilities. Employees with disabilities seem to be caught in the secondary phase of work, which is characterized by an industrial period, while people without disabilities have progressed to the tertiary phase of postindustrial, computer-based careers (Applebaum, 1992).

Many advocates, agencies, and policies suggest that access to education will increase the employment of individuals with disabilities. However, among those individuals with disabilities who have completed postsecondary education, only 50% are employed (Swenson & Richards, 1999). These statistics are similar to, if not lower than the rates of employment for individuals with disabilities that have graduated from high school. For example, studies looking at high school graduates that were three years from graduation found that between 55-65% of individuals were competitively employed (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996).

In order to successfully guide people with disabilities into a productive and successful career path, postsecondary support services need to be in place to
encourage career exploration and adaptation. For example, identifying successful role models, encouraging students to volunteer, arranging for internships or “shadowing experiences”, encouraging students to work during the summer, and conducting student tours of industry and businesses can promote students’ interest in their occupational future and give them the confidence they need to enter the work force (Maddy-Berstein, 1997). Although Individuals with Disabilities and Education Act (IDEA) promotes academic and career development and school-to-work transition for secondary youth, it is important to recognize the differences between a job and a career.

A bachelor’s degree is a prerequisite to many career opportunities. Yet, students with disabilities are often unsuccessful in postsecondary education. Employment rates for people with disabilities are closely linked to their level of education (Stodden & Dowrick, 2000), but they have a lower rate of postsecondary enrollment relative to the general population (Office of Special Education Programs, 1992). The differences between the populations with and without disabilities persist into the employment arena (Benz, Doren, & Yovanoff, 1998; National Center on Secondary Education and Transition for Youth with Disabilities, 2000). Therefore, students with disabilities at a college level planning to pursue a career are a minority population that is often overlooked. With all of this uncertainty, it is important to explore the mechanism(s) that is/are making it difficult for individuals with disabilities to find, procure and/or advance in the job market. Individuals with disabilities defined employment issues important to them in a pilot study, including opportunity and disability related barriers, and poor satisfaction with transition supports. It is the goals of this study to explore those issues from the viewpoint of individuals with disabilities. By focusing on the viewpoint of individuals with disabilities, the proposed study will also help to elucidate methods of improvement for preparatory, transition, and employment supports for individuals with disabilities.

The meaning people attribute to their work is to be sought. Applebaum (1992) compares work to “the spine which structures the way people live, how they make contact with material and social reality, and how they achieve status and self-esteem” (p. 5). These complex relationships have been skillfully and artistically captured by writers, such as Studs Terkel (1974) in his classic book, “Working”. Ethnography too has often captured the lives of people in a community in such ways that a great deal of light is shed on work and attitudes towards work (Lareau and Shultz, 1996). Some ethnographic accounts specifically focused on workplace settings give detailed accounts of the microsystem setting of work (Baba, 1991; Darrah, 1996). There have been many rich program descriptions dealing with efforts to enable people to get work and meaningful jobs (Bernick, 1987; Bullock, 1985). It is the goal of this study to explore “work” in a holistic manner, looking at the importance of support transition from postsecondary education to the workplace, life in the workplace for employees with disabilities, and the role of employers in this process.
Method
Selection of Sample
Individuals were selected based upon recommendations from other researchers and community contacts with the population of individuals with disabilities in Hawaii. After initial contacts, a snowballing technique was then utilized to recruit more individuals with disabilities to interview.

Qualitative Interviewing
Individuals with disabilities in Hawaii are difficult to study because the population is small and therefore these individuals are often over studied. These individuals often give information and do not see any results, changes, or rewards from sharing their personal trials and tribulations - in essence their story. Therefore, qualitative interviewing was selected as the research methodology because it was more personal and engaging for both the interviewer and the interviewee. Instead of simply filling out a questionnaire and answering questions that were posed for these individuals, an exchange of ideas and stories occurred between the interviewer and the interviewee. Interviewees were also able to ask questions about the research direction, products, and importance and offer their suggestions and invaluable insights. Individuals were also willing to refer the researcher to personal friends and other contacts because a relationship had been created during the process of the interview.

