

VOLUME 1

Customizing Employment

A Do-It-Yourself Toolkit for Families | The How-to Narrative



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**CT Council on
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UConn
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE
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The Purpose of This Toolkit

The purpose of this toolkit is twofold. First, it will give you ideas (and steps) about what you should do to assist a jobseeker with a disability to reach their employment goal. Second, this toolkit equips you with the tools you need to avoid “day-wasting programs” of the past like sheltered workshops or other options without real purpose or meaning.

This toolkit is designed for families to develop the following competencies:

1. Using strengths-based terms to describe a jobseeker.
2. Explaining the four essential components of Customized Employment.
3. Describing how elements of Customized Employment differ from traditional routes to employment.
4. Identifying ways in which those four components (in whole or in part) can be used in customizing employment for a jobseeker.
5. Following strategies for a “deep dive” discovery approach that identifies the jobseeker’s strengths, interests, preferences, and other characteristics which could lead to a good match for real work for real pay.
6. Using person-centered, strength-based documents to tell others about the jobseeker’s characteristics that are desirable for employment.
7. Developing a Job Plan with the jobseeker that details how to find and get competitive integrated work that is compatible for them.
8. Using a job development strategy using traditional ways, customized ways, or a combination to facilitate the jobseeker getting a job valued by them and the employer (or customers if self-employed).
9. Identifying Follow-Along Supports to increase the likelihood that the hired jobseeker is able to sustain employment.
10. Accessing follow-along supports for a hired jobseeker.
11. Evaluation personal success using a variety of outcome measures.





Part 1 - Introduction

Congratulations on taking a bold step to facilitate meaningful employment of someone you know with a disability without relying on public agency support to find the “right job!”

Employment First

In the past, many people with disabilities were not allowed to work. Those who tried to work maybe had a difficult time finding work – or keeping the jobs they found – for many reasons. Some were “underemployed” in low level jobs when they had many higher level qualifications. Others worked in places like sheltered workshops where they earned far less than minimum wage if they earned anything at all. “Not working” became the default setting for too many people with disabilities with the advent of some well-intentioned social programs such as those administered by the federal Social Security Administration.

Many individuals (with disabilities) want to work but have not had the opportunity yet. As with other jobseekers, they anticipate that work will be meaningful and important for many reasons.



Although she looks like she’s really into her video game, this woman has nothing else to do because no one helped her get a job despite her varied work experiences years ago in her transition program.”

Unfortunately, like many well-intentioned social programs, Social Security for people with disabilities kept the cycle of poverty going in which these individuals did not receive adequate training for work and accepted employment discrimination as part of their lot in life. Due to old rules that recently have been changed, individuals with disabilities became unmotivated to work because of fear about losing publicly funded benefits for, e.g., health care. Their families believed this benefit loss would occur, too.

This has fortunately changed! Today, “Employment First” is a federal initiative that presumes all people can work in competitive, integrated jobs if they have the supports they need. Many states, including Connecticut, are Employment First states. Furthermore, supports need to be highly individualized and flexible. They are whatever the individual needs to be as successful as possible.

Today, Employment First is the default “day program.”
<https://apse.org/>



As, as you read further, you occasionally will see the word “Appendix” in red and underlined, followed by a letter (or two) of the alphabet. These correspond to the same Appendix in Volume 2. You may want to pause in your Volume 1 reading to check that Volume 2 Appendix out or to continue reading and explore Volume 2 later. It is important to understand, though, that the information and forms in Volume 2 are only usable if you connect them to the corresponding narrative in this volume (Volume 1).

What is the “Right Job” For a Person With a Disability?

When we say “right job,” we mean one which:

- is a good match because it aligns with the individual strengths, interests, preferences, and career goals of the individual;
- is not provided as an act of charity but rather is a meaningful investment of the part of the employer to employ someone who really does add value to the workplace by meeting that employer’s need;
- is supported through flexible strategies;
- has the person earning at least minimum wage or higher;
- provides the same opportunities for career advancement, cost of living increases, and other benefits that are provided to other employees in the same business or industry with a comparable job; and
- has them working side-by-side people without disabilities, receiving primary support from their co-workers and supervisors, just like other workers without disabilities do.

As you can tell by this list of characteristics, your goals are (1) not to have a human services agency take control over the employee and/or the job because there is a direct relationship between the person with disabilities and other employees and (2) not charity on the part of the employer.

In other words, the fact that a person with a disability has a particular job is not because the employer thought “it’s a nice thing to do” or because of external incentives (like tax breaks, although these may help in the short-term). The individual with a disability has the job because they have or can be taught skills that an employer needs to help their business run more effectively, operate more efficiently, provide better customer service, develop or continue producing good products, branch out, and/or make more money.

In return for the benefits to the employer, the individual with disabilities becomes a contributing member of the workforce with the same rewards as employees without disabilities. (i.e., a paycheck and any other benefits offered to other employees in that workplace as well as new social connections and all the other benefits of having real work for real pay).



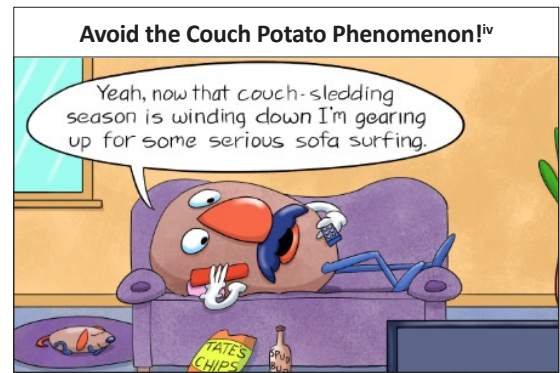
Because he earns real wages in his customized job, this man is contributing to the economic well-being of his community.ⁱⁱⁱ

How Are People with Disabilities Affected by Real Work for Real Pay?

People with disabilities are affected by real work for real pay in the same way as people without disabilities are. Work improves quality of life in many ways. These ways, all of which are confirmed by research, include but are not limited to:

- Greater financial resources so that the wage-earner can purchase better (or even more) goods and services to meet their needs and wants;
- Better physical and mental health as compared to people who are unemployed;
- More social connections (some of which can develop into meaningful friendships outside of work);
- Improved self-esteem;
- Increased independence; and
- Personal growth and development as new skills are learned and applied.

For people with disabilities, an added benefit is that they do not “fall off the cliff” after completing their public school experiences to become another unemployment statistic who is relegated to a life of poverty.



The Legal Basis for Customized Employment

Federal regulations hold the force of federal law because they explain how the federal government plans to carry out a federal law. They usually contain more detail than the law itself, including identifying what can happen if the laws are violated.

You are probably already familiar with one federal law, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), but may not realize that the Code of Federal Regulations that resulted from that law contains much more information. This information applies not only to the role of the federal Department of Education but to state departments of education and local boards of education as well if they want to receive federal funding for special education.

The basis for customizing employment can also be found in federal law as well as the Code of Federal Regulations. [Appendix A](#) provides two important definitions as they are stated in federal regulations.

Competitive Integrated Employment. The first relevant definition in Federal Regulations is of **Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)**. This is an important concept because it requires that a person with a disability make at least minimum wage. In positions comparable to employees without disabilities who have a higher starting salary than minimum wage, people with disabilities must receive the prevailing wage for their job, too. It is illegal for them to start for a lower wage per hour.

Competitive integrated employment also means that, if the individual is self-employed, they earn an income comparable to the income received by individuals without disabilities doing similar entrepreneurial work.

The location of competitive integrated employment is also clearly spelled out in the law and regulations. Employees with disabilities must interact on a regular basis with co-workers, supervisors, customers, and vendors without disabilities to the same extent as other employees without disabilities in comparable positions. Therefore, the workplace must be inclusive and it is not legal to segregate any employee with a disability.



This team of graphic designers works together almost every day. Everyone is paid the same amount for the same or comparable responsibilities.^v

Customized Employment. The second relevant definition in Federal Regulations is of **Customized Employment**. The components of the federal definition of customized employment were already listed earlier in plain language as characteristics of the “right job for a person with a disability”. What is critical to this definition, which also appears in [Appendix A](#), is that *customized employment requires that the individual with a disability has competitive integrated employment*.

Therefore, volunteerism, unpaid internships, group supported employment, sheltered workshops, day habilitation programs, and other examples of people with disabilities earning no or subminimum wages, are not appropriate examples of customized employment at all.²

Who May Need Customized Employment?

People with disabilities who benefit from customized employment are those who 1) have been determined “unemployable” in the past, 2) who have had difficulty obtaining or maintaining employment, 3) who have been consistently underemployed, or 4) who are still in situation where they do not have CIE.

A determination that someone cannot work “before the fact” is totally misguided because, with the right job match, assistive technology, and other supports, both the state and federal government expect that “everyone can work.” It may take time to be able to use the technology and learn the tasks an employer needs done – or to become an entrepreneur and become self-employed – but the outcome of CIE can be achieved for all especially if aspects of finding and/or keeping a job are customized.

²Subminimum wages (also called a 14C waiver) are still allowed but only after all other means, including customizing employment, have not been successful after multiple attempts.

Past services by public and private employment supports providers have focused on traditional jobs. [Appendix B](#) contains a table comparing and contrasting traditional employment services and Customized Employment. In this manual, we are using the term “customizing employment” because Customized Employment is a specific multi-step process to develop an individualized job specification for a specific individual in a specific business that is still a win-win for both the jobseeker and the employer. We are using the term “customizing employment” to refer both to Customized Employment as defined in law as well as in situations in which obtaining and maintaining employment of a person with a disabilities may include a combination of traditional (i.e., more independent) and customized (i.e., more individualized supportive) approaches to getting and keeping a job.



At this time, stop to look over [Appendix B](#). As you compare and contrast each step from assessment to employment outcome, consider where the individual with a disability is likely to, or already has, encountered difficulty with the traditional approach. Then see if customized employment services as described – in whole or in part – may result in sustained employment outcomes for that individual. If you decide that all of the customized employment services apply, you will be working toward **Customized Employment** for that individual. If you decide only some of the customized employment services apply, and the individual can adequately reach their employment goals in the traditional way, then you are customizing only one or more aspects of their employment to achieve success.

You and the person you are supporting in finding real work for real pay are the only ones who can decide how much customization you need now or in the future.

The bottom line is (1) no one should predetermine who can work for at least minimum wage without giving them chances to work if they want to and (2) no one should use the nature or severity of an individual’s disability as an excuse to prevent their employment in a job that is a good match for their strengths, interests, preferences, and so on.



Musicians can earn a living too (although some may also need a day job to make ends meet).^{vi}

A Word about Loss of Public Benefits

Working for minimum wage or higher does not affect public benefits in a negative way. In fact, it can be said that almost everyone will always make more money doing paid work than if their sole source of income is SSI (Supplemental Security Income) or SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance).



One of your first jobs in attempting to secure real work for real pay for an individual with a disability is to learn about options that are available through the Social Security Administration's *Ticket to Work*³ or *Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS)*⁴ programs. Both of these programs, however, require you to work with a qualified agency. **Appendix C** is a table comparing these two federal programs. In short, both allow individuals who receive SSI to transition to employment and still maintain some of their benefits such as health care.

In addition, people receiving social security benefits may be able to claim an Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE) for example, transportation required to work. This is another work incentive designed to assist people with disabilities in paying for expenses that are needed to work.

There is also a new savings option called an Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE)⁵ account that you and the person with a disability need to learn about. You can also participate in Ticket to Work and PASS, and open an ABLE account at the same time!

Here are just a few facts about these options so that you are motivated to look into them more seriously:

- With Ticket to Work, you may not have to re-establish eligibility for Social Security benefits if initial attempts at employment do not work out. There are generous time limits for being able to resume benefits during a trial work period (which may involve several jobs). In other words, during a "trial work period," an individual may have earnings and still collect benefits.

It is a myth that a person with a disability can only work a certain number of hours or must work at subminimum wages in order to preserve their public benefits. Besides, if they have the "right job," they may not need public benefits at all!

³Learn about Ticket to Work at <https://choosework.ssa.gov/>

⁴Learn about the Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) at <https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/pass.htm>. PASS helps former employees return to work.

⁵Learn more about Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) account at <https://www.ablenrc.org/>

- With PASS, a person with a disability who receives SSI benefits and works may set aside the countable portion of their wages (in other words, not have their SSI reduced) to pay for approved PASS expenses.
- With an ABLE account, you can save up to \$15,000.00 per year and up to \$100,000.00 total without affecting your social security at all as long as you use these savings to achieve a better life experience. What is a better life experience? As long as you can justify your withdrawal from this account in terms of how the quality of your life improved as a result of spending money you've saved in your ABLE account, you – the person with a disability who has that account – can decide how that improvement in the quality of your life is defined.

These are not new options but they are not as well-publicized as they could be. Unfortunately, the myths about how older public benefits programs were affected by this federal poverty-based program (i.e., you will have to return a dollar to Social Security for every two dollars you make over the minimum no matter what and may lose your health benefits, too) continues to overshadow the current supports available for people with disabilities who want to – and should – work.



To learn more, you should visit archived webinars⁶ or sign up for new *Work Incentive Seminar Events (WISE)*⁷ offered by the Social Security Administration and/or for webinars offered by the ABLE National Resource Center.⁸ There are also periodic workshops (some of which are recorded) offered by various groups such as The Arc of CT and many YouTube videos on all three topics from reliable sources such as federal and state governments.

Before making any decisions, however, you also should contact the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services within the CT Department of Aging and Disability Services⁹ to receive “Benefits Counseling.”



Logo of the CT State Department of Aging and Disability Services which provide benefits counseling.

⁶Archived Work Incentive Seminar Event (WISE) webinars can be found at <https://choosework.ssa.gov/webinars-tutorials/webinar-archives/index.html>

⁷To sign up for a Work Incentive Seminar Event (WISE), go to <https://choosework.ssa.gov/wise/>

⁸For new and archived ABLE webinars, go to <https://www.ablenrc.org/resources/webinars/>

⁹You can find out how to access Benefits Counseling at <https://portal.ct.gov/AgingandDisability/Content-Pages/Programs/Benefits-Counseling>.

Don't Give up!

Getting hired these days is difficult for everyone. Unemployment rates are still high and have gotten higher as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some employers have not had good experiences hiring people with disabilities – maybe because the person was placed there without appropriate supports or because human services staff interfered with the operations of the business or industry. Some employers adhere to the principle of “last in, first out *but* the person who had been there the longest gets hired back first” in the event of lay-offs. If employers are in the position of hiring back former staff, they are not likely to be willing to hire someone totally new to their workplace. Other employers lack knowledge of how disabilities can affect the hiring process and do not give an otherwise qualified candidate a chance.



Some bosses just aren't very nice.

Some employers also harbor discriminatory attitudes. The general experience of employment specialists is that people with disabilities are not the only ones who experience challenges in such workplaces. Why would anyone want to work for someone (unless totally desperate) who does not want you, does not value your contributions, makes your daily work life difficult, or discriminates against you when there are other employers who will value your contributions?

Self-employment

If you are considering self-employment or other entrepreneurial venture, keep in mind that the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics found that some 20% of small business fail within their first year and some 50% fail within five years of opening. While there are many advantages to working for yourself such as more flexible hours and being your own boss, there are many disadvantages. These include:

- Start-up costs can be expensive and individuals with disabilities who do not have established credit may have difficulty getting a small business loan. They also may not have enough funds in an ABLE account or enough friends who are willing to loan money to do this themselves. Independent attempts to raise capital through crowd-funding (e.g., through such services as GoFundMe¹⁰, Kickstarter¹¹, or similar on-line platforms¹²) is



“The Sharks give budding entrepreneurs the chance to secure business deals that could make them millionaires.” (Source: <https://abc.com/shows/shark-tank>, 8/16/21)

¹⁰<https://www.gofundme.com/>

¹¹<https://www.kickstarter.com>

¹²This is not an endorsement of any particular crowd-funding platform. The above websites are for informational purposes only.

risky because 1) you are sharing your business idea with others who may “borrow” it and 2) you may not receive enough contributions to meet your fundraising goal. Your financial goal should also include the costs of refunds to donors if your business fails or interest payments if it succeeds.

- Changes in the market results in less financial security.
- Slow sales negatively can affect your income and there is no guarantee of a regular paycheck.
- You will have to pay for your own benefits.

Unfortunately, it may take many attempts to find a welcoming and flexible employer but the point is that they do exist. And they are often looking for someone who not only can fill an existing position effectively but can meet unmet needs they didn’t even realize they had. Meeting unmet needs of employers is what the true essence of **Customized Employment** is all about.

Because there are so many new ways to align personal strengths, interests, preferences, and other characteristics with real jobs, you will help assure that employment of people with disabilities is only limited, like it is for everyone else, by the overall economy.

Resources for Additional Information:

- Griffin-Hammis Associates (2021). Creating Communities of Economic Cooperation: Educate, Demonstrate, Change, Sustain™. Author. <https://www.griffinhammis.com/>
- TransCen, Inc. (2017). Career and Workforce Development: Meaningful Work, Community Inclusion. Author. <https://www.transcen.org/>
- Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) and the Youth Technical Assistance Center (Y-TAC) (2017). The Essential Elements of Customized Employment for Universal Application. Downloadable from: http://wintac-s3.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/topic-areas/ta03_IntCompetEmpl/Essential-Elements-of-Customized-Employment-for-Universal-Application%20Rev%207-17.pdf





Part 2 - Possible Results of Job Customization

There are numerous results of a job customization process that are possible. Here are a few that are provided only as examples to get your creative juices flowing. Remember that the most important thing is to find what works for a jobseeker with a disability is what aligns with what they want as well as their strengths, interests, preferences, and other qualities that can make a number of creative options – customized and individualized specifically for them – the “right job.”

