



Job Placement for People with Disabilities

Section Purpose

Provide One-Stop staff a comprehensive understanding of the process for assisting individuals with significant disabilities to obtain employment.

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Job Development for People with Disabilities: Overview

Assisting people with disabilities to find employment is in many ways not much different than working with any other customer. Like anyone else, people with disabilities need to:

- have a clear idea of the type of job they wish to pursue
- consider what type of work environment would be the best fit for them
- use their personal and professional networks as a key component of their job search.

The biggest difference for people with disabilities is that they may need some support and assistance as they go through a job search, and that some of the steps are somewhat more planful, intensive and deliberate. There also may be some considerations that must be addressed as a result of their disability, such as disclosure of disability to employers. Many of the techniques used to assist people with disabilities are also effective with other individuals who are considered to have “barriers” to employment.

Job ready? Jobs now! The issue of job readiness and job matching

Programs and services for people with disabilities have often focused on the concept of “job readiness”, spending months and even years getting an individual “ready” for employment. However, one thing that has been proven consistently is that professional “experts” are poor predictors of who will and won’t succeed in employment.

Instead of worrying about job readiness, focus on “job matching”: finding a job environment and description that suit the current interests, support needs, personality, and skills of the individual with a disability. Starting with the belief that anyone can work, provided that they have a job that’s a good match, will go a long way towards assisting people with disabilities to find employment. Once people are done with their formal education, they are for the most part as “job ready” as they are going to be. As advocate Gerry Provencal has said, “We’re far too patient with the passage of time for people with disabilities. Time is as precious for a person with a disability as it is for all of us.”

Examples of good job matching

- A woman who is loud and boisterous gets a job working in a warehouse, where other people are loud and sociable. Another person with a similar personality gets a job in a “bargain basement” sales floor which is full of activity.
- An individual with limited physical movements, who uses a wheelchair, gets a job doing data entry. He enters data by hooking his augmentative communication device (a computerized device through which he “speaks”) into a computer.
- An individual who is quiet, and prefers not to interact with others, gets a job doing filing and other solitary clerical tasks.
- A man who has issues with hygiene gets a job in a recycling plant.
- A person who needs periodic assistance gets a job in an office environment where people work in an open space with a good deal of interaction.
- A person whose disability is cyclical in nature gets a job in an environment that offers flexible hours and time off policies.
- A woman with mental retardation, who needs periodic monitoring, gets a housekeeping job in a hotel cleaning the public areas (the lobby, offices, hallways). She uses a picture book to keep track of her tasks.

The role of further education and training

The emphasis on job matching does not preclude consideration of additional job training and education (possibly through the use of an ITA to enhance an individual's job skill). People with disabilities, like others, may need such training to attain work goals.

Job development where to begin

In assisting a customer with a disability to find employment, the One-Stop system staff should begin by working with the individual as they would with any other customer, selecting the most useful options from the full range of services and resources that exist within the center. What classes, assessment tools, and activities are available? Does the person need to work on their resume or interview skills? Will there be on-site employer presentations and interviews in which the person can participate? During this process, One-Stop staff should work with the individual to determine:

- the types of assistance and accommodations the person will need to fully access and benefit from One-Stop services.
- the additional supports and resources — beyond the typical One-Stop services — the person needs to find and keep a job.

Use ALMIS

As with any other customer, One-Stop staff should assist people with disabilities to use the resources of America's Labor Market Information System (ALMIS) and America's Career Kit. Among these resources are:

- America's Job Bank (www.ajb.org), the world's largest pool of active job opportunities.
- America's Learning Xchange (www.alx.org), which provides information on career exploration, training, education, testing, assessment, and other career tools.
- America's Career InfoNet (www.acinet.org), which includes a wealth of information on job trends, wages, and national and local labor markets.
- O*NET Online (<http://online.onetcenter.org/>), a database that describes a wide variety of occupations, their requisite skills, and earnings potential.
- The assessment and career exploration tools of O*NET (Interest Profiler, Work Importance Locator, Ability Profiler). Additional information on these O*NET tools is available at: www.onetcenter.org/product/tools.html

Get beyond task skills

Job development for people with disabilities tends too often to focus exclusively on an individual's task skills. Yet many people (with and without disabilities) succeed or fail on a job based not on their skills but how well they fit into the social environment of the workplace. When developing successful employment opportunities, consider:

- What environments does the individual enjoy?
- In what environments have they succeeded?
- What social skills do they bring to the work environment?
- In what environments would their personality & social skills be considered an asset? For example, a customer service director would value a friendly, outgoing applicant; a quiet person might be better off doing clerical work.
- What types of work environments should be avoided?

The tools for the task

This section contains a variety of additional information and tools to help One-Stop staff work with people who have disabilities.

- **Why Employers Hire People with Disabilities** - A summary of research whose findings may surprise you
- **Employment Issues for People with Mental Illness** - A piece that addresses specific issues concerning job development and placement for people with mental health issues
- **Person-Centered Placement Planning** - A discussion of specific strategies that can be helpful in assisting job seekers with disabilities in planning their job searches
- **Career Exploration** - Sometimes a person - especially someone who hasn't had much job experience - needs to gather more information before undertaking a job search. This piece gives a list of specific ideas for career exploration.
- **Dealing with Gaps in Work History** - Strategies for individuals who have significant periods of unemployment as part of their work histories
- **Contacting Employers - Disclosure, Interviews, and Accommodation** - A review of issues to be considered when an individual applies for employment
- **Disclosure of Non-Apparent or Hidden Disabilities** - An information piece that examines the pros and cons of disclosure for people whose disabilities are not readily apparent
- **Conducting a Job Interview: Accommodating Persons with Disabilities** - A piece on interviews and accommodations designed to be shared with employers
- **Pre-Employment Inquiries & People with Disabilities** - An overview of what employers can and cannot ask of job applicants
- **Employer Tips on Interviewing Applicants with Disabilities** - Guidelines for interviewing for One-Stop staff to share with employers
- **One-Stop Staff - Contacting Employers** - A discussion of issues involved when One-Stop staff contact employers on behalf of an individual with a disability
- **Financial Incentives for Hiring People with Disabilities** - A summary of various tax credits and financial incentives that are available to employers who hire individuals with disabilities
- **Business Leadership Networks** - A USDOL program which can assist One-Stop systems in building employer relationships
- **Checklist: Placement Planning & Job Development** - This tool provides a comprehensive listing of issues that should be considered during the job development and placement process
- **Job Development Planning Tool** - Steps to take when assisting a person with a disability to plan a job search
- **Finding the Right Job - Job Seeker Planning Tool** - A tool that can be used by job seekers for career exploration and planning

Why Employers Hire People with Disabilities

When working with individuals where the employer will knowingly be hiring an individual with a disability (either because the disability is readily apparent or the individual has chosen to disclose his/her disability), identifying employment opportunities requires that One-Stop staff determine what business needs can be met by hiring a person with a disability. The Institute for Community Inclusion and Boston College Center for Work and Family held focus group discussions with employers and identified three categories of benefits that employers receive when they knowingly hire people with disabilities:

- 1) **Benefits Directly Related to Business Objectives** - hiring people with disabilities meets the organization's personnel needs by filling vacancies.
- 2) **Benefits Indirectly Related to Business Objectives** - hiring individuals with disabilities benefits a company's long-term viability and profitability by enhancing the corporate image and demonstrating a commitment to the community.
- 3) **Benefits Related to Organizational Values** - hiring people with disabilities reflects the organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility, and is viewed as "the right thing to do"; the benefits to the company are of secondary importance in comparison to the outcomes expected for the employee with a disability and for the community at large.

In addition to the company's values, the decision to hire a person with a disability may be influenced by the personal values of the hiring manager, particularly if they have a family member, friend, or neighbor with a disability.

Through discussions with employers as well as observation, One-Stop staff and the job seeker should try to determine why the business is potentially interested in hiring an individual with a disability.

- If an employer is strictly motivated by Category 1, One-Stop staff and the job seeker will have to demonstrate that hiring the individual will provide direct economic benefit. There will probably be less flexibility around how the job is designed and the individual is supported.
- On the other hand, if the employer is motivated by Categories 2 and 3, the company will likely be more committed to "making it work." This presents the opportunity for greater flexibility and more creative solutions. However, these categories should never be viewed as hiring as an "act of charity" — it is simply that the decision to hire is based on criteria other than straight-forward economic return. It is still paramount — for the long-term success of the individual and for people with disabilities in general — that the job be performed competently in a socially inclusive work environment.

What has been interesting in the experience of those who have spent significant time assisting people with disabilities to find employment, is the number of employers who initially hire a person with a disability for reasons 2 and 3 who were "pleasantly surprised" that the person turned out to be a "good employee." These experiences show that much work needs to be done to change the mis-perception that many people with disabilities cannot be fully productive participants in the labor force.

Based in part on material from:

Pitt-Catsophas, M., Butterworth, J. (1995). Different Perspectives: Workplace Experience with the Employment of Individuals with Disabilities. Boston College

Employment Issues for People with Mental Illness

By Amanda Sawires Yager, Institute for Community Inclusion

One of the most misunderstood disabilities is mental illness. Major advances have been made in the understanding and treatment of mental illness, and are continuing to be made. Through a combination of counseling, medication, self-help groups and other support services, many people with mental illness lead very productive lives. One-Stop system staff may have significant concerns and questions about their ability to meet the needs of people with mental illness. However, as with any other individual with a disability, by simply practicing good customer service, combined with respect, understanding, and following some simple guidelines, One-Stop staff can assist many people with mental health issues to find employment and advance in their careers. People with mental illness include doctors, lawyers, software engineers, university professors with Ph.D.'s., architects, teachers - people from virtually every profession and background.

Although a person with a psychiatric disability might have complex needs, this does not preclude his/her ability to contribute through working. One of the most significant barriers to employment for people with mental health issues are attitudes: their own, those of family members and helping professionals, and employers. Poor work history or poor social behavior can also be barriers.

How to Help

The following principles have been shown to be effective in helping people with mental illness to get jobs. One-Stop staff need to:

- believe that the goal of employment is both valuable and possible
- be able to instill hope, support, and enthusiasm for the goal of work
- be aware that using a variety of strategies is most likely to lead to success
- understand that employment advocacy is crucial.

An essential element for success is to have the job seeker direct the job search and be involved in all aspects of the process. As with any job seeker, it is essential to do everything possible to ensure a good match between the individual and the work environment.