Each participant was given a consent form to sign before the interview began. The interviews ranged from 1-2 hours and were conducted at the convenience of the interviewee. The interview was loosely structured, but followed a protocol designed by the Research, Rehabilitation and Training Center of the Center on Disability Studies. See Appendix 1.

Data Analysis Procedures
Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were then reviewed and reformatted for analysis utilizing a computer software program called the Ethnograph. Constant comparative analysis was utilized to analyze the qualitative data. The interview data were read and re-read and phrases and sentences were coded. Codes were derived from the content of the phrase and captured the main point. The codes were then reviewed, comparing similarities, and combined into themes. The themes were reviewed and grouped into categories of themes based on similarities of ideas. Several categories emerged from the interview data. See Appendix 2 for a complete listing of categories and themes.

Findings
During the eight interviews many issues of importance came to light. Several of these issues recurred in multiple interviews lending them credibility and significance. One the most salient findings were the focus on internal motivation and persistence as key elements in obtaining employment. Another issue that merits further exploration was the consistent negative experiences with Vocational Rehabilitation that individuals with disabilities transitioning from postsecondary education to employment described. Other significant issues discussed by the interviewees included the prominence of disability ignorance and bias when searching for employment, the lack of accessibility to a variety of positions, the importance of
role models for instilling self confidence and determination, and the need for individuals with disability to have prior job experience to increase self-awareness and advocacy skills when seeking employment. The following is a list of findings organized by category and accompanied from direct quotes from the interviews.

**Ideal Workplace**

**Understanding and Accepting People**

Interviewees indicated that an essential component of an ideal workplace included employees and employers that were accepting and understanding of their needs and capabilities, and of their disability.

“My ideal workplace would include people who understand your disability and someone that are willing to ask about your disability. And just understand it and we can all do our job and work as a team, where your disability is not an issue basically.

**Total Accessibility**

Ensuring that the workplace and workplace facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities is a critical component of an ideal workplace.

“The only thing I can say is it would be totally accessible, I do everything I can do to provide the reasonable accommodation.”

**Health Benefits**

Providing excellent health coverage for individuals with disabilities is important when searching for and choosing a job.

“I look for benefits as number one thing, because of my health, I need medical insurance, that type of thing. I don’t look for part time jobs because they don’t give you insurance. So it has to be over 20 hours.”

**Competitive Salary**

Being able to be financially independent and comfortable enough to live the way they want is a critical component of an ideal job.

“The pay, it matters too because . . . but if you keep looking for jobs for pay, you may never get a job.”

**Components of a Successful Transition from School to Work**

**Internal Motivation**

Many interviewees also indicated that securing employment is dependent on having the internal motivation to search for and follow through.

“I don't know how you can instill that, I think it's more internal. Because you can give them all the services, spoon feed them everything but if they don't really make the effort on their part, you may help them get the job but then when you're not there, they're going to be useless.”

“But it's just key, going and going...you know what I mean? It's not giving up and I think that's where it comes in handy, what you have inside of yourself.”

**Family Support**

Interviewees attributed some of their success in procuring a job to the financial assistance and encouragement of their families.

“And then comes the support of my family, they wanted me to always go back to school, so I quit my job, they said they would help support me and I basically took loans and I finished up at HPU, got my political science degree and then here I am.”
Computer Knowledge
Many individuals indicated that computers enabled them to perform their job functions and emphasized the importance of being proficient in the utilization of computers in order to make them more attractive in the job market. “Computers make a great difference in my life. It enables me to do my job.” “Being able to use the computer is always handy and it's really important in today's job field.”

Experience
Many individuals indicated that experience is an important precursor to successfully securing employment. “It is important to get into the workforce in terms of volunteer positions or paid positions while they are going to school or after they graduate, to let them see what they can do and give them some time to learn a new skill.”