Customized Employment Options

Carved Jobs: Carved jobs involve job descriptions that are based on tasks derived from a single traditional job.

Example: Janie loves using the shirt folding device at the department store where she works. She learned to use it very quickly and gets great satisfaction from her neatly folded products sold in a variety of departments (e.g., sporting goods and the children’s, junior’s, men’s, misses’, and women’s clothing departments). Janie, however, gets confused by the various sizes and has difficulty placing the folded shirts in the correct areas. The solution:

A “job carve” where she is only responsible for shirt folding and other sales clerks are responsible for correctly displaying the results according to size.



Job carves can be common practice in some businesses and industries (B/Is) to accommodate workplace efficiency with nondisabled employees.

Negotiated Jobs: Negotiated jobs are job descriptions based on tasks derived from a variety of jobs.

Example: A large insurance company has both an incoming and outgoing mail department as well as an intradepartmental mail system. Clerical staff from multiple departments pick up and deliver mail to and from the mail department. They also prepare intradepartmental mail, located in a centralized area within each department, for mail department clerks to pick up and deliver once incoming and outgoing mail is processed. Clerical staff also use the “sneaker system” of running messages from one department to another when time is of the essence.

Jamal was hired to do all three jobs by making multiple circuits each day to five separate departments and the mailroom so there is a continuous pick-up and drop-off of mail to all five departments throughout the day. This system allows clerical staff to focus on clerical tasks within their departments more efficiently because a corporate time study showed that much time was wasted during the day due to the mail-related errands each ran throughout the day.^{viii}



Created jobs: Job descriptions based on unmet needs of a work setting. Employers themselves may not be aware of unmet needs that slow down production or services. Examples are overflowing in-baskets, missed deadlines, etc.

Example: Charles was hired by a medical office in a created job intended to improve patient satisfaction. His tasks include greeting patients as they come in, handing them a clipboard with the forms they need to complete and directing them to take an immediate seat to fill them out, taking the clipboards and patient insurance cards to the front desk when the forms are completed, returning the insurance cards to the patients, leading patients to the correct examining rooms when it is their turn, telling patients they can bring any magazines (or, in the case of children, toys) with them to the examining room, and cleaning up the examining rooms when the patients are done with their appointments.

Not only has patient satisfaction improved because, they do not have to stand in line upon arrival or when returning their forms or dealing with insurance, but the efficiency of all staff has improved so that the practice has grown and another medical professional was hired to provide patient care.



Patients in a waiting room. The man in the hat is waiting for Charles to bring the forms he needs to complete. The man with the tie is waiting for Charles to take him to the examination room when the nurse is ready.^x

Contract jobs: Instead of being on a business’s payroll, contract jobs are carved, negotiated or created job descriptions performed under a contract with a host business. Contract jobs benefit both the contractor and the individual with a disability.

Example: Chin is an entrepreneur who works under contract with a number of restaurants to prepare containers for take-out. Each day, he and his driver go to 15 different places that sell food on the main street of his home town. Chin enters each establishment independently and puts together pizza and other paper boxes for take-out meals or dining-in customers’ leftovers. Contractors have provided a work space for him in the food preparation area so he comes into contact with restaurant staff the entire time he is working and he puts his finished products in the same storage area each restaurant staffs have always used during their shifts. He is done with his work when the storage area is filled.

Chin’s work has been timed so that he can guarantee being at each establishment within a specific time period each day because of how long it takes him to fulfill his contract at the previous place plus the time it takes for him to get to the next restaurant. This, as well as the number of containers he is to prepare each day, is specified in each of his 15 contracts.

Although he is paid at a “by-the-piece” (i.e., per unit) rate, he makes well over minimum wage per hour. Contractors save time and money because Chin’s products can be used during particularly busy times, customers turn over more quickly, and, in the three single proprietor establishments, owners do not have to come in as early or stay as late to do this themselves.



Pizza boxes Chin has assembled under contract with the owner.^x

Micro-enterprises: Micro-enterprises are small businesses based on the unmet needs of a local market.

Example: Nick Glomb's dream was to be a restaurateur so, with some help from his family and friends, he acquired a mobile hotdog cart and is able to serve, weather permitting, one of America's favorite foods in various locations in his town. He also provides food at special events throughout the state. His business is called "Family & Friends Roadside Cart."

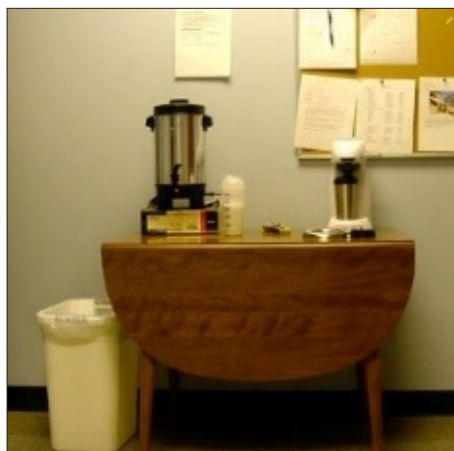


Nick poses for a photo next to his roadside cart in between customers.^{xi}

Businesses within businesses. As this term implies, it is when an individual is granted space within another business to operate a different business that benefits the customers of both.

Example 1: Cara had work experience in a coffee shop when she was still in her public-school transition program. She loved making coffee in the big pots, taking and filling customers' orders for coffee, and handling the cash register.

Cara did not want to work at someone else's coffee shop, though, so her team was able to negotiate with a small Chamber of Commerce office for her to have a business-with-a-business. The Chamber of Commerce office was located on a busy street in a small strip mall. Cara's proposal was to put up a coffee station and serve customers who had business with that office. Soon, not all of her customers were looking for services from the Chamber of Commerce because word quickly spread. Now, she has a strong customer base from other businesses in the strip mall as well as members of the public who will go out of their way for a freshly brewed cup of coffee.



Cara's coffee station in her local Chamber of Commerce office.^{xii}

Cara has since acquired more coffeemakers and a small refrigerator for fresh milk and cream. She pays a small monthly fee to the Chamber as rent for her space and, of course, provides the two-person staff with free coffee on request. The Chamber benefits from Cara's fees as well as increased traffic to their office and a greater opportunity to serve their community.

Example 2: Maya had enjoyed making and stringing beads since she was a little girl. As she got older, she started to be more aware of fashion jewelry and was no longer content to use any old bead stringing kit. She discovered a section of a craft store that was completely dedicated to many types of beads and other materials needed to make everything from necklaces to earrings.

After taking the free course offered by that craft store, reinforced by a course she took at a local community college in jewelry making, she began producing many beautiful pieces. With a little help, she was able to approach a number of businesses near her home and offer them 15% of every sale after taxes to display and sell her goods. Maya needed help to maintain her own records which one of the store owners who had known her for years was happy to provide for another 20% of her sale after taxes. This left her with 65% to purchase new materials and pay herself minimum wage for the hours she actually works.



An example of Maya's earring and her traveling display case. ^{xiii}

Social enterprises. A social enterprise is a business that has at least two goals: 1) to make a profit and 2) to serve some primary social goal.

Example 1: Probably the most famous social enterprise is Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream¹³ which started as a small ice cream factory in a renovated gas station in Burlington, Vermont.

The two owners grew their social enterprise and eventually sold it as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Unilever that operates in many states. However, the company has an independent Board of Directors that assures its original



¹³Learn more about Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream at this website: <https://www.benjerry.com>

three-pronged mission is sustained: 1) selling fantastic ice cream in a growing repertoire of flavors and content, 2) making money, and 3) as a social enterprise that funds projects for social good.¹⁴

Example 2: Hanna grew up in the midst of housing instability and food insecurity. Her idea for a social enterprise was, with her family, to open a bakery and also serve coffee. At the end of the day, leftovers (including hot coffee) would be delivered to homeless people and shelters in her community.¹⁵



Other entrepreneurial options. Other forms of customized employment involve individual, family, or community based entrepreneurial ventures.



At this time, stop a moment to watch two videos representing these types of entrepreneurial opportunities. Right click on a link and then left click on the Open Hyperlink option in the drop-down menu to access it.

The first video is about a social media and marketing business called “Will & Wit, LLC” run by Carly Bobenski.¹⁶ You can access her video, in which she explains why and how her business got started, here: <https://www.facebook.com/1774152072834807/videos/1862427374007276>.

The second video is about “Poppin’ Joe’s™ Gourmet Kettle Korn” in which Joe Steffy is the sole proprietor.¹⁷ You can watch a short video describing how this customized employment option was developed for him and the creative way in which it is operated using trained staff and a mentor Joe hires himself: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUaapE7FfAM>. Two well-known professionals associated with Customized Employment, Michael Callahan of Mark Gold & Associates and the late David Hammis of Griffin-Hammis & Associates, LLC, both discuss what this customized employment opportunity has done for Joe.

¹⁶Learn more about Will & Wit, LLC, at this website: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/WillnWit/>. Ms. Bobenski explains her business

¹⁷Learn more about Poppin’ Joe’s™ Gourmet Kettle Korn <https://www.poppinjoes.org/>

Customizing Parts of the Employment Process – Before, during, and/or after

Here are some examples of customization without technically being Customized Employment:

Customized assistance in applying for work. With customized assistance in applying for work, an individual with a disability may receive a customized introduction to the business or industry after a tentative match has been made. Interviews may be waived, a visual resume or, videos may be used, and/or someone may accompany the person to an interview. There are other ways to customize assisting a jobseeker in applying for work.

Example 1: Jake was too nervous to participate in a standard interview at the nursing home where his grandmother worked. He knew he tended to speak too loudly, fidgeted too much, and had a difficult time when asked to sit for any length of time keeping his hands to himself. So, his grandmother, who knew he was totally capable of fulfilling all of the requirements of the nursing home’s job specification for an orderly, made an appointment with human resources to introduce Jake. At the same time, she made arrangements for common orderly tasks to be available for him to do during what amounted to a ***working interview***.

Jake eagerly demonstrated his skills in transporting patients carefully from their rooms to the cafeteria. He also cleaned one of the rooms while the patient was at lunch. This included changing the linen. After, he rearranged the linen closet and wiped down banisters in the hallway. Given this personal introduction and success in his working interview, and an open orderly position, Jake was hired on the spot.¹⁸

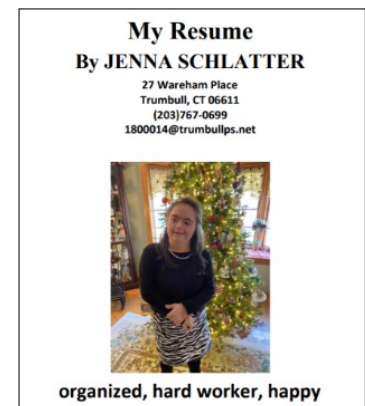


Example 2: Visual artists typically use a portfolio to demonstrate their artistic talent and skills. There are many reasons to use a portfolio and, for example, a visual resume for someone with a disability.

Example 3: It also is becoming more and more popular to submit a video to employers to demonstrate specific skills. An example would be of interpersonal skills or samples of marketing campaigns. Jobseekers with disabilities can use this strategy, too.

Some individuals with disabilities may have challenges with traditional application forms or have difficulty putting together a written resume. An option for them in applying for an existing position (possibly in addition to dictating answers to application questions for someone else to fill out) is to present a visual resume.

See [Appendix D](#) for an example of a visual resume for Jenna who is a fashionista. The cover of her visual resume is shown in the image to the right. In her transition program, she learned most skills required for working in a retail clothing shop and has her heart set on working in one. She is able to speak to her resume if she needs to have a formal interview. She is able to give another copy to her interviewer so they can follow along and ask her more questions about each illustration. Note that this is only an example of one of many ways to be introduced to a potential employer.



The Employer adapts a position to better accommodate an individual employee. In this situation, an individual with a disability is hired in a traditional manner but then receives customization by the employer.

Example 1: Michael was originally hired with a unique job description to meet his employers' need at a particular time during the day. He worked in a gourmet food store that also sold gourmet take-out and eat-in breakfasts and lunches. His job after the morning rush was to do some fifteen separate tasks. These included busing the tables; putting up chairs to wash the floor; restocking the deli; running the dishwasher; putting the chairs back down; wrapping clean silverware in napkins to set the table; putting fresh flowers that were delivered daily in table vases; restocking sugar packets, etc. Each of these tasks has its own complicated set of steps and Michael quickly became overwhelmed even though he knew



Michael hard at work as a dishwasher.

how to do each task individually. When he was overwhelmed, though, he would sit and refuse to work. This was complicated by the fact that Michael was a familiar face to many customers and enjoyed chatting them up instead of working.

Rather than let him go, the store owners decided they would hire other help in the morning and change Michael's hours to the busy late morning through mid-afternoon lunch rush. Then, his job was to wash dishes where he would have limited customer contact to those approaching the deli only (the dishwasher was behind the deli counter) and those were quick exchanges. He would still be working with the deli staff who could provide ongoing encouragement, assistance, and friendly bantering while serving as good role models. To increase Michael's hours, another local restaurant, with a different customer traffic flow, hired him to do their dishes, too.

Example 2: Isaac was be hired by a Big Box store as a Cart Pusher. During down times, most people in this job position assist salesclerks with straightening out merchandise ("facing") or performing general custodial duties. Management decides to eliminate merchandise facing and some custodial duties for Isaac after observing his obvious dissatisfaction and poor performance on these other tasks. Because he was otherwise a great worker, getting compliments from customers he greeted in the parking lot, the manager added a new feature of providing customer carrying and car-loading assistance to those with bags, with large boxes, or who request help. The manager also assigned Isaac to help out on the loading dock even though that's not what most Cart Pushers do when not dealing with carts.



Isaac proudly posing in his cart-pusher's uniform and hard at work.

Customized On-Going Support. Customized long-term supports may involve phone contact, monthly coffee breaks with management, regular drop-ins, or Skype/Zoom by a job coach hired by the family through self-directed services. This employee may be a direct hire or employed by an agency the individual and/or family has chosen. The role of this person is to be available to problem-solve, provide short-term re-training, or otherwise step back in to sustain employment.

Example: One of the reasons Aisha’s manager wanted to keep Aisha on as an employee is that he – the manager – got support whenever there was an issue. This was not the case with other Big Box employees!

Aisha had support staff a phone call away if there were any problems with her work. There were three times when this was necessary. One was when the company changed its time-keeping system and Aisha needed more direct instruction to learn how to use it than the other employees did. Paid staff went in on a short-term basis to teach and re-teach how she should use the new time-keeping system.



A manager consulting with support staff by Skype.

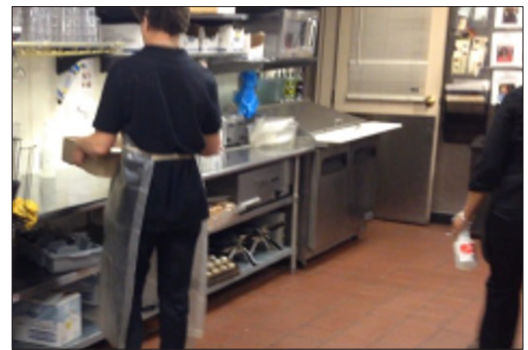
Second was when there was a change in management and the new manager wanted to hire all her old staff in her new location. Staff went in to explain how long Aisha was working and that, to let her go, would cause an undo hardship related to her disability. The new manager retained her.

Third was during the holiday season when temporary staff (including immature high school students) were brought in to help with the shopping crowds. Aisha became upset when she noticed she was doing all the work while her “assistant” played on his cell phone. So Aisha intervened, the high school student filed a complaint, staff stepped in to resolve the issue by teaching Aisha to go to his supervisor with any complaints, and the supervisor explained to the student that, even though Aisha was not the student’s supervisor, he (the manager) did not expect any reports about slacking off or the teen would lose his job.

Altering the Environment. Altering the environment means anything from extending the definition of reasonable accommodations to maximizing use of both high- or low-tech assistive technology to improve employees' independence.

Example 1: Shane got a job in a kitchen of a large chain restaurant. Because of the size of the kitchen, other employees were not always nearby if he had a question about what to do next. Shane often needed to ask because he had difficulty remembering everything. The simple solution was to use the back of the refrigeration unit to post photos and checklists of what Shane needed to do that he could check himself.

Example 2. Eli, who has super sensitive hearing, had a difficult time focusing when the printing company he worked in got very loud. This happened whenever there were multiple rush jobs because many noisy machines ran at the same time and co-workers would shout over the machines to be heard. Although the company policy was “no headphones on the floor,” that rule was intended for people with typical hearing so they would notice if a machine jammed or some other production problem occurred. Since



Shane uses the visual images with descriptive directions taped to the back of the refrigerator in the right of this photo when he forgets what to do next or what his finished task should look like.

