

Collaboration is the Key

To be successful takes a lot of effort, usually from multiple people. For individuals with disabilities this is equally true and also usually involves multiple agencies. Take the success of Devin Lile.

Born in 1996, Devin was adopted by the Lile's when he was three. As parents, they had high expectations for not only Devin, but for all three of their children. They pushed them to try their best and have high expectations for themselves.

When Devin was 14, things were not going so well and he was placed in an Intermediate Care Facility for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF-ID). He lived there for approximately four years. As he approached his 18th birthday, the ICF-ID staff told the family about the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program. They were connected to Jo Schumacher, a Transition Specialist with MFP. The Lile's credit Jo with helping them open doors and learning about services in the community.

MFP is a Medicaid program that helps individuals wanting to move to the community from an ICF-ID. Currently MFP serves individuals who are on the Waiver for Individuals with Intellectual disabilities (ID Waiver) and those who are served by the Waiver for Individuals with Brain Injuries (BI Waiver). To be eligible for MFP the person wanting to move has to have lived in an ICF-ID or nursing home for 90 days.

MFP Transition Specialists help plan the move and confirm the necessary supports and services are in place to ensure a successful transition. Once the person moves to the community, the Transition Specialist follows them for 365 days. During those 365 days MFP can provide intensive services and supports to/for the person based on their needs as determined by their team. Once the MFP year is over, it is expected that the person will be successful on the services and supports offered through the traditional waivers.

After three months of planning, Devin moved to a duplex in November 2013. He lived with two other individuals. Things went well for a while, but he and his family made the decision that he needed different residential supports. So, while the year of MFP was coming to a close, Devin moved into a townhouse with two other young men. Interestingly, this move was on the exact day a year later as his earlier move and the last day of MFP.

Devin feels he has more freedom living in the community. He has fewer roommates and more privacy. Both Devin and his Mother agreed that one of the best things that has changed since the move is that there are less phone calls from staff. In the past more phone calls meant more problems. So all are grateful for fewer calls!

Neither move was stress free. Former roommates and friends were left behind, furniture and home furnishings had to be purchased, new staff had to be met, and sometimes just moving can be stressful. The Lile's are grateful for MFP and Jo's help with the transitions. According to Karen, "Jo did an amazing job!"

Devin graduated from High School in June of 2014. While in school he participated in Experience Based Career Education Work Experience (EBCE) that included work experiences at multiple places as well as learning about apartments, apartment leases, paying bills, etc. The summer after graduation the Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC) of the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) helped Devin find his first paying job—a summer position with the Parks and Recreation Department of West Des Moines. The summer job was perfect as Devin was to begin Project SEARCH operated by Candeo at UnityPoint—Methodist Hospital in Des Moines in the fall.

Devin applied to Project SEARCH at the end of his senior year. This fit well with his career goal of helping people and he knew he wanted to work in the medical field. It is interesting to note that he was the first applicant to use a video to show why he was interested in Project SEARCH and how he would be a good fit for the program.



In addition to being a participatory class member, Devin completed three internships: Grounds, Pathology Laboratory, and Radiology. He completed Project SEARCH in June of 2015 and in July was hired to work in the Pathology Laboratory. He works 8:00-4:30 Monday—Friday, has benefits and currently earns \$11.85 an hour.

One of his duties at the “Path Lab” includes batching specimens, which involves scanning the bar codes on the tubes and placing them in the right container to make sure they get to the right place. He also fills orders for supplies to be delivered to other hospital and clinics. This involves gathering the needed items, labeling the bag and placing it on the correct shelving unit so the delivery personnel can quickly retrieve it. Devin also works on the computer where he enters patient information when Doctors order tests. Indexing, as this is called, allows Doctors to double check what tests they have asked to be run.



During the interview with Devin, Karen and Project SEARCH staff all agreed that Devin is the reason for his success. He worked hard, did his best, and learned from each internship as well as the classroom portion of the program. He listened to others while keeping an open mind about the best way to do things. He gained confidence, was willing to try new and different things, and recognized when he needed to ask for assistance.

At the same time it was recognized that while Devin is the main reason for his success, there were other players who helped him succeed:

- the EBCE during high school helped him learn about “adult life”;
- the MFP Transition Specialist helped Devin and his family find Candeo for appropriate residential supports;
- the MFP Employment Services Specialist, building on his interest in the medical field, suggested he investigate the Project SEARCH at UnityPoint and his team agreed;
- the DRC helped him secured a summer job giving his experience and building confidence;
- his high school teacher helped him make his application video to Project SEARCH;
- Medicaid used pre-vocational dollars to fund the classroom portion of Project SEARCH;
- Initially Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services paid for one internship then with Polk County funded the remaining two;
- Candeo and UnityPoint supported him in his employment efforts and eventual success; and
- finally, his parents—they stuck by him, supported him, while all the time having high expectations and holding him to the high standards they knew he could meet.

Everyone’s assistance helped. Collaboration is key. Devin worked hard, enjoys a great job, is in the medical field and he has money to spend on things he likes.