Tips for Student Focused Planning for Employment

**Employment Conversation with Planning Team**

A Person-Centered Planning (PCP) team should include people who have been invited by the participant (focus person) that know the person well and can contribute to a discussion about the supports and services needed to help the individual reach their goals. Examples include: family members, friends, neighbors, support staff, service coordinator and others that are part of the person’s life and understand their needs and believe in their goals. For more information about person-centered planning related to transition and employment visit the Center Disability and Human Development website at: <http://moodle.idahocdhd.org>. Once on the site you will need to self-register for the training.

***Discussion: Everyone Can Work and There Is Work for Everyone.*** One of the biggest barriers preventing the employment of individuals with developmental disabilities is low expectations for themselves and the attitude of those around them. Most, if not all, people with disabilities are able to be successfully employed in the community with the right supports. The key is helping the individual, their family, and others in their support circle believe this is possible.

Examples of individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities working successfully in the community can be found on the following websites:

**Real People, Real Jobs: Stories from the Front Line -** <http://www.realworkstories.org/>Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts, Boston

**GO WISE -** <http://gowise.org/Wise-Videos>   
Washington Initiative for Supported Employment

**What Can You Do? -** <http://whatcanyoudocampaign.org>The Campaign for Disability Employment

Encourage the individual to consider employment, if they haven’t already, and find out about their career interests. Help team members believe the individual is able to work and can develop employment skills.

**Setting a Supported Employment Goal**

Start where the student is at the moment. What are their current abilities and work-related skills? What is the person’s desired job or career area? The best way to find out about the individual’s current skills is to observe the person doing things in a variety of natural environments: cooking a meal at home, cleaning the house, painting a room, biking to the store, scheduling time with friends, mowing and lawn care, using a computer, washing and putting gas in the car, walking a dog, etc. Each of these activities can be broken down into tasks/skills with which the person has competence and could use in the workplace.

*Examples:*

*Jill loves to cook for her family and friends. She shows that she knows how to plan and cook a meal: make a shopping list, shop for ingredients at the store, pay for the goods and receive change, take the goods home, unpack the goods and put away, follow a recipe, prepare ingredients for the meal by rinsing and chopping, cook meal by using the oven and/or stove. These tasks show that Jill has competence in variety of areas: reading, writing, finding items in a store, using money, carrying, using a knife, measuring, using a cooking appliance, and more. These skills could be used in a variety of work settings like a restaurant, grocery store, deli, and others.*

*John loves animals and especially dogs. He has cared for his family’s two dogs for several years: feeding, bathing, grooming, and walking them on a daily basis. Recently he has volunteered to walk two different neighbor’s dogs as well and they are very pleased with this service. John knows that the local pet store hires people to care for animals for sale and it also provides a dog grooming and boarding service. He would like to get a job where he can use his love of animals and skills in caring for dogs.*

Define the goal as placement in a job in the community. Identify job tasks and things the person will need to know to fit into the environment of the workplace. Align with current skills and abilities to see where any skills might need to be developed. Supportive services will help fill the gaps where the individual may need to develop a skill or need on-going support in a specific task required in the workplace.

*Examples:*

*Goal: Jill will have paid employment in the local deli/restaurant.*

*Her job tasks include: unpack food deliveries into the walk-in cooler, take inventory of all food products and supplies, prepare sandwich ingredients for counter, make sandwiches according to customer orders.*

*Jill will need support to: learn how to unpack deliveries and place items in the appropriate area of the cooler; understand the inventory form, recognize and count items; learn the employer’s preferred preparation of ingredients and sandwiches; reading orders from the cash register receipt, learn how to use the bus schedule to accommodate a changing work schedule.*

*Goal: John will start a dog-walking service and work part time at the Pets Plus store.*

*John’s Dog-Walking Service job tasks include:   
Create advertising flyer, distribute flyer through neighborhood and at local grocery store, communicate with customers by telephone and email, schedule walks of each dog/customer, record details/logistics for each customer (door key, gate, leash, etc.) find customer addresses (first time visit), map walking route, purchase supplies (clean-up bags, dog treats) greet customers/dogs, walk dogs through nearby area, clean up after dog as needed, return dogs to customer home, work with parents to bill customers, receive payment, deposit in bank, and file needed reports (SSI, taxes, etc.).*

*John will need support to: create and print advertising flyer, communicate with customers during initial contact, record customer details and schedule walks, find customer addresses. Parents will support John with financial considerations and required reports.*