Eli could hear better than typical employees, it was a reasonable accommodation for him (and him alone) to wear headsets. “He needs them, you don’t” was how management explained Eli’s equitable accommodation to anyone who questioned this.

Example 3: Hiring someone whose disability can be channeled into an asset for the business can require some creativity on the part of a manager but that is exactly what happened when Chris worked with Sam, now known as “The Dancing Barista.”



Eli is always alert for any unusual noises but is comfortable now because the ambient daily noises are muffled.^{xiv}



At this time, stop a moment to watch this video of a Starbucks employee (Sam) who might have had a challenging time working in any other situation because of his movement differences.

[Autism barista or AKA dancing barista - Bing video.](#)

Notice how the music selected by the manager (Chris) complements his movement but how, despite Sam's movement differences, Sam is able to manage the details of filling a customer's order.

Conclusion

Part 2 of the Customized Employment Toolkit is included so you can see some of the many work opportunities for individuals with disabilities – customized in full or in part – so a jobseeker can obtain and sustain employment. As you go through the remaining parts of the Toolkit, remember you are only limited by your imagination, drive, and the same economy that affects everyone else. Nothing should be a barrier simply because a person has a disability, no matter how significantly their disability affects them in other aspects of life. Everyone deserves an opportunity to be a contributing member of society.



Part 3 - Getting Yourself Organized

This section of the *Customizing Employment: A Do-It-Yourself Toolkit for Families* contains helpful information to get yourself organized before attempting to develop a customized job for a jobseeker you know. As with many other components of this Toolkit, it relies on a strengths-based, person-centered planning process called *Charting the LifeCourse* and *Charting the LifeCourse Tools*.

You can learn more about the Charting the LifeCourse framework, which was developed by families to support individuals with disabilities and their families to “develop a vision for a good life, think about what they need to know and do, identify how to find or develop supports, and discover what it takes to live the lives they want to live.” Information about the LifeCourse framework and tools can be found at this website of the Institute for Human Development at the University of Missouri - Kansas City (UMKC): [LifeCourse Nexus – Exchange Knowledge | Build Capacity | Engage Collaboratively \(lifecoursetools.com\)](http://lifecoursetools.com)

Although Charting the LifeCourse processes and tools are applicable at any stage of life from diagnosis through old age, these tools are especially helpful in planning transitions from school to work or from being a couch potato to days filled with meaning. They, therefore, can be very applicable to customizing employment.

Deciding what supports you need

One of the first steps is deciding what supports you need right now and then returning to add to the information as you continue through this Toolkit. We will start by using the three buckets of supporting families developed by UMKC. Fillable buckets appear in [Appendix E](#).

Often, when we think of family supports, goods and services immediately come to mind. But there are two other buckets to consider as well. We will look at these first because they are essential to knowing what goods and services are actually needed.



Discovery and Navigation. The blue bucket is for “Discovery and Navigation.” You already added to this bucket by discovering (i.e., learning) about Customizing Employment in general (Part 1 of this Toolkit) and seeing how others navigated the process of customizing employment for specific individuals in whole or in part (Part 2 of this Toolkit).

Here are some other things to consider for your blue bucket as you pursue discovering more about customizing or customized employment and navigating the resources to actually achieving real work for real pay through customization. Most of the items fall into the category of your possible need for additional training information, strategies, and support:

- Information about the pros and cons of disclosing a jobseeker’s disability to employers and, if the decision is made to disclose, at what point in the employment process disclosure is likely to have the most positive impact.
- Information about more options and possibilities for employment that might be a better match for your jobseeker’s strengths, talents, interests, and preferences.
- More knowledge about best practices and values underlying the Employment First movement and specific strategies (and accommodations) likely to work best for the jobseeker of concern to you.
- Knowledge about how earning real pay for real money will always result in more financial assets and great stability for anyone.
- Knowledge about what supports/services might be helpful even as you do this yourself.
- Skills to navigate and access supports/services if and when you need them.
- Knowledge of state and federal laws and policies about people with disabilities and employment.
- How to advocate effectively for supports/services and policy change.

Connecting and networking. The next section of this Toolkit will go into things to put into your orange bucket, connecting and networking, in greater detail. For now, here are some things to consider that you may need in your orange bucket:

- Parent-to-parent support.
- Self-advocacy organizations for your jobseeker.
- Family organizations.
- Support for your jobseeker's siblings.
- Professional counseling.
- Non-disability community support.
- Families who have already been involved in customizing or customized employment for a jobseeker.

More information is available after the next section on the last bucket, Good and services, about building your social capital.

Goods and services. The last section of this Toolkit will go into goods and services, the green bucket, in more detail. These are the day-to-day tangible items or services – things we connect with to make daily lives possible and successful – that you use or buy from public and private organizations in your community. Public organizations include local, state or federal governmental agencies as well as private organizations open to the general public in your community. This is a short list of things to consider that you may need in your green bucket:

- Self/Family-Directed services
- Transportation
- Adaptive equipment
- Workplace modifications
- Financial assistance
- More training for the jobseeker (although on-the-job training is a large part of customizing employment because “pre- means never” as the late Lou Brown used to say)



At this time, stop a moment to look at the Connecticut's Official State Website at <https://portal.ct.gov>. Using the search feature, enter the words "Employment + Disabilities." Open random links on several pages and notice the number of state agencies involved with employment of people with disabilities. Examples include the CT Departments of Developmental Services, Aging and Disability Services, Labor, Social Services, and more! Relying on state services to assist with employment is complicated and can be very confusing about where to start first. Filling your blue and orange buckets first can better prepare you for this journey if you choose not to do-it-yourself.



Building Social Capital

Many families have isolated themselves over the years from opportunities to develop "social capital." Social capital includes meaningful interpersonal relationships (past, present, and future) and other lesser known members of a network that can support you and the jobseeker. Social capital includes family members, friends and acquaintances, and people who are paid to be in your life and the life of the jobseeker. Social capital has other applications for family members and individuals with disabilities to live good lives in the community (for example, having a place of one's own to call home) that are beyond the scope of this Toolkit.

Even if you feel you have a strong base of social capital, this section contains essential information to expand your social capital, as well as that of the jobseeker, for the purposes of employment. In fact, early research showed that the best sources of jobs for people with disabilities were people the family somehow knew.

Social capital also helps assure that people with disabilities are safer and more secure because of the increased number of people who know, like, and genuinely care about them. Even if it's uncomfortable to think about, having a good amount of social capital can help answer the questions many families have about who will be there for their student when they are gone.

**You Can Never
Have Too Much
Social Capital!**



For Prospective Jobseekers From Preschool Through High School. If your jobseeker has not completed their high school education, it is important to know that social capital can best be built through inclusion in general education classes. In their review of many studies, Taub & Foster (2020)¹⁹ concluded that “...postschool outcomes are improved when all students are provided the opportunity to learn alongside their peers. These outcomes support economic growth and stability, which will strengthen the larger society.” Articles they reviewed included ones specifically linking inclusive education to employment (p. 276). It is in learning side by side nondisabled classmates that students with disabilities – regardless of the nature or severity of their challenges -can model the behaviors of their nondisabled peers, practice some of the “public behaviors” needed in job settings, improve social and communication skills, and learn other skills beneficial to adult life.^{xv}



Students learning in a diverse classroom that includes students of different racial, ethnic, and cultural communities as well as a student with a disability

¹⁹See Taub, D., & Foster, M. (2020). Inclusion and Intellectual Disabilities: A Cross Cultural Review of Descriptions (p.276). International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education, 12(3), 275–281. Retrieved from <https://iejee.com/index.php/IEJEE/article/view/1090>

Additionally, activities with students without disabilities that are school- and community-sponsored are important so that their peers can build true relationships with each other. After all, students without disabilities may be the employers or support staff for your jobseeker/student of tomorrow and sometimes remain lifelong friends.

For prospective or current jobseekers receiving transition services from their public school. During the transition years, it is important for schools and families partner to build relationships with people in the community. These relationships can possibly continue to support jobseekers immediately and in the future. One place to support interactions with nondisabled peers is in a postsecondary environment like a college or university setting. In fact, data from the Think College National Coordinating Center on students with intellectual disabilities²⁰ clearly shows these students were more than twice as likely to be employed as students who did not participate in a Think College program and earned \$406.00 more per month than their counterparts who were employed.



At this point, stop and read the article in [Appendix F](#) called “Customized Employment Topics: Social Capital by Nancy Brooks-Lane, Walker Lane, and Katherine Inge. Reflect on your own social capital and that of the jobseeker. Social capital is the sum total of all the different kinds of relationships people have with one another.

Important for ALL. One of the things about anyone’s social capital is that most relationships do come and go over time. Networks change with various life stages and experience. It’s never too late to start reconnecting with former members of your network and building new social capital but the time to start is NOW! It is worth repeating that one can never have too much social capital.



In the next section are four separate ways for you and the jobseeker to build or enhance social capital. These

This table has intentionally been set for a romantic dinner for two but there is no guarantee the dinner will go as planned!

²⁰Sannicandro, T., Parish, S.L., Fournier, S., Mitra, M., & Paiewonsky, M. (2018). Employment, Income, and SSI Effects of Postsecondary Education for People with Intellectual Disability. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 123, 412-425. doi: 10.1352/1944-7558-123.5.412. PMID: 30198768.

tools for building social capital are important because people with disabilities and those who care about them have learned the hard way that a planned, intentional approach to developing social capital is one of the most effective ways to assure that those connections occur.

Marsha Forrest and Jack Pearpoint wrote years ago that you can compare social capital intentionality to the intention of having a romantic dinner. Despite the best of intentions – perfect meal, perfect wine, candlelight, kids out of the house – things can still go wrong (e.g., dinner wasn't ready on time, wine was spoiled, smoke detectors or sprinklers went off, the babysitter canceled). Hopefully, such an experience will not make you shy away from romantic dinners. It is the same with intentionality and social capital: **"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."** The difference with social capital is that the people with whom you initially connect may be able to connect you to others while not choosing to remain in your network whereas people typically don't expect romantic partners to introduce you to their replacements.

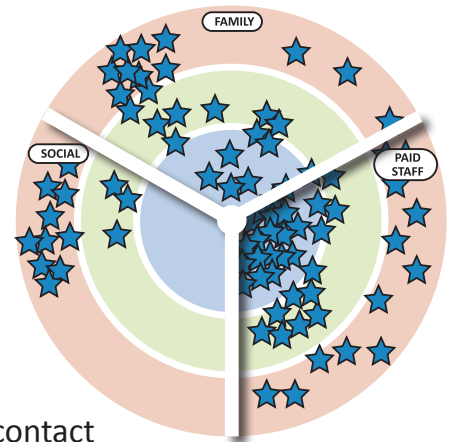
Tools for Building Social Capital

Tool 1: The Community Resource Map. The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition describes community resource mapping as a well-used strategy for determining, for a particular community, what resources exist and what resources are needed but may not exist. For the purposes of employment planning, this tool helps jobseekers and those who support them learn for themselves what types of resources are in their communities, how those resources can or should be accessed, where gaps exist and what could be done about them, and what specifically can be taught to students about accessing those resources. Community resources have their own networks that may contain people you can add to your own social capital, may be a source of information about employment, and may be places for a jobseeker to get paid or volunteer work experience to resume-build while waiting for the right job.



At this point, stop and complete the Community Resources Map in **Appendix G**. This map may help you identify community resources where you can develop relationships with those who work there. This map is also useful in making decisions about where the jobseeker will live now or in the future to access these resources as well as their job!

TOOL 2: Circle of Support. To the right, the illustration of a completed Circle of Supports shows what a circle of relationships looks like for too many people with disabilities. You can see that their connections may be heavily weighted toward people who are paid to be in their lives. They have few, if any, genuine friends and some people they consider friends may not really have the reciprocal and close relationship described necessary for true friendship.



Even extended families, in some situations, have minimized contact with the family of a jobseeker with disabilities for a variety of reasons (e.g., too many missed events due to challenges getting out of the house or maybe being embarrassed about the child's behavior at family gatherings). Some have been disinvited or, because of cultural beliefs, shunned. However, extended family members should still be added to the outer layer of a Circle of Support because of the potential to both reconcile past differences and make possible connections to employment opportunities.



At this point, stop and complete two of the Circle of Support diagrams in [Appendix H](#) with the jobseeker. Follow the directions carefully in deciding which person you can name (and represent by a dot, star, or stick figure) **really** fits in which part of the circles. Use your first copy to identify who is in your and the jobseeker's circle of support now and check whether their diagram resembles the one above. Use the second copy to identify people you and the jobseeker would **like** to have in the circle and use the next tools to identify ways to bring them in!

TOOL 3: Associational Mapping. An *Associational Map* was developed by community organizer, John McKight, and has been adopted by people in the world of disability services. The Associational Map is used to identify organizations and other groups in the community that may be of interest to the jobseeker or already share common strengths, interests, preferences, and skills of the jobseeker. Joining associations is one way to increase social capital and perhaps meet someone who is an employer or who knows an employer looking

to hire someone with your jobseeker's assets. These will be identified in the **One-Page Personal Profile** and the **LifeCourse Trajectory**, you will complete in Part 4 of this *Do-It-Yourself Handbook*.



With the jobseeker, go to the Associational Map found in [Appendix I](#) to identify specific opportunities in the jobseeker's community which offer possibilities for increasing the jobseeker's social capital through connections with community associations that align with their strengths, interests, talents, passions, and other assets. Sometimes, you and the jobseeker may find a category of associations that has not been explored before but could be during the Discovery phase of customizing employment described in Part 4.

Tool 4: Actions that Build Community. John and Connie Lyle O'Brien devoted their careers to supporting people with disabilities in achieving valued outcomes through person-centered planning. One of their products was this tool, *75 Actions That Build Community*, which John based on another community-building process geared toward the general population. It identifies 75 actions that can be taken by individuals with disabilities and/or their families to develop networks, acquaintances, and even friends in the community. Some of these actions may appear to duplicate those in the *Associational Map*. Think of these actions in terms of "how can I make a good impression" when attempting to join an existing group or meet other people not connected to community associations.



Complete the form in [Appendix J](#) while looking at your two copies of the Circles of Support diagrams you already completed. Identify possible ways to build relationships with specific people not already in your inner circle from the list of community-building actions. Instead of using this form as a checklist, actually write the names of individuals next to the action you intend to use and commit to completing at least one of those actions at least once or twice a week moving forward.

Effective collaboration with your network. According to the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities brochure, *The Discovery Process: A Path to Employment for All*, the benefits of a person-centered Discovery approach is an “evidence-based alternative to comparative, standardized assessments, and evaluations” with the following benefits:

- Newly found interests and skills of focus individuals can be identified. Even family members and others who think they know the jobseeker well can be surprised when an individual’s intense interest is not the area where they want to work.
- Decisions that someone is “unemployable” are challenged when employment is customized.
- Team member perspectives change. They see the unique skills, preferences, and support needs, and possibilities for an individual first.
- Agency representatives on teams become more familiar with the individual and with each other. As a result, team members develop a bond while working together and with the jobseeker and you. Examples of agency staff who might be good team members include representatives from the CT Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the CT Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) in the CT Department on Aging and Disability Services, the CT Department of Social Services (DSS), the CT Department of Labor (DOL), American Job Centers (AJC), provider agencies, and, if the jobseeker has not exited from special education services, school personnel.
- Individual Education Programs (IEPs) and Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) can be modified based on new information including learning strategies that work and training opportunities that lead to the individual’s desired employment outcome. SOURCE: http://flfcic.fmhi.usf.edu/docs/FCIC_FactSheets/FCIC_FactSheet_Discovery.pdf

Notice the heavy emphasis in this list (and the list just addresses one component of customizing employment!) on teams. Whether these teams consist of agency staff and/or members of your own social network (e.g., family, friends, people in your faith community, other people you are acquainted with in your neighborhood or the community), it will be most helpful for you to create a team to *support you* in “doing this yourself.” Why? Because the reality is, as human beings, we seldom do anything without others. Most of us are interdependent on others. To drive this point home, here are a few examples of the kinds of support many of us get from others:

- Building your own teams.** Most of the above examples have nothing to do with customizing employment but they hopefully emphasize your need to fill your second bucket (the orange one labeled Connecting & Networking) of support. To the right, there is an image of a tool you can use to assure that any meetings you have with others as you move toward customizing employment for a jobseeker are short, efficient, effective, and outcome-oriented. A fillable form of the tool, called the “Collaborative Team Meeting Agenda and Minutes,” can be found in [Appendix K](#). This tool also will be useful for the jobseeker to manage their own meetings with or without your help. Each feature is broken down and explained in the table in [Appendix L](#).

Only one form is used per meeting but the reverse side of the paper (or page 2 if you are taking minutes electronically) can be used for anything that does not fit on a line.

TOC < >

Learn About Potential Sources of Funding

Customizing employment for your jobseeker does not have to cost any money if you have time to devote to the process. Otherwise, available funding may depend on the agency that has services for which your jobseeker is eligible. The A.B.L.E. accounts to save money for jobseekers and the Social Security Administration's Ticket-to-Work and PASS programs were introduced in Part 1 of the Toolkit. Here are some additional funding sources for which your jobseeker may be eligible.