Self Awareness
Having a strong sense of self-awareness was also stressed as an important facet in succeeding in a job. Individuals indicated that knowing one’s strengths, weaknesses, and accommodations is important when looking for and performing one’s job. “The person who is looking in a work situation should really focus on what is necessary for them. If disability is not new to them, they've had a couple of years to adjust; they should try to know themselves as best they can. Nothing like learning on the job, but if it's an experimental thing, it'll probably be beneficial for them to learn everything they can.” “You just gotta see what your limitations and what are the qualifications for the jobs.”

Positive Attitude
Interviewees indicated that having a positive attitude about yourself and about seeking employment makes securing a job easier. “So long as you don't put up barriers for yourself, you have an easier time of getting a job. If you say, oh I can't do this, I can't do that, then all they see is the negatives and they don't want to hire anybody like that.”

External Motivation
One of the interviewees stressed the need for external support when searching for and performing one’s job. “What I see is the person needs to get a lot of job coaching, not only from DVR but from employment agencies, especially with the state to understand how they need to think about becoming employable and how employers would perceive them as they come in the door for the first interview.”

College Career Counseling
One of the interviewees indicated that career counseling in college is an important link between postsecondary education and employment. “One of the difficult things I know college kids are going through is they'll major in something but they themselves are not sure of what they are going to end up doing when they graduate.”

Factors leading to current employment
Persistence
Interviewees emphasized persistence and not giving up when looking for and retaining employment. “But it's just key, going and going...you know what I mean? It's not giving up and I think that's where I think what you have inside of yourself as well as the people around you to support you make a big difference.”
Personal Relationships and Contacts
Individuals with disabilities frequently utilize personal contacts and relationships to secure employment.
“Word of mouth, from a friend who said they were looking for somebody and they asked me send my resume, that's how I got my job.”
“It's the more people that knows about you, that you are looking for a job, the better it is, you're not the only looking for it, you know.”

Qualifications
Being qualified for the position they are applying for is also an important factor leading to employment for individuals with disabilities.
“In general terms, I think level of education of job skills for both. A person should make sure they have at least what it takes to qualify for the job.”

Influences that Shaped Individuals
Religious Influence
A few individuals indicated the importance of their spirituality during their development.
“In the time that I was going through my crisis, I turned to my faith in my childhood, it was Christianity. I think it was that faith in God, that belief in God, seeking strength inwards. It helped me get through. I'm not necessarily a bible-toting Christian, but I definitely have a strong faith... so I thank God for bringing me this far.”

Environmental Influence
Interviewees suggested that an encouraging and challenging environment was an essential aspect in shaping their character.
“So it was, I lived what I considered a normal life with my disability, I wasn’t sheltered or anything, I was fully aware of the environment around me, which some may not have if they are sheltered all the time, they don’t know what goes on outside of the house, or outside of their circle, of their immediate environment.”

Role Models
Role models played an important part in encouraging individuals with disabilities. These individuals were mostly family members, friends, or community members that the individual with disabilities had recurrent contact with and that positively intervened in a critical event or moment in their life.
“Many disabled individuals before me who paved the way for me to make it easier and although I have paved the way for many others after me, but there were a few that I looked up to and wanted to model myself after.”

Family Influence
Being a part of a supportive and encouraging family was very important to the success and self-confidence of individuals with disabilities.
“It's not only my parents, but it's my outside my immediate family, my cousin, my aunts, my uncles, those are the ones too as well.”

Motivation to Work
Internal Motivation
Many interviewees indicated that they felt internally driven, determined to secure employment.
“How bad you want to work, and I don't know how you can instill that, I think it's more internal. Because you can give them all the services, spoon feed them everything but if they don't really make the effort on their part, you may help them get the job but then when you're not there, they're going to be useless, so you're giving them the tools to do it themselves.”

Independence
Being able to support themselves and their endeavors was an important
incentive to secure employment. Individuals did not want to be dependent on state or federal assistance. “Because I like to travel and do things and you can’t just do that on assistance. They just give you enough money to survive. They don’t give you money to go and live up. So that’s what I always wanted to do things and that kind of gave me the initiative to keep going and looking for, until I find a job and that kind of stuff.”