*John’s Pets Plus Store job tasks include: take pets from customers at reception desk of the boarding/day camp area; put dogs/cats into kennels for boarding; feed dogs according to pet information sheet; take dogs out of kennels and into day camp play area; play and supervise groups of dogs 3 times each day; take pets identified for grooming to grooming room; return groomed pets to kennels; retrieve pets and return to customers. John has learned how to greet customers appropriately and handle dogs/cats through the intake/delivery process.*

*John will continue to need support to: read pet information sheets, stay on task in delivering animals to grooming area, and keep track of time for each dog play period. Job coach will explore assistive technology to help with timing tasks and work with supervisor to simplify feeding instructions for John.*

**Natural Supports and Assistive Technology**

Consider and list natural supports both at home, in the community, and in the workplace including from possible employers and co-workers. Some examples include: training provided by the employer; co-workers who provide support to learn tasks and understand informal workplace practices; family members provide a ride to and from work.

Also think about assistive technology (like a daily schedule/list or iPod) that could be used to keep track of work tasks and schedules; modifications to work station, equipment, and instructions; and other accommodations that can be requested that might help the individual to be more independent on the job with less need for support staff to be present.

**Information on the Plan to Support an Employment Goal**

Review information and services available on the student’s Individual Education Plan and, if they receive adult Medicaid services, ask the student/family if you can talk to their service coordinator about their Individual Service Plan to learn what the student has available and ensure continuity of services. If the student has a service coordinator, this person may be an important part of the person-centered planning team. Can new objectives be added or some of the services listed be used to build skills to be successful in the workplace? Supports can be focused on learning skills related to employment: getting ready for work, appropriate appearance, getting to work, being on time, working with a team, solving a problem, and communication in the workplace.

**Considerations**

Are there related needs? Will the student have adequate housing, food, transportation, assistive technology, etc. that need to be in place to support successful employment. Can they apply for additional assistance in any of these areas?

**Benefits Planning**: How will working and earning wages impact the individual’s current benefits? There are ways an individual can work and keep some of their benefits. If your student and their family has concerns about working and benefits, there are people who can help them understand how the income they earn may affect their benefits, like SSDI and Medicaid. Schedule an appointment with a work incentives coordinator from Disability Rights Idaho to learn more about work and benefits at 1-866-262-3462. Some community rehabilitation providers have trained benefits planners on staff to serve their clients.

**Supported Employment Services for Adults**

The Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (IDVR) provides vocational assessments and funding for job development services and initial job coaching through Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) agencies. A student should be referred to vocational rehabilitation as early as possible – but at least the year before they graduate from high school. After being referred the student will be assessed to determine their eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services. If found eligible the individual works with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) to develop an individual employment plan. The plan of service may begin with training, job development, or other services depending on what the individual needs to become a competitive job applicant.

The length of time needed for job development varies depending on the individual. After the person is hired at a job, Vocational Rehabilitation provides funding for initial supported employment services. Supported employment services are used to provide one-to-one support in the workplace called job coaching. A job coach’s role is to help the individual learn the job, gain skills related to job tasks, and understand the workplace environment. This includes communication with supervisors and co-workers and the “social code” of the workplace. It is important for of the job coach to build the individual’s independence in the workplace and create a transition plan for fading the level of support overtime as the individual learns how to do the job, gains more independence in the workplace, and natural supports are engaged.

The VRC will determine if the individual needs on-going job coaching, beyond the initial period provided by Vocational Rehabilitation. If the student is eligible for the adult Medicaid HCBS Developmental Disability Waiver, on-going employment support services can be included on their individual service plan to be provided by a Supported Employment Agency (Community Rehabilitation Provider).

**Linkages**

**Referral to IDVR Services**: As the student develops an employment goal for their plan, they need to apply for services from the Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. To find out more about IDVR services and local offices go to this website: <http://www.vr.idaho.gov/index.shtml>

A great place to start to find information about finding a job, working with a disability, and the resources available in Idaho is the **Able to Work** website: <http://www.abletowork.idaho.gov/> In addition to information on key employment topics, this website includes links to state agencies and other organizations in Idaho.

The Idaho Dept. of Labor provides a variety of services and resources to all Idaho job seekers including: job search data bases, workshops, job fairs, and local job listings. To find out more about IDOL and local offices go to this website: <http://www.labor.idaho.gov/dnn/Default.aspx?alias=www.labor.idaho.gov/dnn/idl>

The Department of Labor also hosts the online Career Information System that has invaluable resources for students to research their career interests, find out where their skills and abilities may fit best, and learn about the job market in Idaho communities. Part of this site has been set up especially for individuals with disabilities. Idaho Career Information System (CIS):  
<http://labor.idaho.gov/dnn/idl/IdahoCareerInformation.aspx>