Medicaid Self-Directed Services. According to the official U.S. government website for Medicaid, [self-directed service delivery models](#) can be used "...to provide employment supports. In a self-directed model, individuals may hire their own job coaches and employment support staff, rather than relying exclusively on agency-based staffing models. This may be particularly useful as individuals seek to expand the pool of people who can provide employment supports and services to include friends, family members, co-workers and other community members that do not view themselves as part of the traditional Medicaid agency-based employment supports workforce."

These cannot be used if services are being provided by BRS and occasionally some other sources.



Under Medicaid, self-directed services delivery means that participants or, if applicable, their representatives:

- Retain decision-making authority over eligible services.
- Assure the service plan reflects the person-centered planning processes that will be described in *Part 4 – Discovery* of this Toolkit.
- Has an individual budget determined objectively by procedures established in Connecticut.
- Base the services they pay for using Medicaid funds on that individual budget.
- Recruit, hire, train, and supervise the people providing the services.
- Manage their own services, including changing how the funds are used in collaboration with the agency providing those funds.
- Receive some assistance (e.g., training in how the program works as well as rights and responsibilities; service broker/consultant like a case manager; a fiscal intermediary to pay those who actually provide the services; and access to an independent advocacy system).

- Maintain records of expenditures and comply with audits required by the government.
- Keep records of outcomes like obtaining and sustaining employment!

This may seem like a long list but the ultimate benefit is that the jobseeker/employee, or legally responsible party, maintains control and gets to direct how any customized employment supports will be used. Additionally, services are provided *specifically to the jobseeker/employee*.

What are eligible services? There are several options in CT. For each, the individual needs to be enrolled in Medicaid to be eligible. There is actually only one option that can be accessed to support employment directly but other options may be able to help support an eligible jobseeker, for example, in living in, or moving into, their own home.

Money Follows the Person

Money Follows the Person, for example, can pay for a number of services necessary for jobseekers currently living in certain institutional settings (including larger group homes) to move into an apartment or other place of their own to call home in the community. This waiver program could be helpful to eligible jobseekers in some of the following ways:

- Allowing the individual to move closer to a place of employment.
- Allowing the individual to move someplace where public transportation to get to and from work is more easily accessed.
- Providing home health services so the individual:
 - Eats healthy meals necessary to be the best employee.
 - Takes prescribed medications accurately and on time.
 - Has clean clothes to wear.
 - Gets enough sleep.
 - Has financial assistance to manage their benefits and money earned.
 - Lives in a clean and healthy environment.

Community First Choice

Community First Choice is similar in the types of functional assistance available to jobseekers except it is a program for those who are at risk for having to live in an institution. Moving from your family's or your own home to institutional care is not likely to result in the opportunity to continue working for many reasons. For both *Money Follows the Person* and *Community First Choice*, you would need to contact the CT Department of Social Services <https://portal.ct.gov/DSS/Lists/Programs-and-Services>. Some applications for different waiver programs can be found at [Programs and Services \(ct.gov\)](#).²¹

Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) are the Medicaid Waiver Services most likely to provide direct funding supports to eligible adults who need customized employment. In CT, the lead agency for the Home and Community Based Services Medicaid Waiver program, which has to be self-directed, is the CT Department of Development Disabilities (DDS). To be eligible for DDS services, the jobseeker must meet DDS eligibility requirements.



If you know for sure that the jobseeker is already eligible for DDS services, you can skip this box. If you are not sure, watch this brief video to learn what those requirements are: [Eligibility \(jwplatform.com\)](#). NOTE, however, the diagnosis of autism itself is no longer a criterion for DDS services unless the individual also meets the criteria for having an intellectual disability or Prader-Willi syndrome. If you believe the jobseeker is eligible for DDS services, application information can be found at [Eligibility for DDS Services \(ct.gov\)](#).

Regardless of whether the individual's HCBS waiver is the "Comprehensive Supports Waiver" or the "Individual and Family Supports Waiver," both provide vocational and employment supports that may apply to customizing employment. Email DDS.Waiver@ct.gov for more information.

Agency with Choice. If all of this seems too overwhelming, an alternative to Self-Directed Services is "Agency with Choice." In this option, you will need to look for an agency that "... will work with you to let you decide who is hired to work with you, how much to pay, and provide help to supervise and train your staff." The "Agency with Choice" model designates

²¹NOTE that "Services" is spelled incorrectly on this link. If it does not work, you can use <https://portal.ct.gov/DSS/Lists/Programs-and-Services?SearchKeyword=application>. If someone at DSS notices and corrects the error, you can also type "Application" in the search feature at <https://portal.ct.gov/DSS/Lists/Programs-and-Services>

the consumer or their family member as the “managing employer” while the Agency with Choice becomes the “common law employer of record.”

This means that the agency will be the employer of your staff. The agency must interview anyone you suggest but will have the final say about whether that person will actually be hired. All other decisions, such as determining the work schedule, managing requests for time off, what the daily support role is, provision of back-up support, and training, etc., are done collaboratively between the agency of choice and the individual. For more information, see [Agency With Choice \(ct.gov\)](https://www.ct.gov/choice).

As of March of 2021, only five of the 285 qualified vendors of DDS waiver services identify as an Agency with Choice. All are accepting new enrollees but none identify as providing Customized Employment. However, some actually are providing CE and others potentially could provide CE.

Waiver rates. Just to give you an idea, the March 2021 funding rates for individuals qualified for DDS Employment Initiatives.

EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES		
CAREER PLAN (10 HOURS MAXIMUM)		
SEI Staffing	\$55.00	Per Hour
DSO Staffing	\$46.62	Per Hour
IDV Staffing	\$34.00	Per Hour
Completed Career Plan	\$784.77	
Intensive Job Placement/Training		
SEI Staffing	\$55.00	Per Hour
DSO Staffing	\$46.62	Per Hour
IDV Staffing	\$34.00	Per Hour
Individual Wages (40 Hours Max)	\$11.25	Per Hour
Working Interview (40 Hours Maximum)		
SEI Staffing	\$55.00	Per Hour
DSO Staffing	\$46.62	Per Hour
IDV Staffing	\$34.00	Per Hour
Benchmark (Only for those with annual ISE authorization)		
Job Start		\$2K Max
3 Month		\$2K Max
6 Month		\$2K Max

Other information about waiver rates for day supports leading to employment can be found on the DDS website at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DDS/Operations_Center/2020/FY20_Funding_Guidelines.pdf.

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)

The CT BRS is one of several branches of the state's Department on Aging and Disability Services (ADS). At the time of this writing, BRS is rolling out a new service – Customized Employment – for individuals who are eligible for BRS services who would meet certain criteria and who are not currently receiving employment services from other state agencies. See <https://portal.ct.gov/DDS/Media/LatestNews2021/Customized-Employment-Curriculum> for more information about the interagency training to prepare support providers to implement CE effectively in the near future.

BRS now is technically the first agency of contact for employment services. As a result, its policies and procedures are changing so that they provide services to individuals previously considered unemployable. One thing to keep in mind, if you run into roadblocks with any state agency, is that you can always ask for a different case worker/counselor or go up the supervision ladder to assure that the jobseeker's desire to work is given full consideration.



A person in a suit showing a card that says REJECTED three times. ^{xvii}

When specifically seeking CE, there is a complex system for how BRS staff will determine whether a) the individual is eligible for BRS services in the first place and b) if the individual needs to have customized employment. Those jobseekers BRS may determine will need CE include:

- Individuals whose cases have been closed unsuccessfully by BRS in the past.
- Individuals who had been placed into jobs by BRS but who a) lost their job and b) whose primary reasons for losing their job included being unable to meet the employer's expectations for filling the position into which the person was hired.
- The traditional evaluations used for the individuals suggested the individual is not employable. This may be because there does not seem to be an existing job that the individual would be a good match for or because the individual would not be able to apply for/be hired with traditional BRS support.
- The individual has been in BRS's "job developmental phase" for more than 6 months without receiving an offer of employment.

Since state agencies change policies and procedures frequently either in response to federal

policies or state statute, it is a good idea to keep checking back periodically as needed.



Take a moment now to help your jobseeker reapply to BRS for services but continue to follow the procedures in this toolkit to do CE yourself. If you have successfully customized employment so that your jobseeker currently has a job, you can always politely turn down BRS's offer of involvement. If your jobseeker is only working part-time, schedule meetings with BRS when they are not at work. If you have not successfully established customized employment for your jobseeker, regardless of where you are in the process, you should still apply to BRS. Who knows? Their process may go more smoothly than yours in finding a suitable job for your jobseeker! NOTE: You do not have to reveal any of your activities to BRS other than providing considerable input into their Discovery and Job Planning processes. [Apply for Services \(ct.gov\)](https://www.ct.gov/brs/apply).

Additional Resources

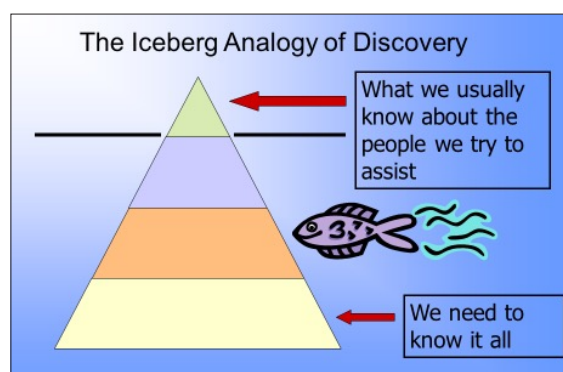
- Connecticut Family Support Network
[Home - CT Family Support Network \(ctfsn.org\)](https://ctfsn.org/)
- Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center <https://cpacinc.org/>
- National Gateway to Self-Determination (n.d.). What Is Self-Determination and Why Is It Important? [Self-Determination Wehmeyer.pdf \(ku.edu\)](https://www.ku.edu/~selfdetermination/Wehmeyer.pdf)
- Neighbours International <https://www.neighbours-international.com/communities-of-practice.html>
- Networking in Faith Communities. https://uconnuccedd.org/projects/faith_initiative/
- PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment
<https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/planning/preparing-employment.asp>
- PATH CT [Providing Hope, Support & Information to Families | PATH - Parents Available to Help, Inc \(pathct.org\)](https://pathct.org/)





Part 4 - The Discovery Process

The Discovery Process is a way of really focusing on who the jobseeker is, what they want, what they need to explore to learn more about their world, and what they gravitate toward. One way of thinking about Discovery is by using “The Iceberg Analogy.”²²



This analogy acknowledges that you already know many things about your jobseeker – how they act in some situations, what they do around you personally, and what you’ve been told by others. All of this is important information but people involved in CE have learned this barely scratches the surface. There is much more about every person that needs to be known in order to customize employment for them in a way that works for both them and their prospective employers. The way to get this information is through the Discovery Process.

“Just remember that sometimes the way you think about a person isn’t the way they actually are.”

-Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird

What is Discovery? Discovery is an alternative to formal vocational assessments. Formal vocational assessments compare one individual to a “norm” and reduce personal qualities to numbers that are compared. Instead, Discovery is a qualitative approach to use already-existing information about the person’s positive qualities or explore what could lead to new and helpful information. In customizing employment, the information gathered through Discovery allows for activities of typical life to be translated into possibilities for

²²Source: Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation’s Customized Employment Services (2008). CE Overview. Juneau: author. PowerPoint. <http://www.labor.state.ak.us/dvr/ceg.htm>

employment. Discovery seeks to answer a fundamental question, “Who is this person?” in a descriptive way that is framed positively. The process takes you away from what you think you know about the person and allows you to find out about who they actually are.



At this time, stop to look over [Appendix M](#). This is a plain-language document from the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities called *The Discovery Process: A Path to Employment for ALL*. Then look at TransCen’s *Positive Personal Profile – Discover* in [Appendix N](#). This template can guide you through the strengths-based and person-centered processes described next.

Strengths-based thinking and descriptions. A strengths-based approach is essential. This means you have to forget all the things you know the jobseeker cannot do and focus on what they can do. You need to forget all the negative things others have said about the jobseeker and start from scratch. You need to acknowledge their interests, preferences, and best ways to support them in being their best. You need to learn how to put anything the person is currently not able to do independently or does not know about into needs for support and possibilities. Here are some concrete examples:

Instead of saying things like:	Say these kinds of things instead:
Can’t get dressed independently	<i>Can get dressed when given help with fasteners</i>
Approaches and touches people inappropriately /invades personal space/ Has no friends	<i>Wants to have relationships with others just like we all do and it’s okay if those relationships look a little different</i>
Has no safety skills	<i>Likes to explore</i>
Can’t communicate	<i>Communicates in their own way; would benefit from alternatives to speech</i>
Has tantrums	<i>Does well when motivated, engaged, doing things they like</i>

Using deficit-based language (such as can't, won't or other negative phrasing) results in a sense of hopelessness and resignation – not the mindset needed to customizing employment. By reframing these descriptors in strengths-based language, the focus is not on the individual's disability but rather on what could be taught, how it could be taught, what they may need for support (e.g., assistive technology including adaptive equipment), and how otherwise to meet their needs. A different set of questions can now be asked. Here are some examples:

So, when you say this like this:	<i>The questions that follow are like this:</i>
Can get dressed when given help with fasteners	<i>What would it take to teach total independence in dressing? Can adaptive clothing/fasteners be used? Can the schedule be arranged so needing this help is not devaluing?</i>
Wants to have relationships with others just like we all do and it's okay if those relationships look a little different	<i>What social capital can accept the individual "as is?" What strategies can others use to make experiences positive for everyone? What environments lead to the best outcomes?</i>
Likes to explore	<i>How can this person explore safely? Is there assistive technology that can help?</i>
Communicates in their own way; would benefit from alternatives to speech	<i>What alternatives to speech have been tried? Which met with the most success? What is out there now that is new? Who will teach the individual how to use it?</i>
Does well when motivated, engaged, doing things they like	<i>What motivates and engages the person? What else might motivate and engage them that we haven't discovered yet? How much can we avoid things they don't like? What can we teach for coping strategies?</i>

Once you are able to reframe everything you know about the jobseeker in strengths-based terms, and you have a better idea of what you want to document during the Discovery process, the next step is to do some person-centered planning. To start, you will use two tools from the Charting the LifeCourse Nexus, a project of the Institute for Human Development, University of Missouri - Kansas City (UMKC).

Person-Centered Tools

One-Page Personal Profile. An image of a One-Page Personal Profile appears below.

Everyone has strengths and some things others admire about them. These get recorded in the blue rectangle. For some people, this list may be short and sweet. Examples are “Whole face brightens and body relaxes when around her sister,” “Expresses dislikes by frowning,” or “Has beautiful hair.” Others’ blue rectangles will need to be filled with summary statements like “Can do most activities of daily living (ADLs) independently,” “Can dial cellphone, especially 911, independently,” or “Had group of 3 others in school who loved hanging out together during breaks.”

The form is titled "ONE PAGE LifeCourse PROFILE" and features a small circular icon with a person and a gear. It consists of four main sections:

- Blue rectangle (top left):** Labeled "What people admire about me/My strengths".
- Green rectangle (bottom left):** Labeled "What's important to me (my preferences, interests, passions)".
- Orange rectangle (bottom middle):** Labeled "How best to support me".
- Pink vertical rectangle (right):** Labeled "What does NOT work for me".

At the bottom, it says "Developed by the UNMC Institute for Human Development, UCEDD." and "May 2016 REV UCEDD UCEDD 2017".

The green square describes what is important to the individual (not what you think should be important to them). These include preferences, interests and passions that you currently know about. The orange square is a heads up about how best to support the individual and, for those who have significant behavioral challenges that are triggered, the pink vertical rectangle is where to list what does not work for them.

The benefits of using a one-page profile are: 1) it consolidates the most important information about the jobseeker in one place; 2) the single page can be inserted “as is” or in a modified format in other documents or folder such as a Transition Portfolio, a visual resume (described in Part 2 of this Toolkit as one of the Ideas for Moving Forward); and 3) as a way to introduce the jobseeker to anyone who wants to know about them in positive terms.

²⁴Inge, K. (n.d.) Q & A on Customized Employment: Parent Questions Answered! Richmond: VCU RTC. https://worksupport.com/documents/Q%26A_parents_questions.pdf.



Choose a fillable or replicable form to take a first cut at developing the jobseeker's **One-Page Personal Profile**. You can find one example of a fillable copy of this in **Appendix O**. If you are not 100% comfortable with this particular format, you can find other one-page profile templates at <http://helensandersonassociates.co.uk/person-centred-practice/one-page-profiles/one-page-profile-templates/>.

Life Trajectory. There are two forms that document a person's life trajectory. They look like this:

Before completing these, know that, at first, the vision you have for CE needs to be based on the individual's One-Page Personal Profile and core values about Employment First and Everyone Can Work. The Discovery Process will let you know how accurate the vision is or how much more it should be refined when you get to Part 5 of this handbook. Here are a few cautions:

<p>Have high expectation tempered by reality</p>	<p>Ex. If Nathan is fascinated by trees but uses a wheelchair, the vision may better be phrased generally at first as in "Nathan will have a job where his knowledge about and passion for trees is useful." This does not rule out working in a cherry picker but it also leaves open the possibility that current technology for cherry pickers may not be able to accommodate Nathan's wheelchair.</p>
<p>Do not assume an area of interest is more than recreational or for the purposes of social communication</p>	<p>Ex. Mario talks constantly about the weather and has since preschool. When he was going into high school, his team was excited about the fact that there was a radio station and Mario could report the daily weather. Mario burst into tears at that meeting saying "But I don't want to talk about weather."</p>

As the Tip Sheet in the next STOP box says, “The Trajectory is designed to be used over and over again.” As time goes on, the vision for CE will become more and more refined as will what the individual doesn’t want (like reporting the weather or working in a radio station v. an initial vision to “avoid being a couch potato”).