The Issue of Stigma

People with mental illness are probably more overtly stigmatized and discriminated against than are those with other disability labels. This, in combination with the symptoms of the illnesses themselves, leads to an unemployment rate estimated to be as high as 90%. Dealing with the stigma of mental illness may be more handicapping to the individual than the effect of the disability itself! That is why it is so important for One-Stop staff to provide an environment of hope, belief, and support.

Myths and Facts about Mental Illness

Background Information on Mental Illness

MYTH: Mental illness is rare.

FACT: Mental illnesses are more common than cancer, diabetes, or heart disease. In any given year, more than five million Americans experience an acute episode of mental illness. One in every five families is affected in their lifetime by a severe mental illness, such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and major depression. (Source: NAMI)

MYTH: Someone who is mentally ill is likely to get much worse.

FACT: The course of severe mental illness over an extended period of time is not necessarily just maintenance (staying the same) or regression (getting worse). The treatment success rate for schizophrenia is 60 percent, 65 percent for major depression, and 80 percent for bipolar disorder. Comparatively, the success rate for heart disease ranges from 41 to 52 percent. One half to two thirds of people with schizophrenia achieve considerable improvement or recovery over 20 to 25 years. With time, resources, ongoing intervention, and enough support, an individual can reach significant employment outcomes.

MYTH: If someone looks or acts odd it means that staff need to be concerned about the potential for violence.

FACT: Contrary to media focus, individuals with mental illness are no more prone to violence than the general public, and in fact, are more likely to be the victims of violence than the perpetrators. The exception is adding the presence of substance abuse, which increases the likelihood of aggressive behaviors (as it does with the general public).

Who Can Work

MYTH: If someone's mental illness is not under control, they are not "job ready".

FACT: Individuals with complex needs, including psychiatric disabilities, have often been labeled as not "job ready". However, individuals with similar needs can be found working successfully in the community. Waiting for all disability-related issues to be under control may mean that the customer is never judged to be "ready". Job readiness really happens when "the skills, interests, values and needs of a person [are matched] with the demands of a specific job and the values and needs of a particular employer." (Marrone, Gandolfo, Gold, Hoff, 1998). Job readiness is a dynamic, not a static, concept.

MYTH: The stress of working is likely to cause relapses for someone with severe mental illness.

FACT: Part of the stress response for these individuals is the knowledge that the typical new worker adjustment period might be misread as a recurrence of mental illness symptoms. All people undergo stress in making major life changes, both positive and negative ones. If the changes caused by a new job are planned and have built-in supports, stress can be minimized. Individuals who are taught coping skills to anticipate potential problems are likely to do better at handling stressful situations. Education on self-monitoring can be an important tool for the individual adjusting to a new work environment.

MYTH: A person with mental illness who states he/she is not ready to enter the world of work is obviously not ready.

FACT: Individuals with mental illness may be fearful at the prospect of work due to poor self esteem or inexperience. These individuals need to build confidence through career

exploration activities, such as those listed elsewhere in this section. One-Stops can assist such individuals by gradually introducing them to the world of work, through classes on interview techniques and resume building, informational interviews, job shadowing, tours, and so on. Participating in group activities at a One-Stop Center, especially activities which include individuals without disabilities, can be particularly helpful in building the confidence of people with mental illness.

MYTH: If customers request or need help to get a job, they are not ready to work.

FACT: Asking for help is a sign of health, not weakness. The professional is there not to “do it all” but to enhance that customer’s skills, presentation, and self-confidence. Professionals can help by:

- identifying assets
- providing training and support
- gathering information
- presenting options
- counseling on implications
- bringing in other contacts.

Securing Employment

MYTH: A person with mental illness always needs specialized disability resources to get a job.

FACT: Specialized resources can help, but basic strategies are always useful. Networking, in particular, is invaluable to all job seekers. People with mental illness may find that connections are helpful in lessening the chance of being automatically rejected due to lack of recent job experience, gaps in work history, previous terminations from jobs, and discriminatory attitudes.

MYTH: If a person with mental illness is really motivated to work he/she should be willing to try out any job.

FACT: Every person has different needs and concerns. Severe mental illnesses often arise in late adolescence or early adulthood. A person with a mental illness therefore, may not have had the opportunity for much vocational exploration and, early on in the personal journey into (or back into) employment, may need to try out different jobs based on preferences as opposed to aptitude, knowledge, or experience.

MYTH: A person with a mental illness should only work at low stress jobs that require no interpersonal contact.

FACT: While mental illness can cause problems in interpersonal relations, each person’s strengths and deficits are different, as are each job’s requirements. (For example, the interpersonal skills needed for a desk clerk at a Motel 6 are different than those required for a desk clerk at a five-star hotel.) Rather than broadly generalizing about personal barriers, it is best to help job seekers with mental illness understand their own capabilities and how those capabilities fit into a specific job match.

MYTH: Since it seems impossible to find a job listing that fits a particular customer, it is unlikely he/she will be able to find any appropriate job.

FACT: There are many points of entry into the world of work. Networking and personal relationships are important ways to create jobs that fit. Employers are much more flexible than we often realize. One-Stop staff should work on finding out the needs of employers and proposing to fill them in a way that is a “win-win” for all involved.

Employer Issues

MYTH: Only employers who are “Good Samaritans” will hire someone with mental illness.

FACT: Employers hire people with mental illness for a number of reasons. The primary reason is the same reason that they hire anyone else - in order to get the services of a good employee. Additionally, employers may hire an individual with a mental illness because they appreciate the consultation and support that an agency offers, and/or because they believe it is the right thing to do. For more information, see the piece “Why Employers Hire People with Disabilities” elsewhere in this section.

MYTH: Employers need to know that a person has a mental illness

FACT: Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, employers cannot ask about a person’s disability, and people are under no obligation to disclose that they have a disability. It is essential to discuss the issue of disclosure with a customer early in the job hunting process, and to help that person make an informed choice about the best course of action to pursue. See the discussion on disclosure in the piece entitled, “Contacting Employers: Disclosure, Interviews, and Accommodations” elsewhere in this section.

MYTH: Employment settings are limited in their ability to handle people who are perceived as deviating from the norm.

FACT: Community settings can and do accommodate a range of skills and behaviors, and employers are getting better every day at creating environments which value and support a wide range of personalities. Advocacy and a good person-job match are key to a successful job search.

MYTH: It is very difficult to accommodate a worker with a mental illness.

FACT: By definition, accommodation is specific to an individual and a job. There are many types of possible accommodations, such as flexible work schedules, job creation and job carving, and providing a co-worker mentor. It is important to approach the issue of accommodations with an employer in the spirit of cooperation. Most data show that accommodation costs are minimal (less than \$500) in the overwhelming majority of situations. See Section 6, “Job Accommodations”, for additional information and examples.

MYTH: If person with mental illness gets a job and it does not work out, it means that that person is less likely to succeed in another job.

FACT: Different job situations, even the same job titles with different employers, have both similarities and differences. When a person with a mental illness loses a job, that person should not be precluded from seeking another job right away. The fact that the person was successful in becoming employed should be celebrated. At the same time, help the person understand what went awry and how it can be avoided in the future. The loss of a job can be a learning experience. Focus on what the individual learned about his/her strengths and abilities, and then use this knowledge to find a better job!

References

- Marrone, J., Balzell, A., Gold, M. (1995). *Employment Supports for People with Mental Illness*. *Psychiatric Services* 46(7), 707-711.
- Marrone, J., Gandolfo, C., Gold, M., Hoff, D. (1998). *Just Doing It: Helping People with Mental Illness Get Good Jobs*. *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*, 29 (1), 37-48.
- Marrone, J., Gold, G. (1994). *Supported Employment for People with Mental Illness: Myths & Facts*. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 60 (4), 38-47.
- National Alliance for Mentally Ill (www.nami.org)

Person-Centered Placement Planning

Anyone conducting a job search should do some type of planning, to ensure that the objectives and goals for the job search are clear, that the steps in the process have the best chance of resulting in a successful job search, and to avoid wasting time, going off in arbitrary directions. Job seekers vary significantly in the amount of planning that needs to be done, before undertaking an active job search. Some job seekers have a fairly clear idea of what type of job they are looking for, based on their past experience, education, skills and personal preferences. Others need to spend substantial amount of time doing some upfront planning, determining what direction makes the most sense, and possibly doing some significant soul searching, before moving ahead in the job search process. Job seekers with disabilities are no different.

Like other individuals, some people with disabilities (but not all) need to undertake a substantial and deliberate planning process, before actively seeking a job. The reality for many people with disabilities, is that they have had limited work and life experience on which to base their job search decisions, and also have limited expectations for themselves. Some people with disabilities have also had limited experience in making decisions for themselves, and are used to deferring to others. Some job seekers with disabilities therefore may not be sure of what type of job to pursue, may have abstract ideas about the type of job they may enjoy based on limited information, or may only be interested in a field of work only because others have told them that's what they would be good at.

A good planning process for people with disabilities (and anyone else) must be empowering to the individual, and promote self-reflection, personal insight, creativity and a wide range of possibilities. A useful approach is “person-centered” planning, which develops individual solutions through collaboration, creative thought, and group problem solving. This planning process is not a whole lot different than that used by many other job seekers. Some key elements are:

- initial focus on helping a person identify needs, interests, choices, desires, and dreams
- identify employment options that fit well with the job seeker's personal vision
- the professional's role is to guide and support the individual, not to be an “expert” who makes decisions on the person's behalf
- family, friends and community resources help generate career directions, employment contacts, and supports
- consideration of relevant multicultural issues.

Suggested Steps in the Planning Process

Determine what needs to be decided

Does the job seeker have a general idea of what they want, and just needs to narrow it down? Or is the person at square one, and need to do some significant planning and assessment before moving forward?

Decide whom else to involve

Job development is far more effective and efficient when a variety of ideas, perspectives, and business contacts are contributed. Essentially, the job seeker needs three things from others: assistance in developing a clear vision about the type of job to pursue; information about the needs of the job market; and contacts for job leads and career exploration. Potential participants include:

- **Job seeker contacts:** Taking advantage of personal networks is often key for many people, with and without disabilities. One-Stop staff should help the job seeker generate contacts (people who can help with their job search), such as family, friends, housemates, proprietors of places they do business with, organizations in which they are involved, former co-workers, school contacts, other professionals in their life, etc. Particularly for people who are struggling in determining a direction to go in a job search, it can be extremely helpful to involve others who can provide different perspectives, share some of their positive experiences they have had with the individual, and help move beyond the self-reporting of the individual as the only source of information. Note: Individuals vary significantly in their comfort level concerning others' involvement in their career planning and job search. One-Stop staff should discuss the advantages of such involvement, try to minimize the job seeker's uncertainties, but proceed with this approach only if the individual is comfortable.
- **One-Stop contacts:** As an organization dedicated to meeting the employment and training needs of job seekers, One-Stops obviously have many contacts that can be utilized, including staff members, businesses with which the One-Stop has existing relationships, other job seekers, etc.

