

When I first started in supported employment I was very anxious. I didn't know what kind of job I could get. I have a legal history that I thought would make it difficult for me to work in retail which I liked and have experience in.

With help from my employment specialist, I wrote a letter explaining a work situation that was preventing me from applying to a grocery store job. They then allowed me to apply. At first, my employment specialist and I visited the manager of the store two times a week asking about jobs and letting her know that I wanted to work there. After the first month, we checked weekly. She let us know that she was willing to hire me but there just weren't any openings.

Finally after three months she hired me without even doing an interview. I had many unexpected challenges when I first began. With no notice, I had to step in and care for my niece full time. This involved arranging transportation so she could stay at her same school and also arranging care for her while I worked. I was sick several times, misread the schedule two weeks in a row and missed my shifts. My employer was very upset. With support from my employment specialist I was able to let my employer know how much I valued my job and the steps I was taking to be more reliable about attendance.

Today, I love my job. I feel like I'm part of a team. I'm beginning to pay off some of my bills which helps reduce stress. Working gets me out of the house and I feel more successful, like I'm accomplishing something in my life. Working has helped reduce my symptoms of depression. It also has showed me strengths I didn't know I had.