Decide whether you want to start with the Exploring or the Planning form. Access the form at [Person Centered – LifeCourse Nexus \(lifecoursetools.com\)](https://lifecoursetools.com) by scrolling down the page until you see the images that look like the ones at the beginning of this section. Click on the image you want to use. There are also copies of each that appear in **Appendix P** along with a copy of the directions from the CT Department of Developmental Services website.²³ Read the directions before completing the Life Trajectory you decided to use. Then complete the Life Trajectory with the jobseeker and/or a team of people who know the jobseeker well.

Strategies for Discovery. There are many strategies for discovery. The common theme in each strategy is to keep it strengths-based and person-centered. Strengths-based does not mean ignoring the need for support. It means stating what type of support would be needed for the individual to do something. Your goal is using these strategies is to define the jobseeker’s ideal conditions of employment, learning characteristics, interests, preferences, contributions, task competence, and support needs.

Discovery strategies include:

- Interviewing the individual in their primary mode of communication and native language. What do they think are their strengths? The good ways in which others would describe them?
- Interviewing and asking strengths-based and person-centered questions of others who have known the person – past and present – as family, friends, neighbors.
- Interviewing and asking strengths-based and person-centered questions of others who have known the person – past and present – as paid staff. Sometimes, teachers who had the jobseeker in early years may remember a personality trait or interest that has not been obvious since but is waiting to be rediscovered.

²³<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DDS/family/ctlcexperiencesbooklet.pdf>, p.3

- Observing the individual at home in different rooms and in the community in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar places at different times of the day.
- Conducting brain-storming meetings with a team to add to the One-Page Personal Profile and Life Trajectory.
- Debriefing with the individual after each new experience.
- Reviewing records for “optimistic” information.
- Learning about themes and other type of job options related to the information on the person’s LifeCourse documents.
- Identifying the person’s learning styles (how they learn best).
- Learn more about traditional and creative supports.
- Identify Assistive Technology the person currently uses or could learn to use (as is or with modifications).



At this point, you may want to take a moment to read the paper in [Appendix Q](#) called “The Importance of Natural Supports” by the UMass Institute on Community Inclusion [ThinkWork: Advancing employment and opportunity for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities | Think Work](#)

Add to the Discovery Process by exploring real world settings by performing as many of these strategies as you can within a reasonable time period.

- Observe the individual in multiple settings at home and in the community to identify competencies. Make sure you see at least one situation where the person really can do their best.
- Expose the individual to different tasks for a long enough period of time to determine whether each task and features of each task are satisfactory to the individual.
- Expose the individual to different environments.

- Tour a variety of job sites to see “what’s out there.”
- Go to job fairs.
- Visit people you know at work.
- Identify barriers (e.g., transportation, time any human support may be available) and learn about ways to overcome them.

What Discovery is not. There are “right ways” (described in the previous section on “Strategies for Discovery”) and wrong ways to “do” Discovery. The wrong ways are wrong because they do not lead to meaningful experiences or provide helpful information that could be relevant to customizing employment. In and of themselves, “What Discovery is Not” (see [Appendix R](#)) are only “wrong” things to do because they reflect the traditional approaches to employment of people with disabilities. They are inconsistent with why you are using this Toolkit!

“Extraordinary people visualize not what is possible or probable, but rather what is impossible. And by visualizing the impossible, they begin to see it as possible.”

*-Cherie Carter-Scott
(the “Mother of Coaching”)*



Familiarize yourself with the Discovery form in [Appendix S](#). Use this form and the list of discovery strategies above to thinking about a plan of action for your Discovery process. You may now want to revisit your jobseeker’s LifeCourse Trajectory with them and maybe include in that review a team of people who know the jobseeker well.

In Closing

You have been introduced to Customized Employment. You have learned about the many “out of the box” possibilities for people who could not obtain or maintain competitive integrated employment in traditional ways. You have learned strategies to get organized and you just completed the first phase, Discovery, of customizing employment. For some of you, this may be enough to begin a search for work in existing jobs or to decide to pursue an individual, family, or other cooperative entrepreneurial route. Others may want to go to the next Part of this Toolkit to learn about customizing a Job Search. Just remember, this is not about finding a job you want someone to have but about work that will result in a win-win situation for the prospective employee and employer alike.

You also may want to write up your findings to pass on to someone else who will help the jobseeker actually land a job.

Additional Resources

- LEAD Center (2018). Self-Guided Discovery Facilitator’s Guide: Helping People Discover Their Own Path to Employment. [*Self-Guided Discovery Facilitator’s Guide: Helping People Discover Their Own Path to Employment - LEAD Center*](#)



If you are asking school staff to assist in the discovery process, these are resources they may find helpful and can adapt to their own transition process and use in a (preferably inclusive) classroom format because they will benefit ALL students:

- LEAD Center (2019). Guided Group Discovery – Youth Version – Facilitator Guide and Supplemental Slide Deck. [*Guided Group Discovery - Youth Version - Facilitator Guide and Supplemental Slide Deck - LEAD Center*](#)

If you are asking adult program staff to assist in the discovery process, these are resources they may find helpful and can adapt to their own daily schedule. They may also want to invite high school students or jobseeker volunteers for your regional American Job Center (See [Appendix T](#)) and use in a reverse-mainstreamed classroom format because they will benefit ALL adults:

- [*Guided Group Discovery Resources: Introduction and Course, Participant Workbook, and Facilitator Guide - LEAD Center*](#)



Part 5 - Job Search Planning

This part of the ***Customizing Employment Do-It-Yourself Toolkit*** addresses Job Search Planning, an essential step before developing and having a jobseeker employed. Job Search Planning is necessary to assure that you take a systematic approach to finding potential employers without wasting their time or yours.

Job Search Planning in Customized Employment differs from Traditional Career Planning Processes in that it builds on information resulting from the Discovery Process and exploring different businesses and industries (B/Is) in your community. Some professionals consider Job Search Planning to be part of the Discovery Process because the plan depends in large part on discovering “what is out there” in the world of work. Because the previous part of this Toolkit focused on discovering what lies beneath the surface for an individual jobseeker (remember the iceberg analogy), job planning is treated separately here.

Job planning is usually done by a team and contains sufficient information to seriously pursue one or more outcomes of Customized Employment such as those described in Part 2 of this Toolkit. You may remember that options for customizing jobs include job carves, negotiated jobs, entrepreneurship, etc. However, if you can wear a professional job developer’s hat rather than a family member’s hat, you will find the techniques in this Part of the Toolkit helpful.



Cartoon of a problem-solving process consisting of four heads, talking to each other, each of which shares a common thought bubble with gears, pulleys, and arrows^{xviii}

You actually can start job search planning as you are still going through the Discovery Process because, until the jobseeker is competitively employed in an integrated setting in a “win-win” situation for both the employee and the employer, job search planning can also be an ongoing process even if the jobseeker gets employed. You never know if a better opportunity for them will present itself.

This is also the stage of Customizing Employment where pulling together your team or circle of support to help brainstorm possibilities is highly recommended.

Job Search Planning in Customizing Employment

A quick search of the Internet using the search terms “job planning” and “career planning” reveals that common advice given to anyone beginning to search for a first job or a new job, or planning a career, includes:

1. Having an idea of what kind of job do you want and why. For example, do you expect to gain satisfaction from the work itself or are you wanting to work for other reasons (e.g., so you can pursue a passion for which you are not likely to earn enough to live on)?
2. Deciding what you want to do and don’t want to do.
3. Realistically identifying your strengths and weaknesses.
4. Researching “what’s out there.” Setting aside time to do the research.
5. Networking.
6. Setting measurable goals for job finding.
7. Gaining competencies if needed.
8. Practicing interviewing.
9. Updating your resume.

But these steps are not customized; challenges with this sequence for some people with disabilities is that: a) they may not have enough experience to know what they want or don’t want to do, b) they may only focus on what they cannot do and not realize what strengths they could contribute to an employer, c) they may not have the skills or resources necessary to research what’s out there, d) their personal networks may be limited, and e) they are more likely to need extensive support for gaining competencies and landing a job using other means than, for example, attending a trade school, interviewing well, or developing a marketable resume.

So, while the processes are similar, CE individualizes the job search approach in order to provide supports and alternatives to traditional job search processes and to enable an individual

to obtain and maintain competitive integrated work. As you know, the first step is Discovery. The next step is following a prescribed process for developing a job search plan for CE *that individualizes the relationship between employees and employers in ways that meet the needs of both.*

Job Search Planning “...entails using the information learned about the ... (jobseeker) consumer in Discovery to develop a plan toward meaningful employment, to determine a list of potential employers, and to conduct an analysis of benefits (where applicable).”²⁴

What are Some Critical Features of Customized Job Search Planning?

The most critical feature of customized job search planning is to ***avoid traditional methods of conducting a job search and not seek to fill existing job openings.*** Although looking at such openings may help you better understand what a particular type of business/industry does, there may be no expectation that the jobseeker for whom you are customizing employment will be able to fulfill standard requirements of existing job specifications. They also may not be likely to be able to introduce themselves to an employer through a traditional resume they have developed themselves or participate in a traditional interview. That’s okay! Rarely, someone considered for CE who has gone through the Discovery Process independently may be able to do this but generally the significant nature of their disability or their employment challenges to date requires the alternative CE approach.

Another critical feature of the job search planning process reflects the self-advocate’s mantra of “nothing about me without me.” This means that you are not doing this on your own but rather involving the jobseeker every step of the way. These steps, at minimum, include:

- Obtaining approval by the jobseeker for Discovery-related information.

Include the jobseeker even if you do not know for sure that they understand what you are saying. Their receptive language may be much better than you know. They also are more likely to be motivated to participate in the new and exciting venture of finding real work for real pay. If they are not able to speak or use an alternative form of communication, tell them what you are doing and hoping for and look for signs of approval or disapproval.

²⁴Inge, K. (n.d.) Q & A on Customized Employment: Parent Questions Answered! Richmond: VCU RTC. https://worksupport.com/documents/Q%26A_parents_questions.pdf.

- Getting the jobseeker’s input on others to involve (e.g., siblings, friends without disabilities, former teachers, neighbors, extended family members, former employers, etc.).
- Developing the products described in this Toolkit that are applicable.
- Deciding to whom those products should be distributed.
- Making decisions about disclosure (see [Appendix U](#) for a discussion of disclosure issues) of the jobseeker’s disability.

Which Comes First?

In the job search planning phase of customizing employment, you have two important tasks to accomplish at the same time. Or at least you start at the same time. As you progress through the process, your results on one of these tasks (identifying themes and “employment-worthy” characteristics of the jobseeker) informs the other (identifying where those themes and characteristics could be desirable because they can meet the needs of an employer. At the same time, learning more about “what’s out there” for work can bring to light something you discovered about the jobseeker but didn’t think was a relevant theme of an “employment-worthy” characteristic. We will start with learning “what’s out there” because, by involving the jobseeker, this activity can add to your Discovery information.

Places to learn “what’s out there.” Sometimes, you can get information from existing job descriptions you find in the classified ads or on such websites as www.indeed.com or www.monster.com. You can use the internet to look for job categories and labor market trends on the U.S. Department of Labor website <https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/statistics/occupations>, that of the CT Department of Labor <https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/index2.asp>, or <https://www.careeronestop.org/>. Sometimes public places such as coffee shops, sidewalk kiosks, or libraries advertise jobs that can give you an idea of who’s hiring and for what purpose. Librarians can also help you explore different types of businesses/ industries, especially ones that may not be that obvious. Your local Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business Association can also provide advice. Remember, the purpose of this information gathering is not to approach any employer to ask for a job but rather to plan for your next step. This next step is covered in the next part of this Toolkit called “Job Development.”

To help you keep a good record of this part of the Job Search Planning process, you may want to use the tool in [Appendix V](#) on *Vocational Themes & Lists of Potential Employers*.²⁵

Discerning potential job matches or themes. This is the most important function of job search planning because it requires you to think creatively about the jobseeker's strengths, interests, preferences, and other positive qualities in relation to different types of occupations or workplaces. The idea is to: 1) identify vocational themes in what you have discovered about the jobseeker, 2) use themes to identify potential employers, and 3) determine whether the potential employers may be a good match for the jobseeker. You are not contacting employers at this stage, only identifying them for future action.



Stop and read the “Grab and Go Practices” produced by the Think College National Coordinating Committee located at [GG8_F2.pdf \(thinkcollege.net\)](#).²⁶ Using the form you will find in [Appendix W](#), begin to identify what you need to do to accomplish the three steps of job search planning identified above.

Engaging Your Social Capital

To develop a deep understanding of the importance of social capital in CE, revisit Part 2 of this Toolkit for the discussion of social capital. Hopefully, you have already been building your own social capital using the four tools associated with the Part 3 – Getting Yourself Organized section of this Toolkit. The Job Search Planning process is where these connections will begin to be really helpful. For example, if you have a lot of connections within your community, you may be able to move directly to Job Development once you have developed a list of the jobseeker's employment themes because you have at least one specific employer in mind for which the jobseeker might be a good match.

Part of learning “what's out there” is relying on the fact that everyone you listed has their own social capital and everyone involved in their network has their own network and so forth. Word of mouth is the one of the most effective way of learning about a broader range of prospective employers in the community. In other words, plan to find someone who knows someone who knows someone who...

²⁵Carlson, C., Dwyer D'Agati, A., & Hooley, R., (2018). Customized Employment–Employer Research, Think College Grab and Go Practices, Number 8, Insert. Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston.

²⁶Carlson, C., Dwyer D'Agati, A., & Hooley, R. (2018). Customized Employment–Employer Research, Think College Grab and Go Practices, Number 8. Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston.



At this time, develop a job search script. It may go something like this: “Hi.” (Introduce or re-introduce yourself by name unless you are already well-acquainted with the person you are approaching.) “I’m trying to help someone find work.” They are (brief description of the themes). “Do you know of any businesses where they might be a good fit?” Practice the script until you can deliver the words without sounding robotic or as if you are reading it!

Other Considerations in Job Search Planning

Transportation. An important consideration in job search planning is to find work opportunities at locations where transportation will not present a barrier. Some people find work within walking distance of where they live. Some people may be able to learn how to travel to work using public transportation or even drive, while others may need to ride with co-workers, take specialized transportation services, or ride a bicycle. Some individuals with disabilities are using Uber or Lyft just like anyone who needs transportation services but lives too far to walk to or from public transportation pick-up/drop-off points.

Learning about B/I from an Employer’s Perspective. It is helpful, especially if you are not actively engaged in the business world yourself, to familiarize yourself with basic principles and practices of running a business that involves hiring employees. These principles and practices can give you some foundational knowledge that allows you to speak the language of the business world so you don’t appear so alien to the employer. On the other hand, the actual job development process allows you to educate employers about the “value-added” benefit of hiring a jobseeker who is a good match to the B/I and an possible value added to the employer with their bottom line.



Stop and take a moment to look up each of the following terms on line. What do they mean? What is likely to need modification to customize a jobseeker's job search? Each of these terms will be important in job development because they are likely to be some of the things (in addition to actual work tasks, start date, starting salary, benefits, etc.) you are probably going to need to negotiate:

- Personnel recruitment
- Candidate selection
- Preservice training
- Business etiquette
- Resume requirements
- Job application contents
- Work flow concepts
- Work processes

Also take some time to learn and practice "Informational Interviewing" by watching this video by Griffin-Hammis Associates, Inc., called *Community Conversations: Informational Interviews - A Genuine Approach to Employer Engagement*. [Community Conversations: Informational Interviews - A Genuine Approach to Employer Engagement - YouTube.](#)

Avoiding the "Four F's." Avoid them, that is, unless one of them really aligns with the information you collected during Discovery. In job planning, we all must stop thinking about "The 4 'F's" as the only options for jobseekers with disabilities. The four F's are Food, Flowers, Filth, and Factories because these historically have been the only options most people have been able to imagine jobseekers with disabilities doing. You have probably run into someone in the food industry bagging your groceries. Many farms hire people with ID/DD because they are reliable workers and don't seem to mind seasonal work. So many "job preparation programs" involve working with a school custodian or learning to use a floor buffer. And, while we never want to diminish the importance of meaningful factory work (i.e., making products that are marketable because they are desired by consumers), for too long people with disabilities produced goods for cents on the dollar or worked for less than minimum wage in what essentially were still sheltered workshops or group supported employment arrangements.



Here are some examples of when one of the Four F's may or may not result in a good match between the individual and the employer. Note that this list is far from being all-inclusive.

- Searching for opportunities related to food can very appropriate for someone who, for example, loves to cook, be in a restaurant environment, or be creative (e.g., in cake decorating).
 - Bagging groceries at a grocery store, however, is not usually something people aspire to do and being around food without eating it may be challenging for others.
- Searching for opportunities related to flowers can be very appropriate for someone who, for example, likes to garden, take care of things, or be creative (e.g., in making floral arrangements).
 - Farming or greenhouse work are not good options for people who hate being outdoors or cannot tolerate working in the heat.
- Cleaning or organizing jobs can be very appropriate for people who like the physical activity involved in pushing industrial scrubbers or buffers or who enjoy repetitive work that involves organizing.