Decide what the job seeker needs from others

Contacts for job leads? Help to determine a direction for the job search? Ideas on how to explore career possibilities? Before involving others, the job seeker and One-Stop staff should clarify what they need.

Decide the method(s) for involving others

The involvement of others can happen in many ways. The job seeker or One-Stop staff can make personal contact to gather ideas, information, and contacts. However, the dynamics and energy of a group "brainstorming" session can offer significant benefits if the job seeker is comfortable with this type of meeting. Successful placement of people with disabilities in community jobs requires a never-ending supply of creativity. Brainstorming, especially in a large group, can be a very effective way to create the energy and enthusiasm needed to generate ideas and maximize creativity in the job search.

Do some exploring

The typical job planning process gathers information such as education and work experiences. In a person-centered planning process it's important to delve beyond these basic facts. Help the job seeker really explore their life:

- ◆ When, where, and in what kinds of environments/places have they currently or in the past:
 - had the most success
 - been happiest
 - enjoyed themselves
 - found fulfillment
 - not enjoyed or not liked what they were doing
- ◆ What do they like to do with their free time?
- ◆ What types of hobbies do they enjoy?
- ◆ Is the individual part of any clubs or organizations?

- ◇ Include both past and present experiences
- ◇ Be sure to look at all aspects of the individual's life: school, home, community, and employment experiences
- ◇ Explore the underlying reasons why the job seeker has felt either positively or negatively about experiences and activities.

Develop a Job Search Profile

From the information generated, develop

- a job exploration or job search goal
- a list of the important criteria for the type of positions that would be a good match

The primary criteria in developing this list should be the job seeker's own interests and preferences, not what others consider appropriate for the individual. The profile can have a specific goal such as "working in an office doing clerical work," or more general such as "work involving music," or "a position requiring no customer contact." The profile can include a number of options. For each criterion, note whether it is absolutely essential/required or somewhat optional. A list of possible criteria to consider are contained in the piece "Career Exploration" elsewhere in this section.

Develop a Plan of Action

Questions that need to be considered at this point:

- Is there enough information available to begin the job search?
- Does the job seeker need to undertake some career exploration activities to assess potential ideas and generate more information before beginning the actual job search? Career exploration activities include such things as: community and business research, informational interviewing, job tours, job shadowing, volunteer work, and situational assessment. (See the piece "Career Exploration" in this section for suggestions.)

In the action plan, be sure to specify:

- tasks to be completed by the job seeker
- tasks to be completed by One-Stop staff
- tasks to be completed by other individuals who are part of the career exploration and job development process

Revise the Plan of Action as Needed

If the plan's goal is further career exploration, clearly this plan will need to be revised once enough information has been generated to begin the actual job search. It is also a good rule of thumb to revisit and possibly revise a plan every 30 to 45 days if an individual is still not employed.

This section also includes two forms:

"Job Development Planning Tool," to guide One-Stop staff, and "Finding the Right Job - A Tool for Jobseekers". These simple tools may be helpful in conducting a person-centered career planning process.

Develop a step-by-step action plan by considering the following:

- What would it take to accomplish...?
- What are the next steps towards these goals?
- Who is the most logical person to take each step?
- Who else do we need to get involved? Who are the experts? Who knows them?
- What can each person commit to?

From: Butterworth, J., Hagner, D., Heikkinen, B., Faris, S., DeMello, S., McDonough, K. (1993). Whole Life Planning: A Guide for Organizers and Facilitators. Boston: Institute for Community Inclusion

The Setting Makes a Difference

Group brainstorming can be done at the One-Stop Center. However, as an alternative, consider holding it:

- ◆ at the person's home, a restaurant, or some other relaxed social setting where the job seeker feels more in control. Experience in working with people with significant disabilities has shown that removing a group planning process from the typical settings (e.g. agency offices) can have an extremely positive impact on the session's quality and outcomes.
- ◆ in the evening or on the weekend. This is especially important when the job seeker wishes to involve personal contacts (such as family and friends), who may be busy during traditional business hours.

Guidelines for Brainstorming

- ◆ Generate lots of ideas. The goal is generate is to come up with as many ideas as possible concerning possible jobs, careers, contacts for job leads, etc.
- ◆ Involve everyone and anyone. Involve as many people as possible
- ◆ Get different perspectives. Avoid having most or all participants from the same group or background. Involve people who know the job seeker from a variety of settings, and people who bring a variety of life experiences to the table.
- ◆ Search for different questions. Different questions can lead to new and different ideas. For example, answers to the question "What jobs is Jose qualified for?", may lead to a limited set of ideas. However, asking the question "What does Jose really love to do?", or "Where does Jose have the most fun?" may lead to new and creative ideas.
- ◆ There are no wrong answers – all ideas are valid. Rule # 1 of any brainstorming session – naysayers aren't allowed. Ideas that initially seem off-the-wall and unrealistic can often lead to creative real solutions.
- ◆ Have Fun! Brainstorming sessions should avoid any pretext of a formal meeting. While the intent is serious, keep the atmosphere casual and relaxed, so people can let their minds roam freely, and feel comfortable lots of different ideas. An important tip: refreshments and food help!

Resources on person-centered planning

Whole Life Planning: A Guide for Organizers and Facilitators

by John Butterworth, David Hagner, Bonnie Heikkinen, Sherill Faris, Shirley DeMello, Kirsten McDonough (1993).

Published by:

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Voice: (707) 448-2283
www.allenshea.com/listentome.html

It's Never Too Early, It's Never Too Late: A Booklet About Personal Futures Planning,

by Beth Mount and Kay Zwernik (1988).

Published by:

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Planning Possible Positive Futures: Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope

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Career Exploration

People's interests are strongly influenced by what they have experienced in life. The reality for many people with disabilities is that their life experiences have been very limited. As a result, a good planning process will need to include real opportunities for the individual to explore the world of work and develop preferences and interests. Good career exploration gathers information not only on specific interests and skills, but also on the personal characteristics and other attributes that the job seeker has to offer, and the work environments and culture that will be the best and most supportive fit.

Have you ever had a certain impression about what a certain field of work was like, only to have that impression change significantly once you worked in that field or explored it more closely? Like anyone else, people with disabilities may express an interest in a field, but have a limited understanding about what it entails. Additionally, they may have a finite view of the types of jobs that are available. The following are methods for helping people with disabilities (or any job seeker) determine what direction to go with their job search.

Assessment and Career Exploration Tools

America's Labor Market Information System and America's Career Kit has a number of excellent resources:

- America's Career InfoNet (www.acinet.org), which includes a wealth of information on job trends, wages and national and local labor markets.
- O*NET Online (<http://online.onetcenter.org/>), is a database that describes a wide variety of occupations, their requisite skills, and earnings potential.
- O*NET Career Assessment and Exploration Tools, which include:
 - Interest Profiler - A self-assessment career exploration tool, where participants identify and learn about broad interest areas most relevant to their-related interests.
 - Work Importance Locator - A self-assessment career exploration tool which helps clarify what an individual finds most important in jobs.
 - Ability Profiler - An ability assessment developed for counseling and career exploration which measure nine job-relevant abilities.

*[Additional information on these O*NET tools is available at www.onetcenter.org/product/tools.html]*

As with any other customer, One-Stop staff should help customers with disabilities use these and similar tools, for career assessment and exploration.

Research

Like any other job seekers, business and community research can help an individual with a disability learn what types of jobs are available (and not available), areas of growth, and who the area's biggest employers are. Research on specific professions and employers can help to plan a job search and identify business contacts. The tools of America's Workforce Network available at One-Stop Centers, and online, can be an excellent starting point including America's Career InfoNet, and O*NET Online, described above.

Besides the tools of America's Workforce Network, One-Stop Center are likely to have other information sources in their resource library. Sources for information include:

- annual reports
- business publications
- newspapers
- directly contacting the employer for an information packet.

The advent of the internet has made collecting such information much easier, and it's recommended that the world wide web be used as the starting point for such research. The Career Resource Library of America's Career InfoNet provides links to other internet based resources.

Experiential Methods

While these can be good starting points, activities that expose individuals to the realities, dynamics, and idiosyncrasies of real work environments can be invaluable. Also, due to a variety of issues (limited life experience, cognitive limitations, etc.), standard assessment tools do not always fully or accurately reflect the interests and capabilities of many people with disabilities.

The following experiential methods can help determine the types of positions to explore in the actual job development process. The connections that the One-Stop system has with the employer community should make it relatively simple to arrange those activities that involve direct employer contact. The One-Stop system will find these methods useful not only for customers with disabilities, but for all job seekers. In fact, many local One-Stop systems may already have many of these and similar services available to assist job seekers.

- **Informational Interviewing:** Informational interviewing involves meeting with an employer, not for a job interview, but simply to gather information about the business. It is a wonderful way to increase job seekers' knowledge of a field; it also provides the opportunity to gain experience interacting with employers without the pressure of a hiring decision.
- **Job Tours:** Similar to informational interviewing, touring various businesses exposes the job seeker and One-Stop staff to a variety of jobs and work environments.
- **Job Shadowing:** Job shadowing involves spending time observing an individual as he/she performs a job. This can last for an hour, an entire work day, or a series of days, depending on the nature of the job and the level of interest of the job seeker.
- **Volunteer Work:** Doing volunteer work can be a helpful step for some individuals and for certain fields. For example, many people enter the human service and radio/television production fields through volunteer work and internships. Certain cautions apply:
 - ◆ From a values standpoint, it is important to recognize that volunteer work is not a substitute for paid employment. As part of the career development process, keep volunteering brief, and make sure that the goal remains employment.
 - ◆ For both legal and ethical reasons, people with disabilities should only do volunteer work that is similar to what other members of the community are doing as volunteers.
 - ◆ It can sometimes take enormous effort to find a volunteer job for a person with a significant disability. Such effort may be better spent on finding paid employment!
 - ◆ A final word: Volunteer work is an option for some people in specific situations, but it is not for everyone.