External Motivation
Encouragement by disability support services, instructor, college career counselor, and job coaches provides important motivation to work. “What I see is the person needs to get a lot of job coaching, not only from DVR but from employment agencies, especially with the state to understand how they need to think about becoming employable and how employers would perceive them as they come in the door for the first interview.”

Self-Employment
Interviewees suggested that individuals with disabilities may be more successful in self-employment and entrepreneurial businesses because of the current difficulties and biases in securing employment. “The only other way I would go in terms of establishing a job is to go the self-employment route and develop some kind of a business because it’s so difficult for people with disabilities to get a job.”

Barriers to Employment
Job Limitations
Many individuals with disabilities indicated that their variety of types of employment is limited by their disability. These limitations make it more difficult to secure employment because their options for jobs are not as diverse as the options for the non-disabled counterparts. “I find myself limited to a desk job, you can’t be a messenger downtown and deliver and all that kind of stuff. It’s very difficult. It lessens where we can look for potential employment.” “Like I said, the opportunities are less depending on your type of disability and what you can do. It’s harder because when you narrow the field of what you can go for, the larger it is, the better chance you have of getting a job. When you narrow it, and keep narrowing it, then it gets even more difficult.”

Disability Bias and Ignorance
Interviewees discussed the presence of negative attitudes toward their disability and the lack of awareness of employers and other employees of their limitations and needs. These attitudes devalue individuals with disabilities and make it difficult for individuals with disabilities to succeed in their area of employment. “[The only thing that makes it challenging to be employed is] the attitudes of other people.” “I think a lot of it is they don’t know what someone with a disability can do and they are a little bit hesitant and how much they have to change to accommodate someone with a disability. Sometimes it’s a lot; sometimes it’s very minor. But they really don’t know.”

Lack of Accessibility
Buildings and facilities at many areas of employment are still not accessible to individuals with disabilities. These structural barriers make it impossible for an individual with a disability to be employed at these businesses. “It was very difficult because a lot of interviews, sometimes I couldn’t get into the door because it was not accessible,
they are on the second floor of a two story building, so that didn't work out.”

**Conclusion**
Understanding what individuals with disabilities think is important when successfully transitioning to employment. This understanding contributes to the knowledge base of those providing services and funding. By collecting qualitative data through interviews, the data reflects individual perspectives of people with disabilities. In conjunction with quantitative data already collected, these qualitative perspectives help to create a holistic picture of transition from postsecondary education to the workplace for individuals with disabilities.

Completion of this research project increased the understanding of the barriers that individuals with disabilities face as they transition from postsecondary institutions to the workplace. It also helped to identify the areas of transition support that need to be improved to ease their transition, as well as led to improved transition services at postsecondary institutions and the workplace. Information gathered from this study also helped to clarify the role of technology for individuals with disabilities in the employment arena. The results of this study will ultimately result in more successful career outcomes for people with disabilities.

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Appendix 1: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I. Introduce myself and state purpose of study. Consent form explained and signed. I am coming to you for your knowledge. I need your help to understand what it is like to be an individual with disabilities. I am interested in learning about your experience with and conception of employment and transition services. These questions are very broad. There are no right or wrong answers; I just want to hear your opinion on things. If you ever need to take a couple of minutes to think about a question, that’s not a problem. I’m not in a hurry.

II. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
   • What did you do this past weekend? Is that a typical way to spend your time? If not, what is?
   • Ethnicity and cultural values – If you had to describe yourself to someone else what would you say?
   • What do you think has had an influence on shaping who you are? Now rank these from most to least important.
   • Education history – Tell me a little about your education.

