**Career Exploration Program Outline for High School Students with Developmental Disabilities**

**Location: Rochester, NY**

**Program Overview:** This program is designed to help high school students with developmental disabilities explore career options and understand how their unique skills and abilities can align with various job opportunities. The program will include guest speakers, hands-on activities, and field trips to provide real-world context and inspiration.

**Program Duration: 6 weeks**

**Week 1: Introduction to Career Exploration**

**Objective:** Students will begin to explore their career interests and understand the importance of matching skills to careers.

**Activities:**

1. **Introduction to Career Exploration (15 minutes):**
	* Group discussion about career interests, skills, and strengths.
	* Show videos or examples of various jobs (with subtitles or visual aids if necessary).
2. **Vocational Interest Inventory (20 minutes):**
	* Complete Vocational Interest Inventory Worksheet (online or paper-based).
	* Review results in a group discussion, highlighting common themes (e.g., artistic, hands-on, helping professions).
3. **Guest Speaker: Local Career Coach or Job Counselor (30 minutes):**
	* Invite a local career coach or vocational rehabilitation counselor to speak about career planning.
	* Focus on how students can explore job options based on their interests and strengths.

**Materials:**

* Vocational Interest Inventory Worksheets
* Visual job examples (printed or digital)
* Whiteboard/Pens

**Week 2: Exploring Different Career Pathways**

**Objective:** Students will explore different career sectors and narrow down potential fields of interest.

**Activities:**

1. **Career Exploration Worksheet (30 minutes):**
	* Students research three career options based on the previous week's inventory results.
	* Focus on job duties, skills required, and work environment.
2. **Group Sharing (15 minutes):**
	* Students share their researched career options and discuss what appeals to them about each one.
3. **Guest Speaker: Job Coach or Employer (30 minutes):**
	* A local employer or job coach from an inclusive workplace shares insights about available roles and expectations for different jobs.
	* Discuss inclusive workplaces and how different abilities are valued in the workforce.

**Materials:**

* Career Exploration Worksheets
* Laptop/Tablets (if available) for research

**Week 3: Developing Job Skills**

**Objective:** Students will learn about soft skills and practical abilities required for various jobs.

**Activities:**

1. **Soft Skills Training Session (30 minutes):**
	* Teach key workplace skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and time management.
	* Use role-playing exercises to practice these skills in job-related scenarios.
2. **Career Profiles (Printed or Digital) (15 minutes):**
	* Provide students with various career profiles detailing job duties, skills, and growth opportunities.
3. **Guest Speaker: HR Professional or Training Specialist (30 minutes):**
	* Discuss the types of training and development programs available for people with developmental disabilities.
	* Share stories of employees with disabilities who have succeeded in different job sectors.

**Materials:**

* Career Profile examples
* Role-play scenarios
* Soft Skills Training Materials

**Week 4: Real-World Job Experiences**

**Objective:** Students will visit a local workplace to observe careers in action and understand the work environment.

**Activities:**

1. **Field Trip to Local Business (2 hours):**
	* Visit a local inclusive business or organization that employs individuals with developmental disabilities (e.g., a local non-profit, retail store, or community center).
	* Observe different job roles and interact with employees.
2. **Group Discussion and Reflection (30 minutes):**
	* After the field trip, discuss what students observed and learned about different jobs and work environments.
	* Encourage students to reflect on what they enjoyed most about the visit.

**Materials:**

* Permission slips for field trip
* Field trip reflection worksheet

**Week 5: Job Exploration & Practice Interviews**

**Objective:** Students will practice skills necessary for seeking and applying for jobs.

**Activities:**

1. **Job Application Basics (30 minutes):**
	* Teach students how to fill out a basic job application.
	* Discuss the types of information required (name, contact information, work experience).
2. **Mock Interviews (30 minutes):**
	* Pair students up to practice interview questions with a partner.
	* Provide feedback and suggestions for improvement.
3. **Guest Speaker: Employer with Inclusive Hiring Practices (30 minutes):**
	* Invite an employer from a local company or organization to discuss their hiring process and share advice for job seekers.

**Materials:**

* Sample job application forms
* Interview questions handouts
* Mock interview feedback forms

**Week 6: Setting Career Goals & Wrapping Up**

**Objective:** Students will reflect on their career interests and set personal goals for their future.

**Activities:**

1. **Goal-Setting Activity (30 minutes):**
	* Students set short-term and long-term career goals based on their interests and skills.
	* Use a template for setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals.
2. **Vision Board Creation (30 minutes):**
	* Each student creates a vision board reflecting their career aspirations using magazines, pictures, and words.
3. **Guest Speaker: Community Support and Vocational Services (30 minutes):**
	* Invite a representative from a local vocational rehabilitation program or community resource center to share information about ongoing job supports, internships, and post-graduation opportunities.

**Materials:**

* Vision board supplies (magazines, scissors, glue, etc.)
* Goal-setting templates
* SMART goal worksheets

**Possible Field Trip Locations:**

1. **Inclusive Workplaces:**
	* Local stores, restaurants, and offices that have experience with inclusive hiring practices.
	* Examples might include Wegmans, local non-profits, or government offices.
2. **Vocational Rehabilitation Centers:**
	* Local training programs or job skill centers that help students with developmental disabilities prepare for employment.
3. **Community Career Fairs:**
	* A visit to a career fair focused on inclusive hiring and vocational resources.

**Program Evaluation:**

1. **Pre-Program Survey:** Assess students' knowledge and interests in career options before starting.
2. **Weekly Check-ins:** Short discussions or reflection activities to assess understanding and engagement.
3. **Final Reflection:** Students will complete a written or visual reflection about what they learned and their career goals.

**Conclusion:**

The Career Exploration Program provides students with developmental disabilities in Rochester, NY, a holistic approach to exploring careers, learning essential job skills, and setting realistic career goals. The inclusion of guest speakers, field trips, and interactive activities ensures that the students are engaged and able to apply their learning in real-world contexts.