- Such work would not be appropriate for individuals with low tolerance for odors of cleaning products or who crave variety in what they do.
- Factories can provide great opportunities for people who have an eye for fine details (quality assurance) or like to operate machinery. There also are factories that specialize in products that someone may have a passion (but not an obsession) for having in their life and who would love being part of the creation of those products.
- Factories are not good options for people who cannot keep up with the pace of some assembly lines, who do not like repetitive work, or who prefer independently completing tasks from start to finish.

What's important is that the 4 F's cannot be the only option for people with disabilities whose strengths, interests, skills, and preferences are for other types of paid work. There is Nothing Wrong with "The 4 'F's" for some. However, there is a lot wrong with them for others. And most individuals will not be successful in environments they cannot tolerate, where they do not feel valued, when they are doing work they don't like, and when they have assets that would be a better match for another type of work.

Workplace cultures. In addition to these task-specific types of considerations, you will need to pay attention to the culture of workplaces you explore. Are the people who work there friendly and helpful? This may not work for someone who prefers to work alone but may be wonderful for someone who loves to socialize and can do that while still getting work done. What is the sensory environment like? Are the odors, lighting, and noise level tolerable to the jobseeker? If they need other types of sensory input²⁷, can these needs be met?

Do not expect any workplace to install things like vestibular swings, ball pits, or other sensory equipment that schools may have provided. What you can look for, though, are staff are very "laid back" or have a high level of tolerance for diversity, behaviors that other employees engage in (like pencil chewing) that are accepted, or subtle opportunities for the same needs to be met (e.g., doing wall push-ups in a cubicle bordered on at least one side by a stationary wall).

²⁷Wearing a weighted vest, opportunity to rock in a rocking chair or spin in an office chair, bathroom stalls within which to jump, places to stash fidgets or chewies, a quiet space to regroup, an employee exercise room

Entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship may be a particularly attractive opportunity for individuals whose significant disabilities may prevent consistent attendance or performance in a competitive employment situation despite adequate post-employment supports OR who may have a particular strength, interest or preference that creates a niche market for a product or service.



Stop here and look over the Self-Employment & Entrepreneurship resources on the website of the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/employers/self-employment-entrepreneurship>

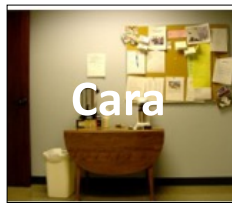
Remember these individuals you met in previous parts of this Do-It-Yourself Toolkit who, as entrepreneurs, are self-employed:



Chin



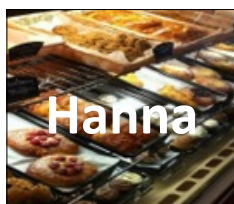
Nick



Cara



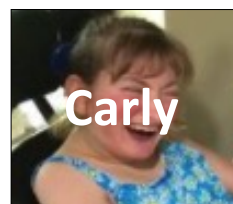
Maya



Hanna



Poppin Joe's
GOURMET
Kettle
Korn

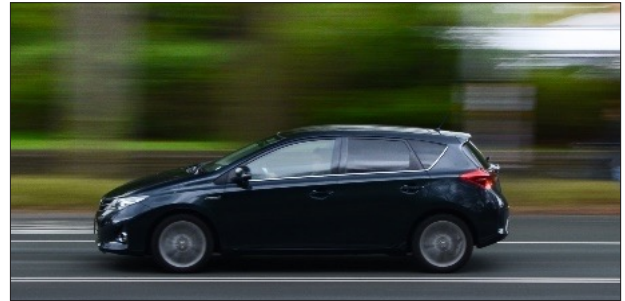


Carly

Renew your own commitment to the jobseeker becoming employed. You've presumably read through Part 1 of this Toolkit to understand what customizing employment is all about. Your creative juices should have been flowing after Part 2 when you learned about some of the other creative possibilities resulting in CIE for many individuals. Hopefully, you used the strategies described in Part 3 to get yourself organized. You have discovered things about the jobseeker that you may or may not have already known (Part 4). In this part, you have

begun seriously to connect what you have discovered to work skills that would be valued by an employer in a B/I that would be a good match for the jobseeker.

This is where the “rubber meets the road” in terms of actually developing a job – unless the jobseeker has already found work, has a written commitment (which is actually a contract although CT is an “at will” state)²⁸ to begin work from an employer, or some other circumstances prevents you from taking the next step.



One of those circumstances may be that you have decided the information you have so far should be turned over to a professional job developer who already has the knowledge and skills necessary to approach employers confidently and had an established record of success. You may still have some questions and uncertainty about your jobseeker’s “readiness” to work. Remember, however, with customized employment, no one needs to be “ready to work.” Finding the right match, negotiating the right work conditions, and teaching the new employee right at their job site when they are already employed is what customizing employment in all about!



To address other concerns about the impact employment will have on the jobseeker and your family, use the link below to access a document which answers many questions other parents have frequently asked professionals involved in Customized Employment. Although the answers are geared toward those using an agency to provide customized employment services, they apply to do-it-yourself situations as well. https://worksupport.com/documents/Q%26A_parents_questions.pdf.

²⁸“At will” means that an employee can lose their job any time without any reason, warning, or explanation from their employer (as long as this does not violate any anti-discrimination laws or a union contract) but also has the free will to resign at any time.

Outcomes of Job Search Planning

At the end of the job search planning stage, you are now ready to begin job development by yourself or through self-directed services. These self-directed services may be provided and funded through staff at an American Jobs Center, BRS if the jobseeker is determined to be eligible, Medicaid waiver services, or a non-profit agency. They also may be “self-pay” using savings that your family or the jobseeker has or, in some cases, through an established special needs trust. Typical products of Job Search Planning are:

1. An **action plan** stating specific outcomes, processes that will be used to achieve those outcomes, who will be responsible for implementing these processes, and time frames. A sample action plan appears in [Appendix X](#).
2. **One or more alternatives to traditional resumes** for the jobseeker (e.g., a visual resume like Jenna’s that was shown in Part 2, a brochure describing the jobseeker, a photo album of the jobseeker engaged, a video resume.) For more ideas about nontraditional ways to impress prospective employers, check out some of the free apps at [20 FREE Tools to Create Outstanding Visual Resume \(geekflare.com\)](#).
3. **A portfolio of information** (e.g., letters of reference from work experience supervisors, checklists of tasks mastered) that represents the jobseeker’s skills and contributions for potential employers who can be approached because their work or work setting seems to be a good match for the jobseeker.

These products will form the basis for your job development activities – initially in why and how you approach employers and later on as the basis for negotiation with a specific employer. If you are using an agency to assist with the job development process, you need to know that they also may want to do their own assessments or learn more about customizing employment themselves. Hopefully, they will recognize the groundwork you’ve already done and are able to get started with the job development process quickly.

*“Somebody said it couldn’t
be done. But he with a
chuckle replied, That maybe
it couldn’t, but he would be
one Who wouldn’t say so ‘till
he’d tried.”*

-Edgar Guest (1919)

Additional Resources

- Carlson, C., & Hooley, R. (2018) Customized Employment -- Job Development Planning. https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/GGP11_CE_Job_Development_Planning.pdf
- Griffin-Hammis Associates (2017). Developing Vocational Themes: Workbook. <https://www.griffinhammis.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Developing-Vocational-Themes-Workbook-v2.pdf>





Part 6 - Job Development



At this juncture, most families who have gotten this far in the customizing employment process are more than willing to hand the rest of the steps over to a paid Job Developer. The steps are complicated, generally require specific skills related to understanding different workplaces and their cultures, and being able to negotiate successfully. There are no widely accepted credentials for job developers, no consistent job titles, and no central registry.

If you know the employer well, you may be able to try to work through this process together without a Job Developer. If not, please keep in mind that families of typical jobseekers are seldom involved in their job seeking activities with the exception, perhaps, of prevailing on their own social capital and business connections to assist in some way. The roles of parents of jobseekers with disabilities can be confusing between two extremes and a lot of gray area in between: Are they infantilizing their jobseeker or being overprotective? Are they being too pushy in advocating for someone in their family who maybe isn't a good match for a job?

But the information you have collected to this point can be enormously helpful, e.g., to a BRS counselor or DDS case manager, who does not need to start from scratch in helping you connect with job developer. Additional Resources are listed at the end of the Part of the Toolkit. The information you now have will also provide you with what you may need if you are using self-directed supports so you can appropriately supervise the Job Developer you've hired. Just remember that, like everything else in this Toolkit, there is room for individualizing everything and still accomplishing the same CIE outcome.

In customized Job Development, businesses and industries (B/I) that provide goods and services related to the

*Neither finding a job
nor launching a career
are incompatible with
Customized Employment
but, for the nontraditional
jobseeker, the unmet need
of a prospective employer
aligned with what has
been discovered about the
jobseeker is key.*

individual's employment themes are individually approached. This is a complicated process with varying degrees of success. One job developer reported that an average number of individuals he is able to place in traditional job categories are as few as six per year (Michael P., personal communication, June 10, 2021). With customizing his approach to job development, however, we can safely assume that the number of individuals he can develop CIE for would go up (as long as someone else steps in to provide the follow-along supports described in Part 6 of this Toolkit).

When Job Development Should or Could Be Customized

Job development may be customized for a number of reasons. Typically, job development needs to be customized for the following situations:

- Evaluative results that reveal the individual cannot fulfill the essential requirements of an existing job specification.
- How the individual presents to the traditional employment specialist (e.g., physical appearance, idiosyncratic behaviors) which send up red flags about the potential of the individual to not fit in and result in a breakdown in the employment specialist's relationship with a particular business or industry.
- Lack of employment history or experience which is more often a result of lack of opportunity.
- Inability to complete aspects of the job search independently (e.g., develop a resume, adapt a resume to an existing job opening, write a cover letter, complete an application form).
- Preconceived notions about disability and employment (e.g., accommodations are unrealistic, too expensive, individual will need too much support) on the part of the employment specialist and/or the employer.
- Lack of access to reliable transportation or supports at home needed daily to prepare for work.
- Resistance by others to the notion that a particular individual could work.
- Employer fears about the safety of the jobseeker or co-workers.
- The jobseeker's disability requires them to use compensatory strategies (an approach that does not align with what other employees in a B/I use).
- Follow-along support by BRS in the short-term or DDS-qualified provider or self-directed supports hired by the individual or family are likely to be needed.

The customized job development approach also may be used to develop internship sites but these may not actually lead to employment of people with disabilities at those sites. Internships/volunteer opportunities, though, can be great resume-builders and are more likely to be successful than a “cold contact” in obtaining long-term work elsewhere due to increased work skills and because of the recommendation a jobseeker may get from the internship host.



Stop here to watch this short video on *Integrated Customized Employment – A Way to Work for Everyone* by the Disability Rights California, that state’s Protection and Advocacy System. This will remind you of why you are now heading into one of the most challenging areas of customizing employment but one, when you are successful, that will be most rewarding because it will result in Competitive Integrated Employment! [Integrated Customized Employment - A Way to Work for Everyone - YouTube.](#)

What Can Job Customization Look Like?

Job customization can take a number of forms and include self-employment mentioned in Parts 2 and 5 as well as the “business-within-a-business” model described in Part 2. When working with an employer for whom the jobseeker might be a good match, types of customized job development may include:

- **Job Creation.** An individualized (new) job description specifically negotiated for the jobseeker.
- **Job restructuring.** Reallocating or redistributing non-essential components of a job. In other words, the nature and responsibilities of an existing position are changed. (NOTE: This is not required as a “reasonable accommodation” and therefore is considered to be CE.)
- **Job Carving.** An existing job is broken down into smaller steps and those that are considered inefficient for the current jobholder are carved out for the person with a disability who can do them just as well. Although the employer may now be paying two employees instead of one, a job carve can result in improved sales and services because the original employee can do more of the skilled work than a newly hired assistant.
- **Job sharing.** A single position is broken into two part-time positions (e.g., for someone who needs to reduce their hours). A carve may be superimposed on this so one employee does more skilled work (and gets paid more) than the other.

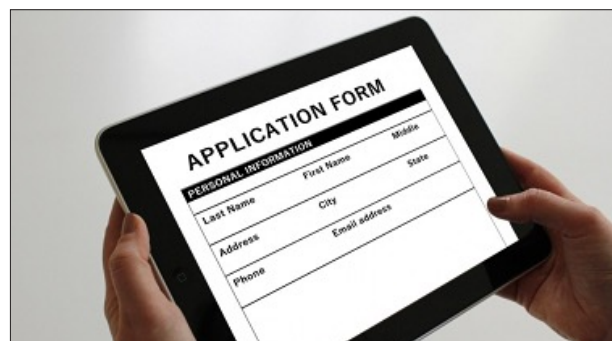
Job sharing has become a more common arrangement in some places (e.g., among new mothers returning part-time to work or people in public office who cannot be available to their year-round employer during their usual schedule because their elected official responsibilities interfere). However, it is almost always done with the expectation that the employees sharing the job will do equal work during equal hours for equal pay.

Job sharing which results in two part-time positions in which the skilled employee works fewer hours or performs more complicated tasks at a higher rate of pay, while the jobseeker with a disability is assigned customized tasks at a lower rate of pay, may not be a familiar concept to employers.

Where CE May be Most Beneficial

The hiring process for many B/Is has become standardized. Many use single-point-of-entry applications (often on-line only) and have rigid eligibility requirements including certification or other evidence of formal training. Often, there is a highly competitive candidate pool. Although owners of small B/Is may still personally interview all applicants and decided the merits of hiring them on the spot, most companies now either use a “head hunter service” which refers potential candidates to them or have a separate Human Resources (HR) department that handles applications at this level.

A customized approach to the hiring process that is built on the individual jobseeker’s strengths-based profile, results of job search planning, and alternative means of marketing themselves as good job candidates may be useful.



An example of an online application form. The benefit is that this type of application can be completed leisurely in a familiar and comfortable environment. The disadvantage is that someone else may need to provide a lot of assistance or do it for the jobseeker AND it is for a traditional position with an existing job description.^{xxiii}

More about How the CE Approach Differs From Traditional Job Development

The CE approach differs from traditional job development in that the goal is the placement of a single jobseeker into a customized job that benefits both the individual and the employer.

In traditional job development, the job developer has an employment goal based on existing job openings and traditional job specifications. Job Developers network with a “bank” of potential employers that may have openings in which particular individuals known to them could be hired. They may use or arrange for incentives for the employer and/or clearly defined mechanisms for supporting individuals in seeking work. Examples of these mechanisms include a “working test period” funded by a state agency or a guarantee of a number of hours of job coaching initially and in the long-term. Unfortunately, too many employers do not hire an individual once their salary from a different source ends and paid job coaches often inadvertently cause disruptions to the company’s work flow. Some traditional job developers also may use “charity approach” and continue to keep the individual on the agency’s payroll instead of the employer taking on this responsibility.

“Three Cups of Coffee.”

Families will very seldom need to use this approach because, more than likely, the “ask” for a customized competitive integrated employment opportunity will be made to someone in their own networks. If the B/I is not known to the person doing the Job Development, a “Three Cups of Coffee” approach is recommended to develop a relationship with owner/chief on-site administrator. Before approaching the B/I, the Job Developer – whether you or someone you have do this for you – needs to have an intimate understanding of what the B/I does, what types of tasks are performed, and other aspects of the B/I culture.



The first of three cups of coffee with a potential employer. ^{xxiv}

This approach lets you do this unobtrusively up to and including an informal meeting between the employer and jobseeker by the third cup of coffee. It is important to note that you don’t literally need to have cups of coffee (or any other beverage) for this approach to work.



Stop here to read the slides for “Three Cups of Coffee:” *The DLW Approach to Employers* in [Appendix Y](#). Although this was written for professional Job Developers to use in approaching businesses with more than one jobseeker in mind, the same strategy can work for families pursuing a customized approach to job development with a B/I previously unknown to them. Before using this approach, it is strongly recommended that you, literally write out the questions you are going to ask at each step (i.e., cups of coffee 1, 2, and 3) using the form in [Appendix Z](#). This will assure that you are as knowledgeable, appropriate inquisitive, and confident as you need to be to “market” the jobseeker as your ultimate goal.

Approaches Other than Coffee³¹

Becoming Familiar with Workplace Needs.

You should have already watched the video on conducting an “Informational Interview” in Part 5 of this Toolkit. Remember, the purpose of these interviews is not to sell the employer on customized employment or the jobseeker. Rather it is to approach the employer with a set of questions that address the type of work, typical hours, working conditions, work that could add to the employer’s bottom line “if only there were enough hours in the day,” and to learn other characteristics of the B/I itself.

