Homesteads for Hope Job Exploration Curriculum for Students with Disabilities (SWDs)

**Program Overview:**

Homesteads for Hope’s Career Exploration Program provides students with disabilities (SWDs) an inclusive, hands-on approach to discovering and pursuing their career interests. The curriculum integrates nature’s classroom, experiential learning, and vocational training to prepare SWDs for meaningful employment. The program emphasizes self-discovery, skill development, and exposure to various career pathways, aligning with individualized employment goals.

**Curriculum Objectives:**

1. Assist SWDs in exploring diverse career pathways aligned with their interests, abilities, and goals.
2. Equip SWDs with information on labor market trends, non-traditional employment, and career options.
3. Develop critical workplace skills, including soft skills and universal workplace expectations.
4. Foster connections with employers, career organizations, and employment resources.
5. Provide opportunities for experiential learning and informational interviews to solidify career interests.

**Program Components**

**1. Career Exploration and Counseling**

**8 sessions**

* **Activities:**
  + Administer vocational interest inventories to help identify career pathways.
  + Host group discussions on labor market trends and in-demand industries.
  + Provide resources and workshops on non-traditional employment (e.g., entrepreneurship, self-employment, military careers).
  + Explore career pathways connected to individual abilities and strengths through one-on-one counseling.
* **Outcomes:**
  + SWDs gain a clear understanding of career options that align with their skills and goals.
  + Increased awareness of career opportunities beyond traditional roles.

**2. Workplace Readiness Training**

**6 sessions**

* **Topics Covered:**
  + Soft skills development: Communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and punctuality.
  + Understanding workplace environments, expectations, and etiquette.
  + Duties and responsibilities across various industries.
* **Hands-On Activities:**
  + Role-playing workplace scenarios.
  + Practicing interview skills and resume building.
  + Engaging in mock workplace environments, including Homesteads for Hope’s farm operations, café, and store.
* **Outcomes:**
  + SWDs demonstrate improved confidence in workplace readiness skills.
  + Better preparation for real-world workplace expectations.

**3. Career Pathways Exploration**

**6 sessions**

* **Topics Covered:**
  + Skills and duties required for specific occupations.
  + Industry-specific expectations and work environments.
* **Activities:**
  + Career speakers: Invite professionals from various industries to share their experiences.
  + Informational interviews: Arrange sessions for SWDs to meet employers and learn about job roles.
  + Field trips: Visit local businesses, trade schools, and vocational training centers.
  + Explore career organizations related to individual interests.
* **Outcomes:**
  + SWDs develop a deeper understanding of potential career pathways.
  + Increased engagement and motivation for pursuing chosen career fields.

**4. Job Resources and Networking**

**4 sessions**

* **Activities:**
  + Orientation and registration at local One Stop Career Center/American Job Center.
  + Accessing online Department of Labor services for job searches, training programs, and career assessments.
  + Networking opportunities with local employers and community organizations.
* **Outcomes:**
  + SWDs build a network of professional connections.
  + Improved access to job resources and support systems.

**5. Individualized Career Planning**

**8 sessions**

* **Activities:**
  + Develop personalized career plans based on interest inventories and vocational assessments.
  + Set achievable short-term and long-term career goals.
  + Track progress and revisit career plans regularly to ensure alignment with evolving interests.
* **Outcomes:**
  + SWDs gain clarity and confidence in their career aspirations.
  + A structured pathway for achieving employment goals.

**Program Implementation**

* **Unit of Service:** 30-45 minute sessions delivered in small groups of 3-5 people.
* **Duration:** 8–14 weeks, with flexibility based on participant needs and the number of sessions offered each week.
* **Location:** Homesteads for Hope campus
* **Staffing:** Therese Flannery, Program Facilitator, Robert Moriarty, Employment Specialist Consultant
* **Materials:** Vocational interest inventories, career guides, workplace readiness manuals, and technology for virtual career exploration.

**Expected Outcomes**

1. Increased career awareness and confidence among SWDs.
2. Improved workplace readiness skills, including communication, adaptability, and problem-solving.
3. Identification of viable career pathways aligned with individual interests and abilities.
4. Connections with local employers and career organizations for future opportunities.
5. Empowerment of SWDs to make informed decisions about their career goals.

This curriculum will not only prepare SWDs for employment but also promote self-determination and personal growth, ensuring they achieve meaningful success in their chosen pathways.