



Welcome to the Realistic Job Preview for the Job Coach Position!

We are so glad that you are interested in the Job Coach position with East Bay Innovations (EBI). The purpose of this realistic job preview is to give you information that will help you decide if this is the right job for you. It is important that you know about the rewards and the challenges of working as a Job Coach for people with developmental disabilities (such as cerebral palsy and autism) before you accept a position.

In this realistic job preview we will look at:

- What Job Coaches do
- What the job requirements are
- Examples of different job tasks in actual work life
- What EBI is like as an employer
- What the difficulties and rewards of being a Job Coach are
- What staff training opportunities are available at EBI
- What current Job Coaches say about their jobs

This job preview includes stories of Job Coaches and the people they support. These stories are based on situations that you may confront as a Job Coach. The names and places have been changed. These real life examples are in the blue box areas throughout this realistic job preview.

By the end of the realistic job preview you should be able to answer the following questions, which will help you decide whether or not this type of work would be a good fit for you.

- What attributes do you think will make you a good candidate for working as a Job Coach?
- What challenges do you think you will face as a Job Coach? What supports will you need to deal with these challenges?
- Which parts of the job do you think you will enjoy the most?
- What about working for EBI appeals to you?

When people accept jobs at EBI and then leave them after a short amount of time, it can be very difficult for the people needing support, because they will again have to get used to a new person assisting them in important and personal parts of their lives. It is also difficult for their families, for their co-workers and for EBI. Because of this, we hope that this realistic job preview provides the information you need to make a good decision about whether or not to work at EBI as a Job Coach.

What is the role of the Job Coach?



Many people with developmental disabilities are able to hold jobs and enjoy working, but they need some extra help and support in order to be successful in the work world. In California, people with developmental disabilities who want to work are entitled to Employment Services (ES). This means having a Job Coach. Job Coaches provide support, offering both on-the-job training and ongoing support to people with developmental disabilities.

Your specific goals as a Job Coach will be based on the needs and interests of the people you support and could include the following:

- Helping the person you support understand their job duties and employer policies
- Helping the person you support build and maintain positive relationships with co-workers and customers
- Helping the person you support develop a strong work ethic
- Explaining new job responsibilities to the person you support
- Helping the person you support understand how their life outside of work may affect their performance while at work

There are a wide range of jobs held by the people who are supported by Job Coaches, but below are a few examples:



- Customer service at a movie theatre
- Building maintenance
- Cashier at a grocery store
- Office assistant



Job Requirements for Job Coaches

There are just a few requirements for getting a job as a Job Coach at EBI. First, you must be at least 18 years of age and have a high school diploma or GED. You will also need a valid California driver's license and a clean driving record. You cannot have been convicted of a felony in any state.

To be a Job Coach, it is preferable that you have at least one of the following:

- At least 2 years experience working with seniors, people with disabilities, children, or families
- Experience providing training and/or supervising others
- Knowledge of a variety of job responsibilities and industries

Your availability to work days, evenings, early mornings, weekends and holidays is important. Your

work hours might change depending upon the needs and the work schedule of the people you support.

There are many job-related skills you must develop to be an effective Job Coach and once you are employed EBI will provide the training you need. It is not necessary for you to have any official training prior to becoming a Job Coach.



About the Support You Will Provide

As a Job Coach, you will assist each person on a one-to-one basis, and your job duties will be different for each person. What you might help one person with another person may already be able to do independently. With some people you might help with completing paperwork, learning the work routine, or communicating with managers. With others, you might help with improving work performance, taking on more responsibilities, or advocating for more hours. (And remember, you will be trained in how to perform these and other Job Coach duties.) Each person you will work with has their own strengths, preferences and support needs, and these will change over time. One of the rewards of working as a Job Coach is to witness the accomplishments that people make in their lives and recognize your role in their successes.



On the Job Coaching

Debra works at an electronics retail store in the DVD and video games section. The number one gift of the holiday season is the Wii, a video game console that is becoming harder to find the closer it gets to the holiday. Jim, the Job Coach, stops by to see Debra during her work hours. There are a lot of customers and she is busy helping people find DVDs and other gifts that they are looking for. Besides Debra, there are a few other customer service clerks and a department manager helping the customers. When Jim gets a chance to talk to Debra, she asks him what she should say if someone asks her about how to get a Wii.