III. To answer this research question: In what ways can preparatory support services, transition support services, and workplace support services be improved to increase success in securing employment? In response to the agenda set forth by the New Freedom Initiative, some initial fieldwork will be done to assess the importance of proficiency in computer and Internet usage to securing employment for individuals with disabilities.
   • When you look back at the process you went through to get a job, what do you think would be helpful to know about while you are still in postsecondary education/ high school?
   • If you have experienced a transition from education to the workplace, what supports/activities occurred in the process?
   • If you had to design a transition support program to take people from postsecondary/secondary education to the workplace, what would it look like?
   • What would you want to know if you were being trained for work? Knowing what you know, what has been/is important for you to be trained to do/know how to do your job?
   • Talk about computers and your life. Are they a part of your life?
     o If yes, what have you come to learn from your own experiences?
     o If no, what would have to happen for you to support/necessitate the use of computers?
   • If you could envision the perfect workplace, what would it be like? How does your vision differ from your current situation?
   • What does it mean for you to be happy or successful? What do you feel you need to attain happiness and success? What is within your power? What may be dependent on others?
IV. To answer this research question: What disability-related reasons make securing employment difficult?
   • Talk about your life: What makes it more challenging for you to secure employment?
   • Are there elements of your life that make it easier to secure employment?
   • When you are job hunting, what qualities in a job and/or employer attract you to that position? You have said A, B, C, D are the qualities you look for in a job, now rank these 1, 2, 3, 4, one being the most important reason for pursuing a specific job.
   • Here is a want ad from a local newspaper.
     o What attracts you to this job?
     o What would be your concerns about applying for this job?

V. To answer this research question: What role does education level play in one’s ability to successfully secure employment?
   • If the participant has a college education: Imagine your highest degree is a high school diploma, what would your adult life look like? How is that different from your life now?
   • If the participant has a high school education: If you graduated from a postsecondary program, what would your adult life look like? How is that different from your life now?
   • Do you see a difference, if any, between graduating from a 2-year or 4-year postsecondary institution?

VI. Do you have any questions or comments?

VII. Demographics
   • Disability history
   • Race and age range
   • Social structure of support network (family, friends, professionals?)

VIII. Thank them, ask them if they can refer you to one or two people that might be willing to be interviewed, and excuse them.

Possible prompting questions (general)

Tell me a little bit about that.
How is that?
Why is that?
Can you explain a little bit more about X.
### Appendix 2: Categories and Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Components of an Ideal Workplace</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- People with disability acceptance and understanding (perf-peeps)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Totally accessible (perf-aces)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Excellent benefit coverage (qual-benef)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Competitive salary (qual-pay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Accessible environment (qual-env)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Components of a Successful Transition to the Workplace</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Internal motivation (int motiv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Persistence (persist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Family support (fam support)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Computer knowledge (comp know)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- College career counseling (colg car c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Experience (get exp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Self awareness (self aware)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Positive attitude (pos attude)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Confidence (confidence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- External motivation (ext motiv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Job coach (job coach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teaching individuals the tools to support themselves (teach tools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Be more competitive than other individuals without disabilities (be better)</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Motivation to Work</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Internal motivation (int motiv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- External motivation (ext motiv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Money (mony motiv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Wanted to be autonomous of state and federal assistance (no assist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Enabled them to be independent (indepen)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Greatest Influences on Personal Character</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Religious influence (relg influ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Encouragement by role models (modl influ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Environmental influences (env influ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Family influence in life (fam influ)</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Barriers to Employment</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Disability limits job field (limit job)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Employers are ignorant about disabled people (dis ignor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Employers and other employees have a negative attitude toward individuals with disabilities/ Disability bias (dis bias)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Work environment no accessible to individuals with disabilities (no access)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Mechanism to Acquisition of Current Job</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Persistence (persist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Excellent job qualifications (job-qual)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Personal relationships and contacts (job-relats)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Breakout Themes

- Focus on the importance of gaining independence  
  - travel as a mechanism of independence (travel, travel fam, travel dis)
- Dedication of individuals with disabilities to their job (job stay)
- Suggestions of self-employment and entrepreneurship as attractive job options for individuals with disabilities (self emp ly)
- Definition of success linked to employment (success)
- Definition of happiness linked to employment (happy)

### Supports Received During Transition

- Vocational rehabilitation (sup voc re)  
  - Negative experience with vocational rehabilitation (bad voc re)  
  - Does not foster independence (breed dep)
- No transition supports (no transup)
- Assistive technology (sup at)
- University disability support staff (sup udss)
- Accommodations (sup accom)