

**CAREER CONNECTIONS** is a joint venture between Grant Wood AEA, community agencies, and local school districts. The community providers of employment specialist services are Advancement Services of Jones County, Goodwill of the Heartland, Optima LifeServices, Rural Employment Alternatives, Inc., and the University of Iowa Center for Disabilities and Development.

Local businesses are also critical to the success of students in Career Connections. Businesses can get involved in a variety of ways:

- Tours of their business operations
- Short term job shadows where students get to see the business in action
- Internships where students develop valuable skills
- Informational interviews where students gain important industry information
- Hire qualified students
- Referrals to other businesses.



**For more information, contact:**  
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**CAREER CONNECTIONS** is a program that helps high school students identify a career goal and acquire the skills to find, learn and keep a job. Career Connections achieves these outcomes through career counseling, job shadows, time limited skills instruction, internships, and job coaching during an additional or fifth year of high school. The Career Connections program is part of an evolving system of post-secondary services and supports designed to meet the diverse needs of high school students with disabilities to ensure that they become productive members of the Iowa workforce.

**Career Connections serves students who:**

1. Have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) with transition goals for competitive employment after high school;
2. Are likely to need short-term (6-12 months), community based, on-the-job training to achieve their career goal;
3. Have demonstrated the ability to learn multi-step tasks through short term modeling, demonstration, and verbal directions;
4. Want to work in the community and will accept assistance in identifying a career goal and finding, learning, and keeping a job.

# Program Outcomes

AUGUST 2001 TO PRESENT

Your Future Career

These highway milestones represent key program components.

### 3. TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION OPPORTUNITIES

Determine what, if any, post-secondary classes, licensures, and/or certifications are needed. Develop a plan for completing these.

**1. CAREER PLANNING**  
Help you figure out what you want to do and who can help.

GO!!!

## THE CAREER CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

### 4. INTERNSHIPS

Learn a job with hands-on experience lasting 6-12 weeks.

### 2. JOB SHADOWS

Explore jobs by visiting businesses, watching and asking questions.

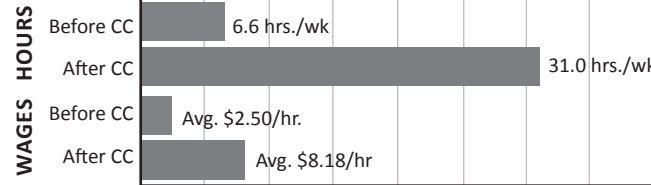
### 5. GET A JOB!!!

Learn a job with hands-on experience lasting 6-12 weeks.

### Employment

Number of students employed at exit.....303  
Average hours worked per week.....30.8\*  
Average hourly wage.....\$8.13  
Average monthly earnings.....\$1,101\*

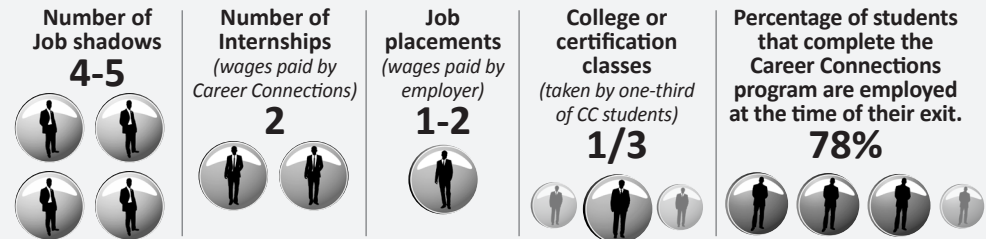
\*These numbers shrank for the first time in 2009-10 likely due to economic circumstances.



### Students work in a variety of occupations:

- Animal care
- automotive
- child care
- clerical
- computer
- construction
- custodial
- forestry
- health care
- lawn care
- manufacturing
- restaurant and retail.

### Resume building activities (average per student)

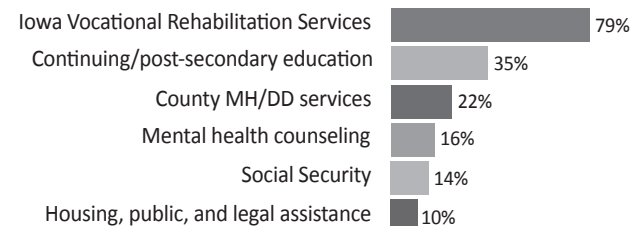


### Successful completion of IEP goals

Students participating in Career Connections typically have goals in the areas of **work exploration** and **self-advocacy**, **job finding** and **interview skills**, and **work performance skills**. Students may have additional goals in such areas as **social skills** or **community transportation** depending on their individual needs. In 2009-10, students participating in Career Connections **met 71% of their IEP goals**. For those goals not met, most students showed improvement in the skill area.

### Linkages to critical ongoing community supports

While Career Connections focuses on building work skills, many students have needs that extend beyond this domain. Community linkages established during the Career Connections program include:



### Excellence awards

The Career Connections program was recognized by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), an independent, nonprofit accreditor of health and human services, including employment and community services, as in the top 1% of service providers in two consecutive, three year reviews.