Jim advises Debra to ask her department manager about the appropriate response, and as the department manager is walking by Jim reminds Debra that she has a question for him. The department manager tells her how she should respond, but Debra is not completely confident that she can answer correctly. Jim breaks down the answer into the main points, models the answer for Debra and rehearses it with her.

In sum, the steps Jim takes to help Debra with her question are:

- Ask the manager: Jim reminds Debra to ask the manager as he is walking by.
- Identify the main points: Jim listens to the manager's response and breaks it down for Debra.
- Model it: Jim plays the role of Debra, showing her how to answer a customer's question about the Wii.
- Role rehearsal: Jim plays the role of the customer, and has Debra answer the Wii question herself.

After completing these steps Debra is confident that she can respond to customers when asked this common question.

About East Bay Innovations



East Bay Innovations (EBI) is a private nonprofit organization established in 1994. It provides support services in Alameda County to over 100 persons with developmental disabilities in their homes and in their community. EBI's mission is to provide personalized support to enable individuals with disabilities to live in their homes, to work jobs of their choosing and to participate in all aspects of the community. EBI seeks to help people live to their greatest potential and as independently as possible.

Scheduling, Pay and Benefits

Scheduling Depending upon the people you support, you may be working evenings, mornings, days, and weekends. As a Job Coach you must tailor your schedule to fit the schedules of the people that you support. Their schedules may vary from week to week, and therefore your schedule as a Job Coach may vary from week to week.

Benefits EBI offers health benefits to employees working 20 hours per week or more, as well as 401(k) retirement plan opportunities to all employees.

Wages Job Coaches are paid an hourly rate that increases over time. EBI is active in policy advocacy to promote good wages and affordable health insurance for all Job Coaches.

EBI is newly unionized with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

Training

There is a lot to learn as a Job Coach. New Job Coaches sometimes feel overwhelmed or unsure about what they are supposed to be doing for the first several weeks on the job. To help you learn how to do your work, EBI provides you with a series of trainings when you start and once you are on the job.

EBI has launched a comprehensive, fun, and interactive training program based on the College of Direct Support, the premier training curriculum for this field. You will be paid for the time you spend in training.

At first you will probably have a lot of questions. If you take a Job Coach position with EBI, it will be important that you talk to your supervisor if you need help or if you have questions. Your co-workers and the people you support might also know answers to your questions, and you should feel free to ask them for information. EBI is committed to

making you feel welcome and have the support you need to do a good job. The supervisors and the managers at EBI are willing to answer questions and provide you with whatever support you need.



Documentation and Following Regulations

As a Job Coach your primary role is to provide frequent support to people related to their work. In order to do this, there are other parts of the job that you must do. These include:

- Communicating with the managers, supervisors and co-workers of the person you support
- Using alternative communication systems that the people you support might need — for example, some people are not able to speak and therefore use communication booklets, electronic talkers or other forms of communication. You will be trained on how to use these forms of communication as necessary.
- Driving your own vehicle to get to the various job locations
- Attending regular training and staff meetings for EBI, which may be at times different than your regularly scheduled work hours
- Understanding and following local, state and federal rules and regulations that govern the services provided by EBI



Most of the documentation that you complete as a Job Coach is done immediately after meeting with the person that you support. It is crucial to document the time that you met with each person and what you did.

The paperwork you will complete as a Job Coach includes:

- Brief case notes of the service you provided and progress made towards meeting goals
- Monthly timesheets that document the amount of time spent traveling and time spent on and off the job site with the people you support. You will write one timesheet recording your hours and one time sheet for each person that you support to record their work hours.
- Yearly plans written with the person you support that identify their goals for career advancement

Advocacy, Empowerment and Self-Determination

As a Job Coach it will be important for you to support people with disabilities to make their own choices and decisions. Often it seems easier to get the job done if you do it for someone. Instead of doing this, Job Coaches need to teach people how to do the job on their own. Supporting people to learn about their abilities, to take control of their lives and to speak up and to speak out about their preferences and strengths is an essential part of the job.

Sometimes you might teach people with developmental disabilities ways that they can take greater control over their own lives and look out for their own self-interest. This is called “self-advocacy.” Teaching people to advocate on their own behalf is important to the main goal of EBI, which is to help people with developmental disabilities be as independent as possible. You will also be in situations where you will need to advocate on behalf of the people you support. This may be to helping them express an opinion about how they want to live when others do not agree with them. Over time you will learn the fine art of when to sit back and watch someone try to do something on their own and when to advocate on their behalf.