- **Temporary Work Assignments:** A short-term, temporary work assignment can help an individual determine whether or not a job or setting suits them, and adds experience to a resume.
- **Situational Assessment:** Situational assessment means trying out a job in the community, for a few hours up to a few days, so the job seeker can determine if they are well-suited for that type of work. Individuals are often paid by a non-employer source for situational assessments. State Vocational Rehabilitation (a One-Stop partner) or local community rehabilitation providers may be able to assist in arranging situational assessment. For a detailed explanation of situational assessment, see the book *Demystifying Job Development* (reference at the end of this article).

What Method to Use

There is “no one right way” to go about career exploration; methods will vary depending on the needs and abilities of each individual. To determine which methods will be the most useful, consider the following points:

- Choose methods that are appropriate to the individual. For example, someone who has limited interpersonal communication skills and abilities will probably not benefit from an informational interview, and might be better off doing a situational assessment.
- Use the methods that provide the most information in the shortest time so the individual can move ahead with the actual job search.

No matter what methods are used as part of the career exploration process, it’s important to gather certain information:

- What types of work are available in the fields that interest the job seeker?
- What skills do these jobs require?
- In what types of work cultures and environments is the individual comfortable?
- What types of jobs meet the specific requirements of the job seeker?

Placement Planning and Career Exploration: Areas to Look At

When determining the types of employment opportunities to pursue, the focus is often on the individual’s job skills and where these can be applied. Yet many people (with and without disabilities) succeed or fail on a job based on how well they fit into the social environment of the workplace. When developing successful employment opportunities, consider: where would an individual’s personality be considered a real asset? (For instance, a friendly, outgoing personality is an important attribute for a customer service job.) A list of possible criteria to examine as part of the career exploration process are listed below under “Placement Planning and Career Exploration: Areas to Look At”

As the career exploration process progresses, the job developer and job seeker should be looking for common themes among areas of interest. For example, an individual may have explored several different fields. While the person may have had interest in a variety of jobs, the ones where he/she is most intrigued may be jobs where there is a great deal of interaction with others, where there is a low level of supervision, which have an informal work atmosphere, which have a variety of tasks, or which focus on a specific area.

The following lists some areas for consideration when undertaking career exploration and planning. This information can be used as part of a job search profile, and also in evaluating a career exploration experience. Use these criteria to examine two perspectives:

- 1) the requirements of a field or specific job
- 2) the degree of importance that a job seeker places on each requirement

In no way is this list exhaustive. Add your own ideas!

- Types of jobs and businesses that are of interest
- Geographic area for job search
- Minimal salary and benefit requirements
- Number of hours of work per day/week
- Time of day and week requirements (mornings, evenings, overnights, weekends, holidays)
- Access to public transit
- Connection with seeker's past education and training
- Personal attributes of job seeker that could be an asset within a job setting (e.g., friendly, helpful, neat, attention to detail, quiet)
- Formality or informality of workplace
- Amount of supervision desired/required
- Level of interaction with co-workers and supervisors
- Camaraderie and sociability of employees
- Level of worker autonomy
- Repetitiveness of tasks
- Variety of tasks
- Flexibility and opportunity for changes in routine
- Availability of training
- Opportunities for career advancement
- Stamina and endurance requirements
- Mobility requirements (i.e., need to move around in an area or within a work facility)
- Communication requirements
- Production rate/speed requirements
- Strength: lifting and carrying
- Manual dexterity
- Reading requirements
- Mathematics/counting
- Level of independence required
- Customer contact
- Dress requirements
- Need to work independently
- Complexity of tasks
- Amount of self-initiative required
- Need/ability to tell time and time awareness
- Stress and pressure of position
- Need to ask for assistance
- Area orientation requirements (small work area, large work area, entire building, several buildings, etc.)
- Environment: noise, temperature, indoors/outdoors

Based in part on material from:

*Hoff, D., Gandolfo, C., Gold, M., Jordan, M., (2000).
Demystifying Job Development, TRN, St. Augustine,
FL. Web site: www.trninc.com; e-mail: trn@aug.com;
voice: (800) 280-7010*

Dealing with Gaps in Work History

By David Hoff, Institute for Community Inclusion

Sometimes people with disabilities have significant periods of unemployment or gaps in their work history. Unfortunately, these gaps are often a “red flag” to employers. If a job seeker has had periods of unemployment, she/he and One-Stop system staff need to develop strategies to address these gaps. Simply hoping the employer won’t notice is not likely to be effective!

When To Address Work History Gaps

The first question that must be answered is when to address this issue. Should it be addressed in the resume or cover letter? Or should the job seeker wait until the interview? There is no right or wrong answer. As with many issues, it ultimately comes down to what the job seeker is comfortable with.

- The plus of addressing it early is that the employer will be fully aware of the situation prior to the interview, thus reducing the negative impact on the interview situation itself. However, revealing gaps at this stage can potentially reduce the chances of even getting an interview.
- The plus of waiting until the interview is that the job seeker will have the opportunity to explain the situation in person, and answer any concerns the employer has. However, since the employer is not aware of the situation ahead of time, this could potentially have a negative impact on the outcome of the interview.

Designing a Resume to Reduce Attention to Work History Gaps

The traditional resume (organized chronologically) can call attention to such issues as gaps in work history or limited work experience. Consider using creative methods to downplay gaps in experience and work history:

- a functional resume that highlights the skills rather than the work experience of the individual
- using only years, not months, for work dates
- not distinguishing between paid and unpaid work
- briefly summarizing (in positive terms) what the job seeker did when they weren’t working.

Another alternative is to totally abandon the standard resume format, and instead use a personal profile of the individual, pinpointing his/her abilities, skills, and interests. This type of format can be particularly useful for individuals who have limited work experience.

- Using a non-traditional resume format possibly implies that something is awry, but it at least allows the applicant to spotlight strengths, not deficits. Remember, the purpose of a resume is to be a marketing tool. It should not tell a person’s life story. Think of a resume as an “advertisement” for a person intended to get the employer’s attention and move the job search forward. A personal profile can help the employer see past the disability and view the job seeker as an individual with various interests and abilities.

Developing a Reasonable Explanation

Although strategies can be used to diminish the visibility of gaps in work history, if the individual has not been employed for significant amounts of time (a year or more), One-Stop staff should work with the job seeker to develop some type of reasonable explanation, because in all likelihood the employer will ask. The explanation should

- minimize the potential negative impact on employment prospects
- feel comfortable to the job seeker.

The idea is not to mislead the employer, but to create as positive a perception as possible with the facts of what the person did when they weren't working. Remember, the employer does not have a right to the job seeker's complete life history, only to that information which is relevant to the individual's ability to perform the essential functions of a position. Possible explanations might include:

- I had some health problems which are now taken care of.
- There was an illness in the family.
- I was taking care of my children or a family member.
- I was doing volunteer work with a community organization.
- I had the opportunity to pursue some non-work interests.
- I took a few years off to travel.

As with any disclosure issue, job seekers vary significantly in their comfort level concerning providing information on work history gaps. However, even in cases where the job seeker decides to be fairly open, he/she should only provide the information that is truly necessary. There is no reason to provide extensive details; in fact, giving too much information could even make the employer uncomfortable.

Emphasize the Present, Not the Past

Ultimately, the most important strategy is to emphasize current activities. The job seeker needs to demonstrate that:

- whatever problems or issues they have had in the past are resolved or have been addressed
- they are now fully capable of handling the tasks of a job

This is also where having done some temporary work assignments, short-term job tryouts, internships, etc., can be helpful, as they can help diminish any concerns the employer may have, and demonstrate an individual's current capabilities.

Contacting Employers: Disclosure, Interviews, and Accommodations

When a job seeker with a disability is ready to begin contacting employers, One-Stop staff should work with the customer to consider a number of issues.

- Will the customer be “screened in” or “screened out” by the usual hiring process (i.e., application, testing, interviewing)?
- Does the customer make a positive first impression?
- Can the person communicate verbally?
- Is the person a good advocate for themselves?
- Does the person require accommodations for the interview or the job?
- Will the person fit into “pre-existing” opening, or will there need to be some type of job restructuring?
- Does the person want to be represented to employers by One-Stop staff or other professionals?
- Does the person wish to disclose his/her disability to employer?
- What are the implications of disclosing/not disclosing?
- Is the disability “hidden”, or is it readily apparent to potential employers?

Consider the implications of applicable issues and various options for addressing them. The bottom line is that the strategies used must

- feel comfortable to the job seeker
- maximize the possibilities for a positive hiring decision and success on the job.

Preparing for the Interview

As they would with any other customer, One-Stop staff should assist job seekers with disabilities to prepare for interviews. People with disabilities should use the One-Stop resources for interview preparation (workshops, mock interviews, etc.) available to all customers as a starting point. In addition, there are disability-specific issues that should be addressed:

- **ADA rights** - The Americans with Disabilities Act clearly prohibits an employer from asking about a disability prior to an offer of employment. One-Stop staff should make the job seeker aware of their legal rights under the ADA concerning employer hiring practices. Information on these rights can be found in section 8, “ADA & Employment”.
- **Disclosure** - A key issue is determining whether or not to disclose any information about the job seeker’s disability, and if so, how to go about it in a way that will positively impact the hiring process (further information on this issue is contained below).
- **Making a positive impression on employers** - Like any job seeker, people with disabilities should be prepared to “sell” themselves in a job interview and demonstrate that they are fully qualified for the position. In situations where disclosure will occur, the applicant must be even more prepared to explain how they will be able to perform the various tasks of a position, how the impact (if any) of the person’s disability will be mitigated, and why they will be an asset to the organization.
- **Other scenarios** - One-Stop staff should review with the job seeker how to handle various scenarios, including inappropriate inquiries about the person’s disability, in a way that has the least possible negative impact on the interview.

Disclosure

Disclosure of disability is very much a personal decision by the job seeker. However, two basic guidelines are extremely useful:

- 1) Disclose disability-related information only as necessary.
- 2) Disclose to as few people as necessary.

Additionally, One-Stop system staff should abide by the following:

- Always get permission from the customer before disclosing any information about a job seeker's disability to an employer
- Always abide by the customer's decision about disclosure
- Do not share personal information about the customer with supervisors and co-workers at the person's job site
- Within the One-Stop Center, do not discuss personal and sensitive customer information and issues in public areas or with people who do not "need to know."

Disclosure: Before or During the Interview

In most cases, if an individual can complete the hiring process without having to disclose, it is probably best to wait until at least after the job offer has been made (if disclosure is going to occur at all). However, there are situations in which earlier disclosure may make sense.