Job Tours. Another way of learning about the needs of a specific workplace is to ask for a tour of the business. A tour is a good way to see for yourself what the workflow is, identify specific tasks that the jobseeker could do (in this case, to free up workers to do more money-making tasks or to ease their workload), and situations where, given what you

Always send or email a thank you note when you have “imposed” on a business in anyway. If the jobseeker was involved, have them send this note. Although you can use email, a bright card like this with a simple but sincere “thank you for your time” can go far in bringing this employer into your circle of support in the future.^{xxv}



³¹Many of these ideas were drawn from two tools that are no longer easily accessible on the Federal Department of Labor’s website called Customized Employment: *Applying Practical Solutions for Employment Success* volumes 1 and 2. Both were produced by the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) in that federal agency.

know about the jobseeker, how they could do tasks that would be an asset to the operations of the B/I.

A checklist of what to look for during a job tour is included in [Appendix Z](#).

Some businesses offer regularly scheduled tours. Others are reluctant to let potential competitors see how they do business! You can tour jobs in similar B/Is just to get a better idea of how similar products are made or services are provided. For example, your jobseeker may want to be an assistant in the kitchen of a small but “fancy” restaurant. A tour of the kitchen in a small pizza store where salads are sold and the owner is happy to give a tour still can give you and the jobseeker an idea of commercial equipment (appliances and utensils) and the work flow involved from taking an order to having a paying customer leave the establishment satisfied.

Show an Interest. Meet the employer and reintroduce yourself casually at community events if possible. For example, attend Chamber of Commerce meetings, volunteer to sit on a board of directors for a potential company, and go to trade group events. You may be able to conduct subtle and informal informational interviews in these settings, e.g., to learn about the supply chain of the B/I.

Be a regular customer. Get to know employees. If you have determined this could be a good place for the jobseeker to be competitively employed among co-workers without disabilities, this can be the time to introduce customized employment casually. Later, as you become better known, you may be able to introduce a task list (discussed in a later section) to introduce the topic of customized employment. The more familiar you are to current staff, and the more they already know and have a connection with the jobseeker, the more likely they will be open to giving the jobseeker a chance.

Analyzing the Potential Worksite

When you are actually inside a potential worksite, look at the work other employees are doing. Is there something that could be done more efficiently or effectively if the jobseeker could learn to provide “an extra set of hands”? Analyze what non-essential responsibilities other employees are doing beyond their usual tasks. Do they spend extra

time at a photocopy machine or delivering items to someone in another office when the jobseeker could do this so they could spend more time doing what they are paid and may have been specially trained to do? Look at work piled up in in-baskets, disastrously messy and disorganized individual or group work spaces, and other evidence of work waiting to be done but not seen as high priority. Could a jobseeker taught to assist in getting these problems addressed support the B/I?

This analysis requires a judgment from you, as an objective observer, of what possibly could be customized for a jobseeker.

The National Center on Workforce and Disability suggests focusing on:

- The variety of tasks performed by the business or industry.
- Tasks that need doing that take employees away from their more critical job duties.
- Tasks that could be done more efficiently or more often.
- Busy times of the day/week/year when the employer could use extra help.
- Jobs that are not getting done because no one has the time.
- Jobs that have the greatest turnover.
- Qualities the company looks for in an employee.

Develop Task Lists. Task Lists are sometimes called “Needs Analyses” in resources for Customized Employment. Rules for developing task lists include:

- Base your list on what you are reasonably certain represents both the employer’s needs and the individual jobseeker’s skills.
- Be specific (e.g., “cleaning specific areas/equipment” instead of just “cleaning”).
- Prioritize from what seems to be most important to the employer first to what seems to be least important last.
- Identify tasks across a number of settings (e.g., departments, different jobs) to demonstrate the flexibility of customizing a position.
- Be prepared to present highlights of benefits to employer.

According to Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP): “Task lists present potential tasks that might be reassigned, established, or restructured for the jobseeker. The task list leads to a customized job description that will be part of a negotiation. Tasks lists may be extensive or brief, depending on the business and jobseeker. There may be different tasks from different departments. These task lists become a ‘menu’ from which responsibilities for customized jobs might be chosen during the negotiation to come up with a unique job description for the jobseeker.”



Examples from an ODEP booklet, Volume 2, appears in [Appendix AA](#). A form for you to develop your own task list for a specific employer with a specific jobseeker in mind appears in [Appendix BB](#). You must have something like this completed and in hand before you make another appointment with an employer to begin a job negotiation. Keep this form, when completed, with your task list specific to the employer being approached.

Develop a Job Proposal

An essential element in customizing job development is negotiating job duties and employee expectations that align the skills and interests of a jobseeker to the needs of an employer. This negotiation results in a job description that outlines a customized relationship between employer and employee. You may develop a Job Proposal prior to setting up a meeting with the employer to negotiate employment for the jobseeker or, depending on your social connection to the employer, you may prefer to do it during the “Third Cup of Coffee” and use it as a means of having another positive contact with the employer.

Remember that options for customizing a new job description specifically for the individual jobseeker include job carving, negotiating a new job description, job creation, and job sharing. Other points of potential negotiation include job supports, the hours or location of the job, or specifics of supervision.

Negotiation

Armed with your job search plan (which includes characteristics of the jobseeker that would be desirable to this employer), the form to match specific skills to observed tasks, the job development proposal if you already developed one, and any other materials (e.g., a video or visual resume) you feel might be helpful, you are ready to begin negotiations with the employer.



Negotiations involve using persuasive but not aggressive techniques to educate the employer about why this jobseeker will be a good match to the B/I and add to the B/I's reputation for excellence and/or increase the bottom line. The informational interviews described in Part 5 - Job Search Planning are one of the best ways to get the intimate understanding about the B/I you need to negotiate hiring of a specific jobseeker – but not for an existing job vacancy.

At this point, the employer should have a good working relationship with the job developer (you or someone you are paying to perform this service). This may be because they are a member of your circle of support or that of the jobseeker (Part 3 on Social Capital) or because the “Three Cups of Coffee” approach is being successful. The job developer approaches the employer to begin negotiation of how the individual jobseeker could be an asset to the B/I if an existing job was tweaked, a new job description created, and/or natural/other (e.g., Assistive Technology) supports were in place.



Learn some techniques for effective negotiation by watching these videos. Consider how the advice given applies to negotiating with an employer about employing a jobseeker with a disability and practice turning what you have already learned about the B/I into questions.

- Harvard Business School Professor Mike Wheeler on How to Add Value at the Negotiation Table <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrtEtP36od4>
- The Top 3 Negotiation Skills of Persuasive People | Brian Tracy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9qRMaNtnNo>
- Tips for negotiating agreements <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCT1BWZByko>

You may also want to practice the negotiation role plays in **Appendix CC**.

Although developed for Think College students, **Appendix DD** contains great strategies for preparing for and conducting a negotiation with an employer.

A word of caution. Although your task list is a starting point for discussion, the employer may not want to include certain tasks on that list in the job description OR may want to add other tasks to the list. A shortened task list for the written job description is fine. The employer can always add more responsibility (along with a request for a wage increase as described in Part 7 on Follow-along Supports) once the jobseeker has demonstrated value and it's time for more work. Adding new tasks proposed by the employer before the jobseeker's first day on the job needs to be considered honestly as to whether the jobseeker already has the skills/other characteristics needed to perform these OR can learn them.

Do not agree to a revised job description unless you are reasonably certain the jobseeker can learn the tasks it contains OR will not be bored or otherwise unsatisfied that certain tasks have been removed. Better to walk away (with a thank you to follow) than for the jobseeker to be fired and the employer become unwilling to hire someone else with significant challenges in the future.

Task Analyses. Task Analyses are different from Task Lists because they break down each overall task described in the new Customized Job Description into specific activities from start to finish that will result in completion of the task to the employer’s satisfaction.

For professional Job Developers, task analyses are done for those jobs related to an individual’s discovery information to identify what the person can/would need to learn/ probably won’t learn to do. For others, a task analysis is simply a list of each step, in order, of what a job would entail. The job may be an existing job because the goal is to carve out part that the jobseeker can do or a job that does not yet exist but could be developed in order to help the business run more efficiently.

Task analyses are done **after the job negotiation process** when the individual has been offered CIE. Task analyses may form the basis for additional negotiation, e.g., about the amount of support the new employee may need or to modify initial task lists.



Stop here learn more about how to break down the negotiated tasks in order to teach them to the employee. **Appendix EE How to Do a Task Analysis** can be useful. You will see that following a recipe is actually a task analysis for making food. Depending on the learner, task steps make need to be broken down into even smaller steps.

To complete a task analysis, all one needs to do is write down the steps to completing the task using the form in **Appendix FF**. Another reason professional job development support may be needed is to determine how broken down those steps must be. For example, some jobseekers would be able to “put the project in the refrigeration unit.” Others may need more steps, e.g., “stand up, pick up the project, approach the refrigeration unit, etc.”.

The Role of Assistive Technology. *The Assistive Technology Act of 2004* is a federal law that supports

OPTIONAL: The entire Assistive Technology Act of 2004 can be read [here](#). You can also visit the National Assistive Technology Act Technical Assistance and Training (AT3) Center AT3-AT3 Center.

“...the availability of, funding for, access to, provision of, and training about assistive technology devices and services...”³² Assistive technology (AT) by definition includes both devices and services that help any person with a disability get the device(s) they need. AT devices are “...any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.” (³²The Assistive Technology Act of 2004, P.L. 108-364 Sec. 2(b)(1)(A).)

You do not need to become an expert in AT in order to imagine some items, pieces of equipment, or product systems that could support a jobseeker to have increased, maintained, or improved ability to function in a job. This is one field that has blossomed in the last two decades so that most needs can be met. What you do need to know is that provision of AT may be one of the reasonable accommodations that employers provide to improve any employee’s quality and quantity of work. Provision of AT that assists a jobseeker at work may also help improve the quality of their life outside of work. In this case, it is usually better to seek other funding sources for AT.

Here are a few examples of how workers with disabilities have used AT in customized job settings:

- **Blind, low-vision, or non-reader:** screen reading software, screen modification software, closed circuit television.
- **Deaf or hard of hearing:** closed captioning, amplified telephone, assistive listening devices, flashing smoke detectors.
- **Physical disabilities:** voice recognition software, automatic page turners, raised desk.
- **Learning disabilities:** text-to-speech software, a smart pen, recorder (e.g., of directions, schedules, other important information).

Not every type of AT works for every individual and not every individual will benefit from AT.



Stop here and explore three resources for Assistive Technology in CT. These are:

1. The Assistive Technology Loan Program (ATLP) of the CT Tech Act Project. AT Loan Program – Connecticut Tech Act Project OR (cttechact.com)<http://cttechact.com/loan/#sthash.z4esDTAR.dpbs>
2. Oak Hill Assistive Technology Home - Oak Hill Assistive Technology (oakhillct.org) OR <https://assistivetechology.oakhillct.org/>
3. A local Easter Seals agency Easterseals | Assistive Technology and Job Accommodations OR <https://www.easterseals.com/our-programs/employment-training/wfd-assistive-technology.html>

But it is something to be considered in Job Development.

Managing and reporting paychecks and benefits. Even though the Social Security Administrations supports Employment First, jobseekers or their Representative Payees must still comply with income reporting requirements for recipients of SSI or SSDI.

What not to do or say. The jobseeker's disability, use of acronyms or jargon (e.g., "Joe used to have an IEP", "we can get support from BRS"), references to level of functioning, or other "human service-y" terms are not only irrelevant but harmful to customizing job development. You are focusing on what the person CAN do for the employer. Also, don't tell stories about yourself or the jobseeker unless it is specifically relevant to the job. For

*Would you want to hire "a low-functioning autistic person who engages in odd behaviors, went to a special school, and is getting services from DDS, BRS, and a private OT"?
Pretty scary for someone who does not have anything to do with disability or background in what these things mean. Emphasize instead what hiring this jobseeker can do for the employer, not what the employer can do for you (paraphrase of John F. Kennedy, 1961) and be able to state these facts using business terms.*

example, say “Joe is very detail-oriented which would be an asset to your quality assurance initiative.” You can say, in general terms, that you know this from spending some time with Joe and from what others have told you. You do not need to, nor should you, explain that you know this because the tasks Joe had been doing are not age-appropriate, devaluing to a non-disabled employee, or not really work-related.

What about disclosure? Refer back to [Appendix U](#) in Volume 2 of this Toolkit (“**What about Disclosure?**”) before deciding when and how much to disclose about the jobseeker’s disability. If you are planning to have a job coach or employment facilitator support the new employee in learning work at their new job, you may want to use generally vague terminologies as part of your negotiation – i.e., “Because of the way Joe learns, we are hoping it’s okay to have Geoff accompany him on the first day of work to get him acclimated and make sure he learns how to do the job to your satisfaction.” You can modify this statement to extend the time Geoff will be available (“...accompany Joe until Joe’s supervisor is confident he can do his assignments”) or to arrange for Geoff to come in before Joe’s first day of work so Geoff can assure Joe’s experience on Day 1 goes smoothly.

Remember that many federal and state laws prohibit sharing confidential information (which include disabilities) without the jobseeker’s permission so you may find yourself negotiating with the jobseeker about what and how much to share as well as why.

When Job Development is Over

Job development may be over when the jobseeker starts working in a new job that is a good match between their strengths, interests, preferences, and other positive characteristics and the business needs of the employer will be met as a result. Job development may continue if the jobseeker agrees to “settle” for a job as a way to gain more resume-building experience or if the job, even if a good match, does not come close enough to their vision for their future. And, sometimes, first jobs are seasonal in nature but should not be turned down unless something better comes along.

So how many rejections you should take before you give up? A quick scan of articles on the internet related to this question gives many answers but all essentially put odds of getting to the third cup of coffee between 20% and 30%. The odds of landing a job after an initial

interview can be in the low single digits. Of course, these odds increase if the potential employer is known to you and the jobseeker is already known to, and appreciated by, the potential employer.

LinkedIn.com³³ offers the following advice:

1. Don't worry.
2. Don't give up.
3. Keep going.
4. Stay upbeat and positive.
5. Remember how many thousands of marketing messages you are bombarded with each day and how many (probably thousands) that you reject.
6. Typically, employers are looking for reasons to reject rather than hire any job candidate.
7. Treat every new job development exercise as your first – i.e., a brand-new opportunity.
8. What can you change the next time to better market the jobseeker to the potential employer?

To this we would add: **And never, ever play the pity card or ask for work because it's charitable or otherwise "the right thing to do."**

Consumers generally view companies that hire people with disabilities favorably so the increase in customers resulting from hiring an individual with a disability can definitely increase the business's bottom line.³⁴ Yet why would anyone want to work in a setting where they are seen as an object of pity or charity, or because an employer felt obligated to hire them despite not really wanting to? If the jobseeker is not wanted because they are valued for whom they are, that is not the worksite for them.

³³SOURCE: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20141001084853-6325520-how-many-job-rejections-should-i-get-before-i-get-worried/>

³⁴SOURCE: Siperstein, G. N., Romano, N., Mohler, A., & Parker, R. (2006). A national survey of consumer attitudes towards companies that hire people with disabilities. Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 24(1), 3-9. http://wintac-s3.s3.amazonaws.com/topic-areas/ta_511/Siperstein-2006-A-National-Survey-of-consumer-attitudes.pdf

Additional Resources

If the jobseeker is not eligible for BRS or DDS services, or not interested in using their staff for job development, here are some other possibilities for finding a job developer if they need job development services and prefer not to do this aspect of customization as a family:



- See the listing of current CESP credential holders recognized by the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) <https://directory.credential.net/apse>.
- See the listing of current ACRE credential holders recognized by the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators <http://acreducators.org/certificate-registry>
- Contact one of CT's five Workforce Development Boards workforcect.org/about-us/.
- Contact your local Chamber of Commerce or look up phone listings for "headhunter" agencies near you (and consider recently retired "headhunters.")
- DDS self-determination staff <https://portal.ct.gov/DDS/SelfAdvocacySelfDetermination/Self-Advocacy/DDS-Contacts-for-Self-Advocacy>
- Someone in your personal network who is outgoing, business savvy, and a good negotiator, and also has a good reputation in the community.

If you are using a professional job developer, you will want to make sure they are familiar with specific strategies for developing jobs for people with disabilities. These are some resources you may want to share with them or use as a guide to how well they are doing.

- Gatepath Communities. *Making the Business Case: Getting Jobs for People with Developmental Disabilities*. <https://abilitypath.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Employment-Toolkit.pdf>
- Griffin, C., Hammis, D., & Geary, T. (2007). *The job developer's handbook: Practical tactics for customized employment*. Baltimore: Brookes Pub. (available through Interlibrary Loan)
- ODEP Solutions for Employers (video). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DiozrP2uw4>



Part 7 - Post-Employment Supports

Congratulations! We are no longer giving tools to assist a jobseeker but tools related to how that person, because of your customized efforts, can sustain and be successful in their new job. In other words, the jobseeker is now a new employee!

Why Discuss Post-Employment Supports?

Everyone needs some post-employment supports – even those who are opening their own businesses as entrepreneurs³⁵. Sometimes, the only formal post-employment supports a business or industry provides are (1) an initial (paid) orientation to workplace policies and procedures and (2) specific information (individual or group pre-service training) about the quality and quantity of performance and output or outcomes expected of the new employee. The next opportunity for formal post-employment supports may not occur until a formal evaluation at which time the employee is either praised for meeting expectations, provided with suggestions for improvement, or either disciplined, demoted, or dismissed.