Advocating for More Responsibility

James has been working at the same grocery store for 7 years. He is a courtesy clerk, which includes bagging groceries, greeting customers and taking unwanted items back to their right location. He enjoys being a courtesy clerk but wants to do more. James’s goal is to be a manager at the store. When a cashier position opens up, he applies. His Job Coach, April, supports him in taking this next step towards a management position. April supports James by helping him prepare for the interview and rehearsing with him on what he will say. James is prepared at the interview to talk about his strengths and what he has accomplished while being a courtesy clerk. James advocates for himself during the interview and is hired as a cashier. This position requires extensive training. April assists him in learning this new position by going through the training program and practicing at the register with him. She also works with him on creating strategies to be successful, such as how to memorize the produce codes.



Community Inclusion and Relationships

*"We don't just deal with the person we support, we deal with the people around him and managers and supervisors. They are all part of the team."
-Job Coach*

Everyone wants to belong and to have valued roles in their community and their workplace. One of your most important roles as a Job Coach is learning how to support people to develop relationships at their jobs. In order to do this it will help you to know what the person likes and what their preferences and strengths are.

As a Job Coach you will need to develop ways of finding out what is going on in the workplace of the person you support. You will also need to find ways to build bridges between the person you support and his or her co-workers.

Fair Treatment

Lisa works at a large retail store and has many co-workers. Cleo, her Job Coach, observes how Lisa and her co-workers interact by walking around the store and watching from a distance. Cleo observes one of Lisa's co-workers calling Lisa names, such as stupid or idiot, to her and about her when talking to other employees. Cleo talks to Lisa about how she feels when people call her names. Lisa says that she is not sure how to respond and that it does not make her feel good. Cleo also talks to the store manager about what he has observed. Cleo and the store manager talk about educating the other employees about treating everybody the same. The store manager creates a mandatory training for all of the staff about discrimination and treating everybody with respect.



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Maintaining Relationships

The people that you support as a Job Coach typically work in a team environment. This means that creating and maintaining relationships with co-workers and management is important. Job Coaches support people to develop and maintain these relationships by talking through how to handle difficult relationships or how to recognize opportunities for building relationships. Co-workers can be influential in supporting the person to achieve goals and succeed at their job.



When You're Not There

Matthew enjoys his job but becomes frustrated sometimes. His co-worker, Maggie, helps Matthew keep his cool when he becomes upset. She can see the physical signs that he is frustrated and reminds him that it is okay to take some deep breaths and to change tasks for a little bit.

When Paul, his Job Coach, sees Maggie again later in the month she runs up to him and says, "Mathew has come a long way." Having Maggie's support is beneficial to Matthew and it is important for the Job Coach to know who these influential co-workers are.

Supporting People with Challenging Behaviors & Using Behavior Support Plans

You may support someone with challenging behaviors, although it is rare that a person has aggressive behaviors. A person you support may become agitated with you or raise their voice to you. They could cross your personal boundaries by asking personal questions or asking you to do something that you are not comfortable with.

For many potential new Job Coaches, this sounds a little frightening. Yet, with training, new Job Coaches with no prior experience learn how to prevent people from displaying challenging behavior. They also learn to respond to people in ways that helps people become or stay calm. You will not be asked to work with people who have challenging behaviors without training on how to prevent these behaviors and how to handle them when they occur. Over time you may decide that you really enjoy working with people with challenging behaviors because you will play an active role in teaching them better communication and living skills, which should cause their challenging behaviors to diminish. Many people with disabilities who display challenging behaviors are able to change with support from a Job Coach.

Taking Control

Jeannie has been working the same job for five years. She enjoys her job and is successful at it. Every once in a while she has a bad day and feels stressed out. When this happens, she sometimes does not show up for work or goes home early. This type of behavior puts Jeannie at risk for losing her job.

Her Job Coach works with Jeannie to find a coping technique so that she can continue to work or communicate to her supervisor rather than walking off the job. After trying a variety of strategies, Jeannie finds that taking a five-minute walk outside helps to calm her down enough to return to her job. Knowing that she has a way of dealing with the stress and the challenges that come her way, she feels more confident and stronger about doing her job.