- Is the disability obvious? - In cases where the disability is readily apparent (such as an individual who uses a wheelchair, or who is blind), disclosure will occur the first time the potential employer meets the individual. Should disclosure occur when the interview is being set up or should it occur "naturally" when the interview takes place? There is no right or wrong answer. If the job applicant would rather provide some information about his/her disability to the employer prior to the interview, a potential strategy is to provide basic information and request accommodations (if necessary) after the applicant has a confirmed appointment for a job interview.
- Less obvious disabilities - An individual may display behavior or have physical characteristics that could be perceived as "unusual" and misinterpreted. Is it better to leave unanswered questions in the employer's mind, or to try and clear up the misconceptions and/or unfounded fears that the employer may have that relate to the disability?

Interview Accommodations

- Typical interview accommodations - Some of these are obvious. If a person uses a wheelchair, the interview location, including the rest room, must be accessible. If the job seeker has difficulty communicating due to a hearing impairment or speech impediment, some alternative method of communication must be used, such as an interpreter. Having materials in accessible formats for someone who is blind or visually impaired is also typical.
- Other interview accommodations - What if the person simply interviews poorly, possibly due to cognitive limitations? What if testing is a standard part of the interview process for the job, and the person tests poorly? Will typical hiring procedures allow the employer to fully evaluate whether the applicant can perform the essential functions of the position? If not, then possible accommodations could be:
 - having an advocate (such as One-Stop staff) accompany the individual to the interview

- using an alternative testing format (if tests are involved)
- using a situational assessment (i.e. allowing the applicant to try out a job for a day or two before a final hiring decision is made)
- being hired on a trial basis.

The One-Stop staff or job seeker will have to advocate for this type of accommodation with the employer, requesting it as a reasonable accommodation under the ADA. Such strategies should be used judiciously, and only in cases where the standard interviewing and hiring procedures put the individual at a disadvantage for equal consideration.

- **Explaining Interview Accommodations to the Employer:** There are always pluses and minuses to using any type of accommodation for interviews. The decision of whether to request an interview accommodation should depend on how the accommodation will positively impact the chances of the individual getting the job versus the potential negative impact of using such an accommodation. If an interview accommodation is necessary, the One-Stop staff or job seeker should explain the accommodation to the employer. For example, if an interpreter is to be used, interpreter etiquette (such as directing questions at the individual and not the interpreter) should be discussed ahead of time. Remember that an employer may have never used such an accommodation before. It is important to emphasize how an accommodation will assist the employer in making an educated hiring decision, and to ensure that the employer is completely comfortable with the accommodation so that it does not become a distraction to the hiring process.

Non-Apparent Disabilities & Disclosure

When dealing with a non-apparent or “hidden” disability (i.e., a disability that is not readily apparent to most people), the issues are less clear. Is it a good idea to disclose? Not disclose? Such a complicated decision requires consideration of the following:

- **Personal ethics of the job seeker.** How does the person view the issue of non-disclosure? Do they view it as possible deception of the employer, or as “none of the employer’s business”? For some individuals, disclosure is a part of honest interactions, and they are too uncomfortable to carry the burden of non-disclosure around.
- **Ability to hide the facts.** Is the disability going to become obvious to the employer during the process of checking references and employment verification? For example, if an individual tries to hide a past felony conviction when applying for a position within a company where security checks are standard procedure, the cover-up may be judged harshly when the truth comes out.
- **Is the truth better?** Will the individual give off signals that cause the employer to wonder “what’s going on,” perhaps causing the employer not to hire the individual?
- **Is the truth relevant?** If the disability has no impact on the individual at work there is no reason to share the information. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) makes the assumption that the presence of a disability is irrelevant unless it clearly affects the person’s ability to do the essential parts of the job.
- **Consequences.** What are the ramifications of disclosing vs. not disclosing? While some employers are fearful of hiring people with previously non-apparent disabilities, some are not. Some non-apparent disabilities are more discriminated against than others (e.g., mental illness is often feared and misperceived).

Remember, it is not the One-Stop staff's job to decide for people what to do about disclosure, but rather help job seekers weigh the above factors and arrive at their own decisions. Once the customer decides, respect that decision, and work with the individual on how to implement it. Should the choice be made to disclose, the individual may need advice as to how, when, and to whom to disclose.

Dealing Openly with Disability

If disclosure is decided upon, it is crucial that the job seeker project an image of capability. An employer will be concerned with the individual's ability to perform the necessary job functions. The job seeker must explain a disability so that

- the employer can understand it
- it is not perceived as negatively impacting the workplace.

The manner in which a disability is explained and/or accommodations are requested, including the words used, can have an enormous impact on the employer's perception of the person's capabilities. Instead of using a "disability label", describe it in functional terms that explain the impact of the disability. Simply stating, "I have an anxiety disorder" could create significant questions. A better alternative would be to say, "I have a condition that causes me to become anxious at times. When it happens I am unable to focus on what I am doing at that moment, but it does not affect others. In past jobs, I have been able to manage it effectively with minimal impact on my work. This condition does require that I have a quiet work space, with minimal outside noise. If you hire me, I would work together with you to set up my work space so that it would be mutually satisfactory."

When an Employer Makes Inappropriate Inquiries

While the ADA clearly states that a potential employer cannot ask questions concerning a person's disability prior to an offer of employment, this does not necessarily stop employers from making such inquiries, even if inadvertently. How should a job seeker act if an employer asks, "What's wrong with you?"

- "You can't ask me that, it's illegal under the ADA." This is correct, but might result in the person not being hired.
- A better response: "I'll tell you what - let me tell you all the things I can do," and then go on to describe why they are eminently qualified for the job.

Obviously if an employer is persistent in asking about a person's disability, and the person chooses not to disclose, the employer should be gently

Guiding Principles for Job Seekers in the Disclosure Process

- ◆ Describe yourself by job qualifications, not by disability
- ◆ Articulate and demonstrate how you can perform the essential functions of the job
- ◆ Do not volunteer negative information
- ◆ Avoid medical terms or human service/disability jargon as they can confuse and potentially scare the employer.
- ◆ Stress current, positive activity rather than dwelling on past negative experiences or issues
- ◆ If possible, connect past problems and issues with significant life event(s)
- ◆ Stress that you are in charge and control

informed that such inquiries are illegal. It is important that people with disabilities know and exercise their legal rights, but such rights are best used in a proactive way to promote the individual for the position. While people with disabilities should certainly pursue legal action when they have been clearly discriminated against, the ADA should be used more as an education tool, not a sledge hammer: the goal is to get jobs, not file lawsuits. When developing interview strategies, determine the best course of action so that the person not only gets the job, but succeeds on the job.

Disclosure After The Job Offer

After the job offer has been made, the timing of disclosure will depend on the need for accommodations as well as the preferences of the worker. One consideration is whether the information will be better received after the employer has had the opportunity to get to know the employee independent of the disability label. If there is a probationary period for the position, the individual may wish to disclose only after that period ends. Should there be no need for immediate accommodation, there is no rush and potentially no need to disclose.

Whom to disclose to:

If the person decides to inform the employer, careful consideration should be given to whom the recipient of this information should be, and how much they should be told. Possible recipients include co-workers, supervisors, managers, human resources staff, or an Equal Employment Opportunity officer. Should they all be told or only a few of them? There are very few situations where everyone in the workplace needs to know. Generally, it is best to begin by disclosing only to those who need to know. Many employees opt to tell their supervisor or manager, and/or a human resources representative. They later decide who among their co-workers to tell. This allows relationships to develop prior to disclosure and thus diminishes stigma.

Final Thoughts on Disclosure

There is no one right answer for every situation, and dealing with disclosure requires making the “best guess” concerning the impact a particular situation will have on the hiring decision and the person’s success on the job. The ultimate determinant is the preference of the job seeker, but One-Stop staff should assist the job seeker in weighing the pros and cons of pursuing various strategies. Even in cases where some level of disclosure will occur, there is no reason to provide extensive details beyond what is necessary for individuals to have an understanding of the situation. As Joe Marrone of the Institute for Community Inclusion says, “it’s disclosure, not confession.”

Based in part on material from:

Hoff, D., Gandolfo, C., Gold, M., Jordan, M., (2000). Demystifying Job Development, TRN, St. Augustine, FL. Web site: www.trninc.com; e-mail: trn@aug.com; voice: (800) 280-7010

Disclosure Of A Non-Apparent or Hidden Disability

Some Pros

- Reduced stress. Many people report that “hiding is more stressful than telling.” Disclosing also makes it easier, if the need arises, to discuss accommodations.
- Immediate knowledge of the work environment. You will have “cleared the air” and will know what to expect.
- Release from the worry that a past employer or reference might inadvertently “drop” the fact that you have a disability.
- Full freedom to question health insurance and other benefits. If a medical examination is required, you will not have to worry about passing it (a concern with certain disabilities).
- Freedom to communicate with your employer should you face changes in your condition.
- Disclosure may make you feel more “comfortable.” That word is the real key to the issue of disclosure.

The Bottom Line: you and the employer must both feel comfortable.

Some Cons

- Bad past experience(s): rejection or loss of a job because of the disability.
- Fear of being placed in a “dead-end job.”
- Fear of being an object of curiosity.
- The concern that if something doesn’t go right, it will be blamed on the disability.
- Fear of being “different.”
- Mostly, just fear of not getting the job.
- Raises other questions for employers.
- May trigger stereotyping.

Rules For A Good Disclosure

- 1) Script your disclosure. Write it down and have it critiqued. Run through it with friends who are employers and with other people in the working world.
- 2) Rehearse your disclosure script until you feel comfortable and good about it, not only with your lips, but with your body language.
- 3) When you prepare your script, avoid being too clinical or too detailed. It may be of great interest to you, but the interviewer wants to know only three things:
 - Will you be there?
 - Can you do the job as well as or better than anyone else?
 - Will you be of value to the company?
- 4) Remember your script and be positive about your skills and abilities. The more positive you are, the more you will convey that you are you and “just happen to have a disability.” Conversely, the more you discuss your disability, the more important it will become in the employer’s mind.

(Modified from the Summer 1985 issue of “Inside MS,” Multiple Sclerosis Society.)

Conducting a Job Interview: Accommodating People with Disabilities

Tips for Employers

Hiring the right person for the job starts with conducting a good interview. The employer is not interviewing a disability. The employer is interviewing a person with skills and abilities. These guidelines will assist businesses in ensuring that people with disabilities are afforded a fair and equitable opportunity to present their job qualifications.