Informal post-employment supports for most employees generally include constructive feedback from supervisors as well as answers to questions and helpful suggestions from coworkers. Some co-workers provide their own supports by observing the behaviors of workplace peers, re-reading policy and procedure guides, or seeking

Ideally, all employees feel valued and share a common goal of being successful so that the place where they work can be successful –in terms of reputation, product quality, and/or personal services offered to customers. Ideally, this is the type of work environment your jobseeker is now entering with the expectation of long-term success as a valued member of that workplace, too.

Employers who have hired individuals with disabilities who had the right supports in place were highly satisfied with these workers, praising them for motivation, attention to quality of their work, and reliability, all of which reduced costs of having to hire and train new employees.³⁶

³⁵New entrepreneurs may get post-employment supports from their trade or professional associations, the Small Business Administration, financial advisors, attorneys, local Chambers of Commerce, and other entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship has not, however, been the focus of this Toolkit.

³⁶SOURCE: Hartnett, H. P., Stuart, H., Thurman, H., Loy, B., & Batiste, L. C. (2011). Employers' perceptions of the benefits of workplace accommodations: Reasons to hire, retain and promote people with disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 34(1), 17-23. DOI: 10.3233/JVR-2010-0530

additional training. Some B/Is provide retreats, mentoring, or in service training opportunities on a regular basis to boost employee morale and maintain or introduce new skills.

If you have come this far in this Do-It-Yourself Toolkit for Customizing Employment, chances are that the jobseeker you are supporting will need at least some customized post-employment supports. When you have worked this hard to become an employee, failing to meet expectations is not an option ***even if those expectations need to be re-negotiated as a post-employment support***. This is different than negotiating while the job is still being developed.

What are Customized Post-Employment Supports?

The short definition of customized post-employment supports is “whatever it takes to maintain integrated competitive employment to the satisfaction of the individual, co-workers, supervisors, and customers.” These supports are highly individualized (customized) to specific individuals in specific job situations. Providing post-employment supports never follows a “one size fits all” model.



Some individuals with disabilities who succeed in being hired for a competitive integrated job need no more short-term supports than a tour of their new work environment and the same orientation and pre-service training other employees receive about policies, procedures, and other workplace culture tips. The longer term supports they will need are the same types of re-training, encouragement, sharing of knowledge, help in temporarily easing another’s workload, problem-solving, and similar supports typical coworkers provide to each other in any workplace. Ideally, workplaces foster cooperation, teamwork, and a degree of camaraderie that makes this collaboration possible.

Because of how they learn, other employees with disabilities may just need “more of the same” – that is, longer or more frequent training and re-training, more encouragement especially if they need to ask for more information or help with their workload, and greater

assistance in solving problems. **Appendix GG** converts the task analysis form into a data collection tool to identify where the new hire is specifically having difficulties and where specially designed instruction (or assistive technology or other accommodations or even modifications) may be needed for success. However, you never want to stand around collecting this data on a new employee with a disability. It is devaluing to them and often upsetting to nondisabled coworkers.

When “more of the same” is needed – more either in terms of how frequently or for how long the supports are provided – these supports are also considered customized. Some employers are willing to provide “more of the same” without any outside help. Others may feel that this poses an undue burden on them and their employees so that there is an expectation someone else will be available to do this to meet the needs of the new employee.

See **Appendix HH** for some specific examples of customized post-employment supports.

Reasonable Accommodations Must be in Place

Post-employment supports may not be necessary if and when the reasonable accommodations needed by the employee are in place. In Part 5 on Job Search Planning, the issue of disclosure for the purposes of requesting reasonable accommodations was discussed. Here we will talk about actual accommodations in addition to assistive technology discussed there and later on in this section. A most comprehensive list of accommodations has been produced by the Job Accommodations Network or JAN. JAN has been funded by the United States Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, and contains extensive resources about accommodations organized in many accessible ways. These ways include information grouped for types of people (e.g., employers, jobseekers, or others) looking for information. Information is also grouped on <https://askjan.org/a-to-z.cfm> by disability, limitation (or the effect the disability has on work), work-related function, topic, and accommodation. There is also information on how to request accommodations and what to do if accommodations are denied. These accommodations have been vetted by representatives of private B/Is.



At this time, go to and explore the JAN - <https://askjan.org> or <https://askjan.org/> website. Look up the types of accommodations the employee might need. There are also examples of situations and solutions. If the jobseeker is still in school, exploring the different types of accommodations that may be helpful is a valid activity for the transition years. Use the form in **Appendix II**, JAN's Reasonable Accommodations Request form, to guide thinking about what types of reasonable accommodations to try. If this is being done for the first time after the individual is already employed, that same form should be use to request accommodations that might already have been identified during the job planning and job development stages. It can also be used for new accommodations should the need arise.

CAUTION: Think carefully about the accommodations an individual may need. Giving the employer the full list as an attachment is not a good idea. Also look for accommodations that incorporate other accommodations. For example, asking for a modified work area to address environmental sensitivities is preferable to listing individual devices or strategies.

What Else is Involved in Providing Post-Employment Supports?

The most critical aspect of customized post-employment supports is to monitor the employment relationship to ensure satisfaction of both the individual and the employer. These are on-the-job support services. They are provided to a new employee in order to stabilize the placement and enhance job retention. This monitoring should have been negotiated as part of the job development process.

Usually, this monitoring is the function of a “job coach” or “employment specialist.” It should not be the function of a parent because it is never good form to have your mom or dad at your place of employment making sure you are successful unless you are actually working for them! Nonetheless, it is important for families to understand what post-employment supports can be put into place so that they can contract with an individual or an agency to do this.

Job coaching. Job coaching is training and related supports provided on a one-to-one basis to individuals who need more support in order to learn and retain the job skills related to what they were hired to do. A job coach or employment specialist (JC/ES) breaks tasks down into manageable steps with the goal of allowing the new employee to perform the task independently. A JC/ES may initially work with a new employee to teach them the task. A better use of a JC/ES is, with the permission of the employer, for them to teach coworkers and supervisors how to work with the new employee if any special information is needed (e.g., “What to do if ____” or “The best way for this new employee to learn is ____”). Good JCs/ESs gradually reduce support as the employee becomes more successful and independent. Job coaching can also provide a transition to long-term employment supports.



Stop here to watch two videos so that you can better understand specific ways of providing customized learning opportunities when needed. In the video, [*Training in Systematic Instruction delivered by Mike Petrie - Bing video*](#), you will see how this JC/ES nonverbally cues the learner. In this video, Instructional Strategies for Acquisition and Maintenance of Customized Job Tasks https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEo22_6MFaQ

Long-term employment supports. Some new employees may still need additional individualized and even customized supports for the long-term. This may be because they are easily distracted, have difficulty remembering key information related to their own tasks or the workplace in general, are trying out new equipment, or are employed in a situation where their work responsibilities change frequently and require new instruction. There are many other situations in which long-term employment supports may be needed.

Supported employment and customized employment are not incompatible!

Long-term employment supports are called “supported employment.” These services are provided on a one-to-one basis to an employee who requires these supports in order to maintain skills related directly or indirectly to their job.

Long-term supported employment, however, does not always require a separate job coach on duty the entire time the employee is at work. Common types of customized long-term supports may include:

- Additional time and assistance to become oriented to, and assimilated into, the workplace environment.
- Additional time to learn job responsibilities and other aspects of the workplace culture.
- Individualized instruction to learn job responsibilities and behavioral expectations (e.g., what is allowed or not allowed by policy for all workers).
- More intensive and repetitive prompting to stay on task and perform the work assigned to them.
- Facilitation of social interactions with coworkers and supervisors by teaching them how to approach and appropriately engage with their new employee.
- Training to co-workers and supervisors about how to re-train and otherwise support the new employee in the long-term.
- Conducting scheduled visits to check in with the employee, coworkers, supervisors, and upper management.
- Availability in person or virtually to understand the employer's needs and offer suggestions, or plan to provide more intensive intermittent support, to make certain those needs are met.

What Are “Natural Supports?” This term has been met recently with some derision by people who are connected professionally to people with lived experience with disability. Why? Because we don't say, when we need help with something, “I called my natural support and they told me what to do.” We say “I called (insert the name and/or relationship of the person you called here) and they told me what to do.” Natural supports is a term used only in the disability world but its meaning is simple:

Natural Supports are not provided by staff specifically hired to support an employee at work. Natural supports usually are the people in the immediate environment or circle of support of a person with a disability who provides support to that person because they care about that person. Sometimes, people use this term to mean ordinary supports that any of us might use like a professor in a class if we have a question, the customer service department of a store, or any other community resources that are not specifically for people with disabilities.

What are Natural Supports at Work? Natural supports at work are almost always provided by co-workers or supervisors. Sometimes, a special division of a B/I like Human Resources or an Employee Assistance Program, a union representative, or colleagues in another B/I provide natural supports.

Assistive technology. You already read about various applications of assistive technology in the *Job Development* section of the Toolkit. Remember that typical employees often use



At this time, stop to look over **Appendix JJ**. This contains a table of the most commonly used terms for teaching tasks to individuals with challenges learning to do things in more typical ways.

For more details on any of the terms in this table, you may open a free account at the website of the OCALI Autism Internet Modules <https://autisminternetmodules.org/> and explore broader definitions, watch some videos of the techniques in action, and acquire a more in-depth knowledge of what these teaching tools. This is also a website to which you can direct a JC/ES – even if the employee they are supporting does not have autism. The important thing is to learn the technique and apply it appropriately to the individual employee so they can learn what to do at work.

“Systematic Instruction” is a very specific way of teaching people who have the most difficulty learning in traditional ways. It may be used overall but has documented success with individuals who otherwise may not have had success learning to do even simple tasks. **Appendix KK** has examples of how you, too, can use systematic instruction.

“low-tech” assistive technologies to support their work. Examples include their own to-do lists, post-it notes, tickler files, date books, calendars, etc. Mid-range assistive technology has included adding machines or calculators, answering machines, photocopying, and dictation machines. Many typical employees are also now using “high tech” assistive technology on personal electronic devices (PEDs) to do things like maintain their schedule,

provide prompts for when a meeting is to occur, keep track of important information, and even count the number of steps they take around the office each day!

Many times, assistive technology devices do not need to be customized for employees with disabilities but how they are used may need to be. For example, different software that provides visual support may be helpful for some people. A visual timer may be more useful than the standard countdown timer built into many PEDs. Although many people take photos just to have them, PED photos can be used to illustrate task steps or show where important places (e.g., where to go in the event of an emergency drill) are in the workplace.

Who Funds Post-Employment Supports?

The best answer to this should be “no one” because the supports an employee with a disability needs are provided by co-workers and supervisors, just like they are for everyone else. They also have access to assistive technology to support them. For some individuals, short-term support with the option of “intensive problem resolution” support in the future may be all that is needed. Generally speaking, however, this type of support is not funded without going through a number of processes involving a lot of red tape.

Supports can also be privately purchased. These may come out of an individual’s A.B.L.E. account or other personal savings, a special needs trust if one has been established to support employment, or their paycheck. There are special rules if funding for post-employment supports comes out of an employee’s paycheck so they are not penalized with SSI or SSDI

BRS will pay for short-term supports such as on-the-job training and time-limited job coaching. If the jobseeker is eligible for DDS services, both short- and long-term supports may be available through one of the many Medicaid waiver programs. When supports are received from state agencies, even if self-directed and paid for with an individual budget, preparing and maintaining employment records to justify expenses to those agencies will be necessary.

deductions. If this is the situation, please refer back to the Introduction to this Toolkit and especially the section called “*A Word about Loss of Public Benefits.*” Benefits counseling from BRS will also be useful if the employee receives a cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA), merit wage increase, bonus, or a promotion.

Follow-Along Supports

Another post-employment support to consider is follow-along support. Follow-along supports may never be needed. Occasionally, though, there needs to be a way to provide short-term services of a JC/ES.

Flexible problem resolution support. Problem resolution support as needed is one type of follow-along supports. In Part 6 on Job Development, the issue of disclosure was discussed. Employers who are knowledgeable and understand that some problems result from the disability are more likely to reach out to you or the JC/ES if a problem arises.



Support problem-resolution can occur in person or virtually or by phone. They do not always involve changing the behavior of the employee or providing them with additional instruction. Sometimes problem resolution requires coaching the employer and the employee, while respecting the business culture, organizational processes, and policies and procedures. Some JC/ES's maintain informal contact with employers through periodic phone or in person check-ins to address issues before problem resolution strategies need to be implemented.

Changing work assignments. Another type of follow-along support is when a JC/ES may need to step in to change what the employee is required to do as an alternative to losing their job. These measures are most likely needed when, despite the best of intentions, most careful planning, and most thoughtful job development, the employment is not resulting in a win-win for both the employee and the employer.

Sometimes, employers may already have an idea of what they want the employee to do if the original work assignment is not working out. However, they may need a JC/ES from outside their organization to teach new skills to the employee or emotionally support the employee during the transition from old to new assignments. Other times, the employer may need to be approached with specific ideas to negotiate changes in work assignments to prevent dissatisfaction resulting in job termination. These ideas may include, for example, reducing the number of assigned tasks, redefining the process by which the individual will complete a task in a manner that is different from the way the employer initially wanted them to do it (as long as the same quality and quantity outcomes is achieved), or to initiate a job carve. You may want to refer back to Part 2 of this Toolkit to remember how these supports were provided in the individual situations described.

Career advancement supports. Follow-along supports can also support an employee in self-advocating for additional responsibilities, promotion and career advancement, increased wages, and support provided after job starts. Some employees may be able to advocate for these independently, may have developed a relationship with a coworker or supervisor who can assist, or access other resources such as human resources or higher-level management who perform this service for all employees.

Other employees with disabilities may need targeted career advancement supports if they have been successfully working in the same job for an extended period of time, express a desire for change to others, or give indications that they are becoming bored with their work.

“A person going nowhere can be sure of reaching his destination. Take the first step in faith. You don’t have to see the whole staircase – just take the first step.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

It is helpful for family members to support the employee in knowing what options are available for career advancement, when and who to ask for help if career advancement or even a lateral transfer is desired for personal growth and development, or when it is time to start the process and seek employment in a different work setting altogether.

Additional Resources

- Assistive technology (AT) in the inclusive workplace. <https://abilitylinks.org/resources/assistive-technology-inclusive-workplace>
- The Case for Natural Supports in the Workplace. [The Case for Natural Supports in the Workplace | Tennessee Disability Coalition \(tndisability.org\)](https://tndisability.org/resources/natural-supports-in-the-workplace)
- Understanding the Role of the Job Coach <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nU91RemByw>





Part 8 - Conclusion

You have reached Part (8) of *Customizing Employment: A Do-It-Yourself Toolkit for Families, Volume 1, How-to Narrative*. Throughout this volume, you have been directed to Volume 2: *Companion Forms and Related Information of this Toolkit*. You have been introduced to the concepts of Employment First, the need for competitive integrated employment, and customized employment. You have been given activities and options which demonstrate that this Toolkit is not a lock-step progression to follow from unemployment to employment. You have seen that various aspect of the employment process – from recognizing the desire to work to being employed satisfactorily for the rest of your working years as an adult – can be customized separately depending on the needs of an individual jobseeker and, later, employee.

In Part 2, you were presented with examples of the many individuals who are successfully employed because of customization processes. The purpose of this section was to get you thinking about the wide range of options beyond what has traditionally been offered to people with disabilities, including those who others thought would never be able to have a real job, those who have had unsatisfying work experiences, those who are underemployed, and those who for whatever reason are unemployed.

Part 3 contained a wealth of information about how to get yourself organized. Suggestions were given for taking care of your own support needs, developing social capital for the jobseeker and yourself, running time-limited meetings that are effective and collaborative, and learning about potential sources of funding and the roles of specific state agencies.

Sections 4 through 7 each covered an essential component of customizing employment according to the generally accepted practices for customized employment. These are Discovery, Job Search Planning, Job Development, and Post-Employment Supports. Although these are presented sequentially, real life efforts to support anyone in achieving competitive integrated employment involves considerable overlap between these components in terms of time (and how you and the jobseeker spend it) and effort (i.e., what you accomplish for one component can either be used as is or in part for another).

Each of these parts describes, in narrative format, the essential understandings, skills, and

activities families hoping to support a jobseeker need to have. This is not to say that all readers must adopt all essential understandings, demonstrate all skills, and participate in all activities. Like any Toolkit, you can skip around, skim some sections or apply others intently, depending on what seems the best way for you to get the job done.

As promised in the beginning, some of the narrative provides explicit descriptions of concepts and skills. There are highlighted sections containing “STOP” signs which offer you the opportunity to take a break from reading and actually make some progress toward your mission of supporting a jobseeker achieve CIE. Pull-out or call-out sections, as well as illustrations, punctuate the narrative with words of encouragement or really important ideas to note. Littered throughout this narrative are references to various **Appendices** which contain forms and more in-depth explanations that you may find helpful.

Together, both volumes *Customizing Employment: A Do-It-Yourself Toolkit for Families* should provide any family with the information needed to lead the way in obtaining and maintaining employment for anyone who, because of their disability, needs a little more support.

“You can’t just sit there and wait for people to give you that golden dream. You’ve got to get out there and make it happen for yourself.”

-Diana Ross

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