“Your conversation is never the same and one day the person you support might understand what they’re doing and for some reason the next time they forget or they have something else going on or something’s bothering them. As a job coach you try to stay focused...It’s okay because everybody else has days like that and we have to move forward...”

-Job Coach

Supporting People with Health Care Needs



A person's medical condition can have a large impact on how they perform at work. It is important for a Job Coach to be aware of any health care needs that may affect job performance, and to help the person they support to develop coping strategies. Depending on the needs of the people that you support, Job Coaches may be expected to take a course in first aid.

Health and Safety

Joel tells Jill, his Job Coach, that he has not been feeling well for the last two days. He has been having stomach problems and constant diarrhea. Jill talks to him about his symptoms, and discusses how the food he eats can affect how he feels. Jill advises him to eat simpler foods and to call the doctor.

This is a medical problem that a Job Coach cannot treat. The Job Coach should advise the person to seek medical attention. Although this is not directly related to the workplace, this matter does affect Joel's work life and, therefore, falls under the category of being addressed by a Job Coach.



Work Environment



As a Job Coach you spend your days both on and off the job sites of the people that you support. No matter where you work, your focus is on the person's job. Your days are filled with a variety of activities and you are interacting with the people that you support and other members of their workplace. On a daily basis, you will not have a lot of face-to-face time with other Job Coaches or your supervisors. It is important to take this aspect of the job into consideration when deciding whether or not it's a good fit for you.

EBI works to provide support to their Job Coaches through a variety of meetings and trainings where Job Coaches can connect with co-workers and talk about the challenges and rewards they are experiencing. Job Coaches can also get support from supervisors by phone.

What Type of Person Makes a Good Job Coach?



"This is not about me, it's about the people that I support."

– Job Coach

How do you know you will be good at being a Job Coach? Here are some of the traits of a good Job Coach:

- Patient
- Reliable
- Caring and compassionate
- Honest and loyal
- Accepting of others as they are
- Flexible
- Independent and creative
- Hard working and cooperative
- Interested in learning
- Good at communicating with others
- Respectful of other people

What Type of Person Should Avoid Becoming a Job Coach?

Being a Job Coach to people with disabilities is a difficult job. It is likely not the job for you if you:

- Need to work a fixed daily schedule
- Want your work day to be nearly the same every day
- Have difficulty with change
- Prefer to have a supervisor with you at all times
- If you are looking for "just a job"
- If you are applying just because you can't find another job that pays as much

What Job Coaches Say

What Rewards Do Job Coaches Have on Their Jobs?

- “Working with people with disabilities and seeing them successful. Knowing that you are a part of that process.”
- “If the person I support is having a rotten day and I can make him or her laugh or put a smile on their face, that’s all worth it to me.”
- “Interaction with the people you support.”
- “You get pay back immediately.”

What Challenges Do Job Coaches Have on Their Jobs?

- “You have to be creative. Some of the people you support may have frustration issues and you have to know, first of all, just stay calm. Their feelings are very real to them.”
- “Your day is never the same so when you walk in you never know, you may think it is going to be a good visit but you walk in and the person you came to see is upset about something. I would say that the biggest challenge is just being open and listening to him or her.”
- “All the driving.”
- “Paperwork.”



Is Being a Job Coach for You?

It is important for you to think about what you have learned in this realistic job preview. Ask yourself this question:

Is this work really for me?

When you work as a Job Coach people depend on you. It is important that you make sure this is a job you want to do.

Remember to answer these questions before making a decision to accept a position as a Job Coach:

- What attributes do you think will make you a good candidate for working as a Job Coach?
- What challenges do you think you will face as a Job Coach? What supports will you need to deal with these challenges?
- Which parts of the job do you think you will enjoy the most?
- What about working for EBI appeals to you?

Learn more about EBI and the other services we provide by visiting EBI's website at www.eastbayinnovations.org

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about EBI and the services we provide for people with developmental disabilities.

Credits and Thanks

Special thank you to the Job Coaches and staff who shared their experiences and to the people who they support.

Many of the photos are of real Job Coaches and the people who they support. Permission for these photos was obtained from each person and the staff who support them. These photos cannot be used for purposes other than as they are used here without prior written permission.