- Make sure your company's employment offices and your interviewing location(s) are accessible to applicants with mobility impairments, visual, hearing, or cognitive disabilities (this includes restrooms).
- Be willing to make appropriate and reasonable accommodations to enable a job applicant with a disability to present him/herself in the best possible light. For example:
 - offer assistance to applicants who are blind or have limited use of their hands in completing their job application forms;
 - provide an interpreter for an applicant who is deaf;
 - offer detailed or specific instructions to persons with cognitive disabilities.
- Don't let a rehabilitation counselor, social worker or other third party take an active part in, or sit in on, an interview unless the applicant requests it.
- Make sure you have in-depth knowledge about the essential job functions of the position for which the applicant is applying, as well as the details of why, how, where, when and by whom each task or operation is performed. This will enable you to structure the interview better and ensure that all questions are job related.
- Relax and make the applicant feel relaxed. Don't be afraid of making mistakes. At the same time, remember that candidates (particularly those applying for professional positions) must be expected to assume an equal share of the responsibility for making your interaction with them comfortable.
- Don't speculate or try to imagine how you would perform a specific job if you had the applicant's disability. The person with a disability has mastered alternate techniques and skills of living and working with his/her particular disability. You should ask an applicant to describe how he/she would perform a certain job function if it is an essential part of the position.
- Concentrate on the applicant's technical and professional knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences, and interests, not on the disability. Remember, you can't interview a disability, hire a disability or supervise a disability. You can interview a person, hire a person, and supervise a person.
- If the applicant is not technically or professionally qualified for the position in question, end the interview. If the applicant is technically or professionally qualified, feel free to discuss in an open, honest and straightforward manner how he/she plans to perform specific on-the-job duties and what he/she will need to get the job done. Remember, all questions should be job-related and asked in an open ended format.

Source: President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, October, 1993

Used with permission

Pre-Employment Inquiries and the ADA

For all job applicants, employers must comply with specific aspects of the Americans with Disabilities Act in their application, interviewing and other pre-employment procedures.

What Are the Restrictions on Pre-Employment Inquiries?

Questionnaires, applications, medical examinations, and tests are often used by employers to determine the competency of the applicant. Keep in mind that, at the pre-offer stage, disability-related questions and medical examinations are prohibited under the ADA.

How Should An Employer Handle Pre-Employment Inquiries during the Interview Process?

- All questions must be directly related to the ability of the applicant to perform tasks of the job.
- Make sure to ask only questions regarding the information on the individual's application form.
- An employer may ask the applicant what prior job duties he or she has performed.
- An employer should be careful not to ask applicants about visible physical characteristics or their health status.
- If an individual has a readily apparent disability (such as an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing), an employer may ask how the individual would perform certain essential functions of the job, if the employer has concerns about whether the individual can perform a specific task.
- It is not legal to inquire if the applicant has a psychiatric disability, a history of having a psychiatric disability, or if he or she has consulted with a psychiatrist.
- Questions cannot be asked about past drug addiction.

May An Employer Conduct an Employment Physical?

- The law permits a medical examination if the medical evaluation is conducted after an offer of employment has been made.
- If physicals are conducted, they must be conducted for all employees in that job category and the medical information gathered must be kept separate from the personnel file.
- Drug testing is not considered a "medical examination" under the law. Therefore, pre-employment tests for illegal drug use are permitted by the ADA.

How Can An Employer Make Sure They Comply with the ADA Restrictions on Pre-Employment Inquiries?

- Develop a thorough job description that identifies the essential elements of the job. By relying on this description, both the interviewer and applicant are aware of the essential elements of the job.
- Employers should also review old application forms to ensure that medical histories or other inappropriate information is not requested.

Source: President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, July, 1996

Used with permission

Employer Tips on Interviewing Applicants with Disabilities

Employers are as perplexed by the social aspects of interviewing someone with a disability as they are by the legal concerns. Here are some basic guidelines for keeping a job interview focused on the applicants' qualifications.

When Interviewing an Applicant with Any Disability

- Don't ask: "What happened to you?" or "How will you get to work?"
- Don't ask questions in terms of disability, such "Do you have a mental condition that would preclude you from qualifying for this position?"
- Do ask job-related questions: "How would you perform this particular task?"
- Don't ask, "How often will you require leave for treatment of your condition?" However, you may state the organization's attendance requirements and ask if the applicant can meet them.
- Don't start the interview by trying to elicit the applicant's needs for accommodation. The interview should focus on whether the candidate is qualified for the job in question. Focus on the applicant's abilities. If there is a need for a discussion concerning accommodations, this should come later.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to request accommodations. Don't ask the job applicant, "Will you need accommodations?" or "What kind of accommodations will you need?" However, if you have concerns over an applicant's ability to perform an essential function of a job, given the applicant's obvious or disclosed disability, you can ask the applicant how they would go about performing that task.
- Always offer to shake hands. Do not avoid eye contact, but don't stare either.
- Treat the applicant as you would any other adult - don't be patronizing. If you don't usually address applicants by the first name, don't make an exception for applicants with disabilities.
- If you feel it appropriate, offer the applicant assistance (for example, if an individual with poor grasping ability is having trouble opening a door), but don't assume it will necessarily be accepted. Don't automatically give assistance, without asking first.

When Interviewing an Applicant Who Uses a Wheelchair

- Don't lean on the wheelchair.
- Get on the same eye level with the applicant if the conversation lasts more than a minute or so.
- Don't push the wheelchair unless you are asked to do so.
- Keep accessibility in mind. Is that chair in the middle of your office a barrier to a wheelchair user? If so, move it aside.
- Don't be embarrassed to use such phrases as "Let's walk over to the plant."

When Interviewing an Applicant Who is Mentally Retarded

- Use simple, concrete language, but don't use 'baby talk'.
- When giving instructions or directions, proceed slowly.
- Be patient, and repeat directions if necessary.

- Ask the applicant to summarize the information you have given to make sure it was understood.
- Give positive feedback whenever possible and appropriate.

When Interviewing an Applicant Who is Blind

- Immediately identify yourself and others present; cue a handshake verbally or physically.
- Use verbal cues; be descriptive in giving directions. (“The table is about five steps to your left.”)
- Verbalize chair location, or place the person’s hand on the back of the chair, but do not place the person in the chair.
- Don’t be embarrassed to use such phrases as “Do you see what I mean?”
- Don’t shout.
- Keep doors either open or closed; a half-open door is a serious hazard.
- Offer assistance with mobility; let the applicant grasp your left arm, usually just above the elbow. Again, ask first, and do not be surprised if assistance is refused.
- Do not touch an applicant’s cane. Do not touch a guide dog when in a harness. In fact, resist the temptation to pet a guide dog.

When Interviewing an Applicant Who is Deaf

- You may need to use a physical signal to get the applicant’s attention.
- If the applicant is lip reading, enunciate clearly, keep your mouth clear of obstructions, and place yourself where there is ample lighting. Keep in mind that an accomplished lip reader will be able to clearly understand only 30-35% of what you are saying.
- The best method to communicate is to use a combination of gestures and facial expressions. You may also want to learn how to fingerspell, or, if you are more ambitious, take a course in American Sign Language.
- Don’t shout.
- If you don’t understand what the applicant is telling you, don’t pretend you did. Ask the candidate to repeat the sentence(s).
- If necessary, use a sign language interpreter. But keep in mind that the interpreter’s job is to translate, not to get involved in any other way. Therefore, always face and speak directly to the applicant, not the interpreter. Don’t say to the interpreter, “Tell her...”

For more tips on etiquette, see the information on particular conditions in section 5, “Disability Fact Sheets.”

Adapted from: MIN Report, July-August 1991

One-Stop System Staff - Contacting Employers

Sometimes One-Stop system staff may contact employers on behalf of job seekers. If so, then One-Stop staff should discuss with the job seeker what they will say to potential employers about the job seeker. Three points are key:

- The One-Stop staff should contact employer's on the job seeker's behalf, only with the job seeker's permission
- The job seeker should be absolutely comfortable with what the One-Stop is going to say on his/her behalf
- Information concerning the job seeker's disability should be discussed with potential employers only with the job seeker's permission.

Here are some guidelines One-Stop staff should consider when representing job seekers with disabilities to employers:

- **Emphasize skills, personality & interests:** As with any job seeker, the goal is to highlight the “selling points” and talk about the person's skills, interests, and positive attributes.
- **Use functional language that promotes solutions:** Use terms that employers use such as job applicant, job description, workforce, etc. Avoid human service or disability-related jargon.
- **Don't volunteer negative information:** Employers don't need help in finding negatives.
- **Orient to individual employer:** As with any job seeker, the information provided about the applicant should respond to identified needs of the employer.
- **Agreed upon by job seeker:** The job seeker needs to be involved, informed, and in agreement with the activity. Job development efforts must be based on the job seeker's needs, interests, and desires.
- **Contrast the past with present:** Explain how any past problems or issues have been addressed. Focus on current activities that demonstrate abilities.
- **Respect/confidentiality:** When One-Stop staff assist in the job search, they are modeling behavior for the employer. Always be respectful in discussions with and about the job seeker, and as noted above, always respect confidentiality.
- **Confidence & commitment:** The employer will judge the candidate partly by how well he/she feels the One-Stop staff believes in and respects the job seeker. One-Stop staff set the tone with confidence and commitment.
- **Honesty:** Honesty is important in developing long-term employer relationships. Nobody can make guarantees. The most able employee has had a job that did not work out. Don't make promises, but if you do, see them through.
- **Follow-up:** Follow-up with employers is crucial, as that is good customer service!

Financial Incentives for Hiring People with Disabilities

The primary reason businesses should hire people with disabilities is because the individual is a good match for a specific business need. However, by hiring people with disabilities, there are a number of financial incentives that businesses may qualify for. In the process of assisting people with disabilities to obtain employment, One-Stop staff may wish to make employers aware of these financial incentives. It may be helpful for One-Stop staff to obtain copies of the publications and materials on these financial incentives, to distribute to employers.

ADA Small Business Tax Credit

Businesses with 30 or fewer employees or \$1,000,000 or less per year in total revenue can receive a tax credit for the cost of accommodations provided to an employee (or customer) with a disability. This credit covers 50% of eligible expenditures up to \$10,000 (maximum credit per year of \$5000). For additional information, contact the Internal Revenue Service.

Web site: www.irs.ustreas.gov

Voice: 800-829-1040; TDD: 800-829-4059

Publications (request publications 535 and 334 which cover ADA deductions & credits) -

Voice: 800-829-3676; TDD: 800-829-4059

WOTC & WtW Tax Credits

Work Opportunity Tax Credit

WOTC is available to employers for hiring individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Employers can receive a tax credit of up to \$2,400 per individual hired. Many people with disabilities meet the criteria for WOTC, including all recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and all clients of state vocational rehabilitation agencies.

