

Best Buddies Expands Support with LifeSherpa

OBJECTIVE

Expand support and improve engagement, while meeting program goals and funding source deliverables.

SOLUTION

Vocational/employment support powered by the LifeSherpa digital support platform.

RESULTS

Expanded reach and effectiveness. Working up to increased caseload of 5 more participants per staffer.

“LifeSherpa lets us provide an additional layer of support ... better engage with participants... and enhance our learning curriculum.”

– Caitlyn Pace, Program Supervisor, Jobs, Best Buddies



Best Buddies Jobs, IL

Best Buddies is the world’s largest organization dedicated to ending the social, physical, and economic isolation of the 200 million people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Founded in 1989, its mission is to empower the special abilities of people with IDD and create opportunities for them.

The Best Buddies Jobs program helps people with IDD get competitive paying jobs and equal employment. It also provides continual support for employees and employers to promote success in the workplace.

The Jobs program has assisted thousands of individuals secure meaningful work, earn an income, pay taxes, receive benefits, and work alongside peers in their community. Unlike many other programs, Best Buddies matches employers and employment seekers’ interests and skills to ensure jobs are enjoyable, competitive, and inclusive.

Pandemic Creates a Support Gap

Helping participants develop job skills, create resumes, prepare for interviews, and find the right position is an undertaking that demands a high level of support. “We have always provided in-person, phone, text, and email support,” says Caitlyn Pace, Program Supervisor, Jobs, at Best Buddies in Illinois.

Until early 2020, a mix of face-to-face, phone, text, and email support were used to keep program participants on track. Then along came the COVID-19 pandemic.

Online Zoom classes were added for training. Yet after training, there was still a need to promote interaction, reinforce content, and remind participants to take action and complete tasks.

To fill the gap, the program needed an immediate way to engage participants and provide support remotely. Best Buddies Job Development, Manager Michelle Dempster did some research and found LifeSherpa.

LifeSherpa Selected to Implement Solution

Working with Michelle Dempster and Caitlyn Pace, the LifeSherpa team turned PowerPoint content into job development activities that were configured and delivered on participants' mobile devices. A Chill Out Activity was set up to help participants maintain focus and manage stress. Reminders were created for time management support and reinforcements.

In May 2020, LifeSherpa was piloted with a small group of program participants. Today, program engagement is proactive, remote support is effectively delivered, and LifeSherpa is integrated into the pre-employment process. The platform is also helping the [Best Buddies Jobs program](#) in IL scale and optimize staff productivity and content.

“LifeSherpa lets us provide an additional layer of support so nobody slips through the cracks. It gives us the tools to better engage with participants, improve their consistency, and unify and enhance our learning curriculum,” says Caitlyn Pace.

By centralizing and delivering training tools and videos, reminders, reinforcements, self-help resources, and private communications on an individual's smart phone, LifeSherpa creates a “digital scaffolding” that:

- allows staff to reach, teach, and engage more participants across a group caseload
- reduces time organizing, individualizing, and improving training and support
- advances job skills and professional development
- provides real-time status, engagement, and productivity metrics

Training Simplified

In a fluid environment of staff and participants, LifeSherpa makes training an easier, more uniform process for everyone. Educational content is now packaged as e-learning courses with video and resource materials centrally located in LifeSherpa.

When new people join the program, training begins with LifeSherpa delivering an Introductory course on each participant's mobile device. Communications and Professional Development courses follow to get participants engaged right away.

Staff can see where each participant and the group caseload are in the e-learning curriculum on a smart phone, tablet or desktop computer. They also can send a pre-defined or ad-hoc reminder to keep participants moving forward.

Ongoing Interaction Delivered

Throughout the pre-employment process, LifeSherpa guides participants and informs staff with:

User Status check-ins for reporting changes in emotional well-being, number of job locations and applications competed



Activities with to do lists and detailed steps on how to create a resume, write a cover letter, prepare for an interview, and more

Time management reminders that are easily personalized and participants can create their own reminders to improve timeliness

Stress management tools including audio to help with focus and reduce anxiety

Resource posts that put program orientation and how-to materials, processes, and procedures at participants' fingertips

Real-time communications between a participant, staff, and support circle

Dashboards and data that provide insight into actions and the progress of participants and group caseloads