Welfare-to-Work Tax Credit

If a person with a disability is a recipient of Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) at the time of hire, the employer can receive a federal tax credit for up to \$8,500 per individual hired.

Additional information on these tax credits can be obtained from the U.S. Department of Labor: <http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/employ/updates.asp>. WOTC state and regional contacts can be found at: <http://wdr.doleta.gov/contacts>

WOTC and WtW tax credit request forms and state contact information can also be obtained by calling 877-828-2050 (a toll-free number). This Fax-On-Demand service allows access to WOTC/WtW request forms via Fax by using a touch-tone telephone or a fax machine. Up to two documents may be requested per call. Once you call this service, simply follow the instructions and enter the document number (listed below) that corresponds to the form or information needed.

#1 - System Index of Information

#101 - The Regional Contact Address Directory

#102 - The State Contact Address Directory

#103 - IRS Form 8850

#104 - ETA Form 9061

#105 - Brochure for Employers

IRS Form 8850 can also be downloaded from www.irs.ustreas.gov, or by calling: 800-829-1040

Business Leadership Networks

A Program of the Office of Disability Employment Policy - U.S. Department of Labor

What are Business Leadership Networks?

Business Leadership Networks (BLNs) are part of a national initiative to engage employers in a focused effort to market the benefits of hiring qualified individuals with disabilities to other employers. The intent of BLN's is to have employers market to other employers the benefits of hiring qualified individuals with disabilities.

What are the benefits of BLNs to employers?

BLNs offers employers:

- access to a pool of applicants with disabilities
- pertinent disability employment information
- a network of companies sharing information on specific disability employment issues
- the opportunity to provide training and work experience for job seekers with disabilities
- recognition for best disability employment practices
- access to a largely untapped market for their goods and services.

Another benefit of the BLN is that it provides peer support to businesses interested in or considering hiring individuals with disabilities. Being able to ask their questions of a fellow business contact who has successfully employed individuals with disabilities can be less intimidating for the potential employer than speaking with a vocational counselor, and potential employers can feel that their peers are more able to address their “real life” business concerns.

“A local BLN is a valuable resource for employers who want to improve their hiring, training and support of employees with disabilities. The program hinges on a fundamental principle - success breeds success. When employers discuss the successes and benefits to their organizations of hiring job candidates with disabilities, then other employers are inspired to do the same.”

—*From the Texas Gulf Coast BLN web site*

How can BLNs benefit One-Stop systems?

One-Stop Centers and systems can utilize their local BLN to assist in identifying and promoting employment opportunities for people with disabilities. BLNs allow One-Stop systems:

- to tap into employment opportunities available from employers participating in the BLN
- learn about issues related to employment of people with disabilities from the employer perspective.
- to use the advocacy and sharing of expertise on an employer-to-employer basis that is a fundamental part of BLNs.

Who heads the BLN nationally?

The Head CEO for the BLN nationally is Thomas J. Donohue, President and Chief Executive Officer of the United States Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Donohue's role is to steer the expansion and growth of the BLN through alliances with state and local chambers of commerce.

What is the structure for local BLNs?

Each local BLN is lead by an employer, in concert with state Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities and/or other community agencies.

Where are there BLNs?

As of October 2000, there were BLNs in 25 states. Some states, where the labor pool is geographically spread out, have more than one chapter. The eventual goal is to have BLNs across the United States.

How do I find out more?

For more information, and to find out if the status of the BLN in your state or local area, contact Carol Dunlap Manager
Business Leadership Network
1331 F Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004-1107
Voice: (202) 376-6200, extension 35
Fax: (202) 376-6868
TTY: (202) 376-6205
Email: dunlap-carol@dol.gov
Web site: www.usbln.com

Annual National BLN Summit

One-Stop staff and other workforce professionals may be interested in attending the annual National BLN Summit. Schedule for upcoming years:

- ◆ Des Moines, Iowa - October 22-24, 2001
- ◆ Florida - 2002
- ◆ California - 2003
- ◆ Pennsylvania - 2004

BLN Web Sites

- ◆ California - www.cabln.org
- ◆ Colorado - www.cbln.org/
- ◆ Florida - www.abletrust.org/businesslead.html
- ◆ Maryland - Lower Shore BLN - www.lsbln.org/
- ◆ Nebraska - www.employmentfirst.org/
- ◆ North Dakota - www.thearcupervalley.com/bln.htm
- ◆ Michigan - West Michigan BLN - www.futureforms.com/wmbln/
- ◆ Pennsylvania - www.blnofpa.org/
- ◆ Texas - Gulf Coast BLN - www.imagineenterprises.com/bln.html
- ◆ Washington State - www.wsbln.org/
- ◆ Wisconsin - www.dwd.state.wi.us/dvr/BLN/bln.htm
- ◆ Wyoming BLN - www.wy-bltn.com/
- ◆ Evanston (Wyoming) BLN - www.webcom.com/ucedc/ebln.htm

Note: Not all BLNs have web sites

BLN Business Steering Group

Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

J. Tim Arnoult
Technology and Operations Exec.
Bank of America

Margie Lewis
President and CEO
Parallax, Inc.

Alabama
Roger McCollough
Assistant Vice President
Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham

Arizona
Ron Cleveland
Project Administrator
DiscoverCard/Boost

Arkansas
Terri Boone
Human Resources Manager
Hi-Tech Engineering, Inc.

California
Ron Grogan
Director of Human Resources
IBM

Colorado
Vicky Steere
President
Careers Colorado

Rebecca Peralta
Human Resource Director
Denver Marriott Southeast

Connecticut
Elizabeth Frechette
Corporate Manager/
Workforce Diversity
United Technologies Corporation

District of Columbia
Sandra LeBlanc
General Manager
Marriott at Metro Center

Florida
Vinece Pastor
Group Vice President
SunTrust Bank

Georgia
Darold Sawyer
Lead, Equal Opportunity Programs
Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co.

Tom Ryals
Quality Logistics Manager
Cello-Foil Products, Inc.

Illinois
William E. Donahue, II
Vice President, Human Resources
Corporate Function
Sears Roebuck and Company

Iowa
Wanda Conway
Operations Human Resources Spec.
Sears Regional Credit Card
Operating Center

Kentucky
Alvin T. Stolen, III
President and CEO
Bank One Kentucky, N.A.

Maryland
Michael Whitehill
Vice President
McCrone, Inc.

Paul Rendine
General Manager
Capitol Securities Management

Kiya Safai
General Manager
Ramada Inn and Conference Center

Robyn Mingle
Director, Human Resources
Black & Decker Corporation

Legusta Floyd, Jr.
Senior Operations Manager
Centennial One

Massachusetts
Jeff Taylor
Chief Executive Officer
Monster.com

Michigan
William G. Birch
Disabilities Manager
Denso Manufacturing Michigan, Inc.

Joyce Henry
Senior Project Manager
Spectrum Health

Minnesota
Richard H. Anderson
Exec. Vice President and COO
Northwest Airlines, Inc.

Karen Moore
Manager, Accommodations
Northwest Airlines, Inc.

Missouri
Staci Michalick
Recruiter - Midwest Regional Staffing
Bank of America

Nebraska
Heather Kelly
HR Generalist
ConAgra Foods, Inc.

New Jersey
Shawn O'Connor
Vice President, Human Resources
Independence Technology, L.L.C.
of Johnson & Johnson

Heather McHale
Director, Community Relations
Corporate Responsibility
Merrill Lynch

New Mexico
Joyce L. Armijo
Academy Placement Manager
The Kemmmtah Group, Inc.

New York
Jeffrey Sampson
Associate Director/
Community Affairs
Verizon Communications, Inc.

North Carolina
Leo Taylor
Director of Human Resources
Hardee's Food Systems, Inc.

North Dakota
Don Anderson
Vice President of Marketing
Community National Bank

Oregon
Stacey Paginton
Administrator
Luxury Tow Van Corporation

North Dakota
Don Anderson
Vice President of Marketing
Community National Bank

Pennsylvania
John Brouse
President and CEO
Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield

Puerto Rico
Hector Troche
Human Resources Manager
Storage Technology

Texas
Gene Humpal
Manager of Employment
Services
JC Penney Company, Inc.

Wanda Bunkers
Vice President, Human
Resources
The Associates

Jana Loucks
Director of Human Resources
Hyatt Regency Austin

Cindy Floyd
Human Resource Manager
SITEL Corporation

Virginia
Katherine O. McCary
Vice President
SunTrust Bank, Mid-Atlantic

Barbara Haight
Community Relations
Booz-Allen & Hamilton
Robert Wozniak
Human Resources Director
Busch Gardens

Washington
Ladrene Coyne
Sr. Production Supervisor
Medtronic Physio-Control
Corporation

Wisconsin
Joseph A. Provino, III
Director of Legal Compliance &
Safety
The QTI Group, Inc.

Wyoming
Bob Peck
Vice President/Operations
SafeCard Services

Alan Griffin
Owner
Domino's Pizza

*Adapted from materials developed by the Office of Disability
Employment Policy - USDOL*

Checklist: Finding Jobs for Customers with Disabilities

Customers with disabilities should be served through the full range of activities that all other One-Stop system customers are typically entitled. In addition, when working with customers with disabilities, One-Stop staff should review the following items.

One-Stop System Services

- Has the full range of services available been reviewed with the customer?
- What types of assistance or accommodations will the individual need to make full use of One-Stop services?
- How will assistance or accommodations be provided in One-Stop service delivery?

Benefits Issues

Does the individual receive any government benefits? If so, what types?

- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
- Supplementary Security Income (SSI)
- TANF
- Medicare, Medicaid, or other publicly funded health program
- Other benefits (housing subsidy, food stamps, etc.)

Note: additional information on benefits is in section 9 - Social Security Disability Benefits

- Does the individual understand the need to report changes in employment status to Social Security and other benefit programs?
- Does the individual understand the impact that earnings from employment will have on their benefits?
- Does the customer want or need counseling to help determine the impact of employment on their benefits? If so, how will benefits counseling be provided?
- Would a PASS Plan (a Social Security work incentive) be helpful to the individual in achieving their employment goals? [Additional information on PASS's is in the social security section of this manual.]
- Does the individual have expenses related to employment that could be reduced through an IRWE (Social Security work incentive)? [Additional information on IRWEs is in the social security section of this manual.]

Disclosure

- Has the issue of disclosure of disability to prospective employers been discussed?
- Does the customer understand that they legally do not have to disclose a disability to prospective employers?
- Have the implications of disclosing and not disclosing been discussed with the customer?
- Has a course of action has been decided on concerning how the individual will handle disclosure to prospective employers?
- Do One-Stop staff who may be representing this individual to prospective employers know and understand this individual's decision concerning disclosure?

Transportation

- Does individual drive or have access to an automobile? If not, do transportation issues need to be considered as part of the job search?

What transportation resources are available to the individual?

- Mass Transit
- Paratransit (special transportation for individuals with disabilities)
- Taxicab
- Family
- Neighbors
- Co-workers
- Walking
- Biking
- Employer resources
- Other transportation services/resources:

Note: Additional information on transportation is available in section 12 - Transportation.

- If the individual doesn't drive, what geographic areas are accessible to the individual via the available transportation resources?

Accommodations for Application Process or Interviewing

- Will the individual need accommodations for the application process or interviewing?
- If so, what are the accommodations?
- How will they be arranged?

Job Accommodations

- Are there aspects of a job that the individual cannot fully perform without some type of accommodation?
- Are there modifications of a job, job site, or way in which a job is done that will allow the individual with a disability to have equal access to all aspects of work?
- Will the individual need these accommodations arranged prior to starting the job?
- What will be the process for requesting accommodations?
- Will the individual need assistance in advocating for accommodations?

Note: Information on accommodations is available in section 6- Job Accommodations.

Assistive Technology

- Is there assistive technology or equipment that will enhance the individual's abilities to perform the tasks of a job or potential job?
- Does equipment or assistive technology need to be obtained prior to obtaining employment?
- Does the individual need to be trained on how to use the equipment or assistive technology?
- How will the technology be paid for?
- Does the individual need a technology evaluation? Where can this be obtained (e.g. state Vocational Rehabilitation)?

Note: Information on assistive technology and funding of accommodations is available in section 6 "Job Accommodations"

Job Development

- Does the individual have experience in successfully finding employment without professional assistance?
- Does the individual want/need assistance in contacting employers?
- Does the individual want One-Stop staff to contact employers on his or her behalf? If so, has the information about the individual that will be provided to potential employers been reviewed with the job seeker, and approved by him or her?
- Are there significant gaps in the person's work history? How will he/she explain these to potential employers?

Job Support

- Will the individual need support/assistance when they begin employment?
- What type of support will they need (e.g., job coaching, counseling, clothing/uniforms, personal care assistance, benefits management)? Who will provide it and/or arrange for it? [Note: state Vocational Rehabilitation, as a One-Stop partner, may be able to assist in arranging support on the job.]

Job Development Planning Tool

One-Stop system staff may find this tool helpful in assisting a job seeker with planning their job search, particularly with individuals who need some clearer direction concerning what types of employment to pursue. This tool is meant to be a supplement, not a replacement of the tools that the One-Stop system may use for career exploration and planning with all customers such as those from America's Labor Market Information System, America's Career Kit and particularly America's Career InfoNet (www.acinet.org), O*NET Online (<http://online.onetcenter.org/>), and the O*NET Career Assessment and Exploration Tools (<http://www.onetcenter.org/product/tools.html>). Customers with disabilities should still have the opportunity to utilize the career exploration and planning tools that are used with all One-Stop customers.

Develop a Profile

- Develop a profile of the individual.

- Past experience (work, volunteer, school, life)

- Interests/Hobbies

- Tasks they enjoy/do well
(Remember to think about all areas of their life: home, their present daytime activity, etc.)

- Dreams for the future

- What kind of environments do they enjoy/fit in?

- Are there specific personality types with whom this individual is most comfortable or fits in well?

- Accommodation/support requirements

- Where they have been happiest? Where have they experienced success?
- Where have they not experienced success?
- Who are the important people in their life?
- With what organizations and activities is the individual currently connected?
- With the customer's permission, from whom else could you talk to gather this information? (peers, friends, family, teachers, other professionals)

Brainstorming

Brainstorm possible work environments that might be a good setting for the job seeker. This can be done one-on-one with the job seeker. However, it can be more effective to get a variety of perspectives and ideas. If the customer is comfortable having others be part of this process, consider involving:

- other One-Stop system staff
- other customers (particularly a One-Stop job seeker support group)
- significant individuals in the person's life (friends, family, other professionals, community members)
- business people
- community leaders.

The job seeker and One-Stop staff can consult and brainstorm with these people on an individual basis. However, if the individual is comfortable with a group brainstorming process, with lots of people gathered together, its dynamics and energy can lead to some creative ideas, connections, and outcomes.

From brainstorming, develop a list of at least four criteria for a work environment that would be a good match for the individual.

A.

B.

C.

D.

Others:

Questions to consider:

- Do we know enough to move ahead with a job search?
- Are there things we can do to generate more information? (see list of ideas in the “Career Exploration” piece in this section)

Identify Types of Businesses

Once you have generated sufficient information concerning work environment preferences, identify types of businesses that would potentially be a good match for the person. If necessary, expand on these ideas by talking to other individuals outside the group.

Identify Connections to Those Businesses

Who works in or has a connection to the types of businesses listed above? Does the One-Stop system or the job seeker have contacts and relationships that could be utilized? Use the brainstorming group as the starting point for identifying these network connections, but also talk to anybody else who might be helpful (other One-Stop staff, other job seeker contacts, business people, etc.).

Finding the Right Job: Job Seeker Planning Tool

To succeed on a job, it's important not to just take a job because you can earn money doing it. It's important to find a job that is a good match for you, and that you like what you do!

A job that is a good match is one where you are:

- Doing things you like to do
- Doing things that you are good at
- Working in places you are comfortable
- Working with people you like
- Working the number of hours your want to
- Working the time of day you want to
- Working the days of the week you want to
- Earning enough money

Before you start looking for a job, it's a good idea to think about these things. While you may want to think about them by yourself, it also may be a good idea to talk to other people who know you to get their ideas. These could include:

- friends
- family and relatives
- neighbors
- people you've worked with
- people who participate in activities with you
- people at the places you shop or spend money
- teachers (current or former)
- counselors

Note: The One-Stop system has a number of excellent tools that can also help you in determining what types of jobs and careers might interest you. Among these are the following tools from the United States Department of Labor.

- America's Career InfoNet (www.acinet.org), which includes a wealth of information on job trends, wages and what types of jobs are available in your local area.
- O*NET Online (<http://online.onetcenter.org/>), has information on a wide variety of jobs and occupations, the skills required for these jobs, and how much you can earn in these jobs.
- O*NET Career Assessment and Exploration Tools, which include:
 - Interest Profiler - A career exploration tool, where you can identify and learn about broad interest areas most relevant to your interests.
 - Work Importance Locator - A career exploration tool which helps you clarify what you find most important in jobs.

*[Additional information on these O*NET tools is available at: www.onetcenter.org/product/tools.html]*

This form is intended to supplement, not replace those tools.

Some Questions To Help You

Here are some questions to think about, in deciding what kind of job would be good for you.

At Home:

What do you do when you are home?

What household chores do you like doing?

What household chores do you not like doing?

What do you like to do for fun at home?

At School:

What classes did you/do you like in school?

What classes did you/do you not like in school?

What activities and clubs did you/do you participate in at school?

What school activities did you/do you like?

What school activities did you/do you not like?

What did you/do you like about school?

What did you/do you not like about school?

At Work:

If you've had jobs or work experience (paid or unpaid):

Where have you worked?

What jobs have you liked?

What jobs have you not liked?

What were the things about the job(s) that you liked?

What were the things about the job(s) that you didn't like??

Leisure:

What do you like to do for fun?

Are there sports or other recreational activities you enjoy?

Do you have any hobbies?

What do you like to do with your friends?

Do you like to do things by yourself or with other people?

What's Important To You About A Job

There are a variety of things people consider in deciding what kind of job to pursue. What is important to some else, may not be important to you. In conducting a job search, it's important to think about what things are absolutely required of a job, if you were to take it, what things would be nice to have (but aren't absolutely required) and what things don't really matter. On the following is a list of items to think about. Put a check mark in the appropriate column which best describes how you feel about each item. Add any additional items that are important to you about a job.

If you got a job, what would be okay and not okay?

	Okay	Not Okay
Working indoors		
Working outdoors (including bad weather)		
Doing physical labor		
Lifting things		
Doing clerical work (like filing & copy work)		
Doing cleaning		
Organizing and sorting things		
Working with food		
Working on a computer		
Having to read things		
Having to write things		
Having to do math		
Doing the same thing all day		
Doing lots of different things during the day		
Working in an office		
Working in a factory		
Working in a store		
Working in a warehouse		
Working in a small building		
Working in a big building		
Working by yourself		
Working with a few people		
Working with lots of people		
Working in a place that is noisy		
Working in a place that is quiet		
Having to talk to people		

	Okay	Not Okay
Having to be quiet all day		
Having a supervisor nearby most of the time		
Not having a supervisor nearby		
Helping customers		
Dressing up for work		
Wearing a uniform		
Dressing how ever you want		
Moving and walking around		
Sitting all day		
Standing all day		
Getting dirty at work		
Having to stay clean at work		
Working with people your own age		
Working mainly with people older than you		
Working mainly with people younger than you		
Working around children		
Starting work in the morning		
Starting work in the afternoon		
Starting work in the evening		
Working on weekends		
Working on holidays		

How many hours per day would you like to work? _____

How many days per week would you like to work? _____

Now that you've thought about what you like and don't like, make a list of jobs that you might like and/or the kind of places you would like to work.

The Next Step

You've got a list of possible jobs and places you may want to work. Before you make any final decisions about the type of job you want, do some research. The tools of America's Workforce Network available at One-Stop Centers, and online, can be an excellent starting point. These include:

- America's Career InfoNet (www.acinet.org) which includes a wealth of information on job trends, wages, and national and local labor markets, as well as other valuable occupational, economic, and demographic information.
- O*NET Online (<http://online.onetcenter.org/>), a database that describes a wide variety of occupations, the skills needed for those jobs, and how much people make who work in those jobs.

Another great way to do research is to go out and talk to people who work in the jobs and places you are interested in. Ask your family, friends, teachers and/or counselors for help in coming up with names and places to contact.

When you visit places that you think you might want to work at, talk to the supervisors and workers. Find out what the jobs are like and what kind of skills and training you need. Walk around the place and watch what people are doing. Find out what's good and not good about working there. Decide if it's a place you would be happy working, and what types of jobs would be a good match for you. If you really like it, then find out how to get a job in that place or in that type of business.