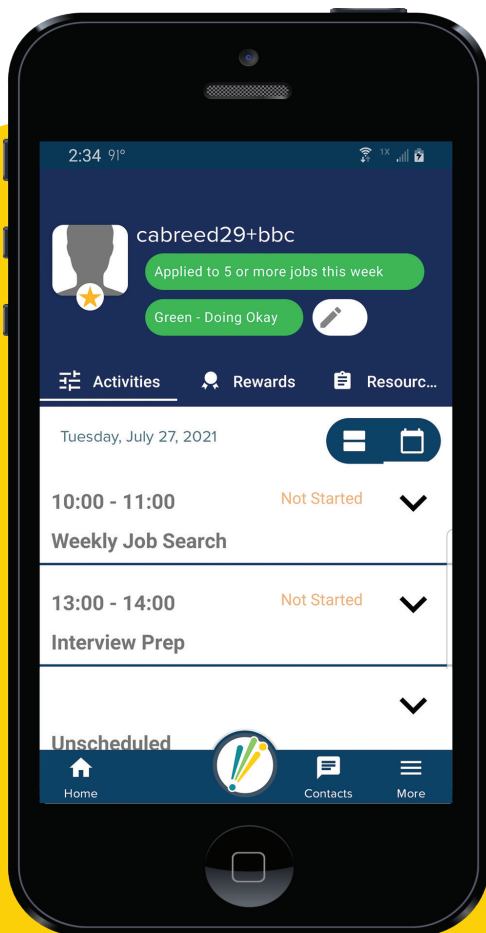
Organizational Value and Results

Using LifeSherpa, Caitlyn and her staff have the tools, all in-one-place, to engage and support participants remotely and effectively, promote greater independence, and improve program outcomes.

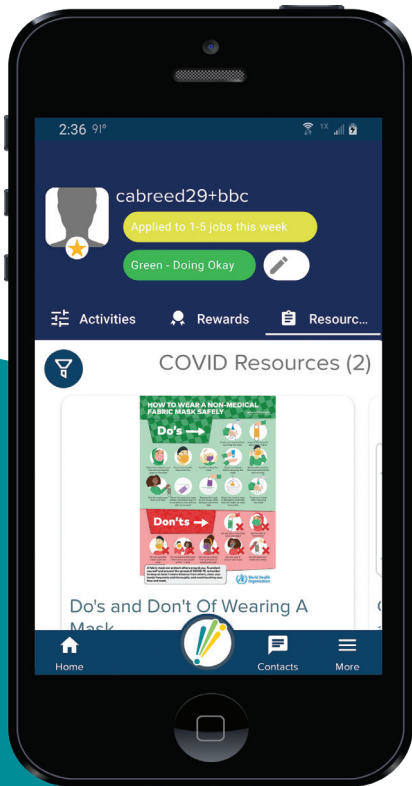
“The ability to customize activities, reminders, and reinforcements to meet individual needs is a huge help,” explains Caitlyn Pace. And working as a force multiplier, LifeSherpa has given the program the ability to extend their capacity as evidenced by:

- **Expanded reach** (remotely) with an additional layer of support
- **More effective engagement** with content and between staff and participants
- **Integrated e-learning** courses; now centralized, easily delivered and accessed
- **Inclusion of video** in training and resources to enhance learning and self-reliance
- **Increased caseload** – working up to 5 more participants per staffer

“Beyond pre-employment, I see us using LifeSherpa for job coaching and sustainment to better support individuals in the workplace and their employers,” notes Caitlyn. **“What started as a way to provide remote support and engagement has become a great tool for our participants, and for optimizing our resources and effectiveness.”**



Best Buddies Jobs' Metrics: Jan 1 - June 30, 2021



Access & Usage

- 43 program participants including graduates
- 24 current, active users
- 5 administrators



Engagement

- 32 live activities helping participants with pre-employment job search tasks
- 24 average # of activity routines completed per user
- 5 most used activities: status checks (2), chill out with audio, job development class, interview practice
- 3 customized activities created to meet specific participant's needs
- 12 resource posts on program orientation, processes, procedures and how-to information



Training & Improvement

- 3 live e-learning courses with video (more coming; expanded library planned)
- 21 currently using e-learning courses

To see how LifeSherpa can help your organization, request a demo [here](#).

About LifeSherpa

LifeSherpa is the digital support platform that makes life and work easier for everyone—manager or staff, neurodiverse or neurotypical. The company was founded by Doug Meeker, digital media and technology veteran and father of a son with autism. LifeSherpa grew out of Doug's passion to help his son Scott, and others, meet life's challenges.

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