

THE 30-DAY PLACEMENT PLAN: A ROAD MAP TO EMPLOYMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Finding and landing the right job is a long and complex endeavor. Many job seekers have found that breaking the job search down into a series of small, workable tasks makes this challenging process much more manageable. It also gives the job seeker a sense of control over the direction of the job search, and a sense of accomplishment when each task is completed. One way to keep tasks in order is to create a 30-Day Placement Plan.

WHAT IS IT?

A 30-Day Placement Plan is a month-long plan geared towards finding a job. It includes tasks to be accomplished that month, due dates for each task, and the names of people who are responsible for completing those tasks. Every 30 days the plan is updated. The job seeker, their employment specialist, and others in their support network (including family, friends, and employment professionals) can all be involved in writing and implementing the plan.

IN THIS BRIEF, YOU WILL LEARN TO:

- ▶ Break the job search down into a series of tasks
- ▶ Develop a plan for employment that is driven by the job seeker
- ▶ Include the job seeker's personal and professional networks in the job search

WHY WRITE ONE?

Many employment agencies require the job seekers they support to have some sort of a plan for finding a job. This is also true of agencies that support people with disabilities. Usually, the required plan has a long-term focus. It may include a general statement about what type of position the job seeker wants and some basic steps for how to find that kind of work. These plans can have many different names, including **INDIVIDUAL SERVICE PLAN, INDIVIDUAL WORK REHABILITATION PLAN, INDIVIDUAL PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT,** and **PLACEMENT PLAN.** Typically, these plans are very broad, and they can sometimes focus too heavily on the services that the agency provides rather than on the steps the job seeker can take. A 30-Day Placement Plan fills in these gaps.

Here are some advantages of using a 30-Day Placement Plan:

- ▶ The plan keeps everyone on track and focused on the job search.
- ▶ It ensures that specific job-search tasks are accomplished each week.
- ▶ The job seeker and their support network become more invested in the job search.
- ▶ Both the job seeker and employment specialist can feel a sense of accomplishment each month, even if a job has not been found.

All job seekers, with and without disabilities, should be in control of their own job search. The job seeker should drive the plan, and the process should be empowering for them. A 30-Day Placement Plan is one way to help these things happen.

WHO IS IT FOR?

A 30-Day Placement Plan is useful for anyone who is looking for a job. Some employment specialists feel responsible for finding a job for the people they are working with—especially if those job seekers have severe disabilities. But each job seeker must also hold a lot of responsibility in order for the career search to yield the best results. When the job seeker



participates as much as possible and is involved in all aspects of their job search, they will feel better about the search, and will thus be more likely to find a good job match.

Since the majority of people find jobs through networking, writing a 30-Day Placement Plan is a team effort. The job seeker, their support network, and their employment specialist can all be involved in writing and implementing the plan. If the only people involved are the job seeker and the employment specialist, it will take much longer to find a job.

This does not mean that everyone needs to participate in a formal meeting. Each time the plan is updated, the job seeker can suggest certain people who may be able to help accomplish tasks outlined for that month. For example, a job seeker might ask a sibling to help write a resume or to drive him or her around the neighborhood to see what types of businesses are in the area.

30-Day Placement Plans and Customized Employment

Workforce and disability professionals may use a set of strategies called Customized Employment. This process involves matching a specific job seeker's strengths with a particular employer's needs. A 30-Day Placement Plan can be used as a Customized Employment technique to promote independence and help job seekers find jobs they want. For more information on Customized Employment, check out the National Center on Workforce and Disability at www.onestops.info.

WHEN DO YOU DO IT?

A 30-Day Placement Plan is most effective when it's created during the first few meetings between an employment specialist and a job seeker. That way, the expectation of a team effort is in place from the start. The plan can be updated as often as necessary, but at a minimum it needs to be updated every 30 days until the job seeker has settled into their new position. Even after a job seeker starts a job, it is important to write at least one more 30-Day Placement Plan to make sure that the transition to the new position goes smoothly. Some people will need ongoing support on the job, and updating the plan each month will help to track those needs.

HOW DO YOU WRITE ONE?

Both short- and long-term goals are addressed in a 30-Day Placement Plan. Before writing the plan, a long-term career goal should be written at the top of the page so it is clear to everyone what the job seeker is striving for. The job seeker's skills and strengths should also be described at the top of the page. The job seeker and employment specialist should then discuss overall goals and smaller tasks, and set time frames to complete these steps.



The **FIRST STEP** in writing the plan is coming up with a **LIST OF TASKS** to be completed. Every plan will list tasks that need to be completed each month; these tasks depend on where the job seeker is in the search process. For example, if the job seeker is unclear about career interests and desires, developing steps to help identify a career goal is essential. The job seeker and employment specialist can work together on exploring career options, going on informational interviews, using interest inventories, doing job shadowing, undertaking situational assessments, and researching career opportunities online, all of which can be tasks on their plan.

In all cases, these tasks need to be:

- ▶ Things that can be completed within the 30-day timeframe
- ▶ Very specific, so everyone knows exactly what they have to do
- ▶ Divided up among the job seeker, employment specialist, and others
- ▶ Measurable, so that it is clear whether or not they have been achieved

step 2

The **SECOND STEP** in writing the plan is **ASSIGNING A PERSON WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR EACH TASK**. The job seeker must be responsible for completing some tasks each month, no matter how severe their disability. They may need to do these tasks with support, and should choose someone—not always the employment specialist—to work on the tasks with them. The employment specialist should not be the only person helping the job seeker.

The job seeker's network should be used to support them in the job search process. The employment specialist should act as a guide to steer the process and help the team come up with steps that can be accomplished within the 30-day time frame. Everyone on the team should be assigned a task. Two or more people may be involved in completing some tasks; in these cases, choose a primary person to be responsible for each task, and also list the names of others involved.

step 3

The **THIRD STEP** in writing the plan is **ESTABLISHING A DUE DATE** for each task. At the very least, you will want to have one task due each week. Make sure that everyone agrees on the amount of time necessary to complete the task. A very important step that can be easily overlooked is to follow up on the tasks once the due date has arrived. If you set due dates without following up, then those tasks might not get accomplished.

step 4

The **LAST STEP** is to have everyone **SIGN THE PLAN AND THEN TAKE A COPY OF IT**. Having people sign the plan can help them take it seriously. It is also a chance to make sure that everyone really understands what they need to do that month. It can be helpful for some job seekers to highlight their tasks to make them easier to track. The employment specialist may need to work with the job seeker to break down a task and write smaller steps in their date book. For example, if a job seeker needs to make four phone calls in a week, the employment specialist may break it down to one phone call per day so it is not overwhelming.

Tasks Job Seekers Can Do

- Bring in a copy of their local paper's job listings, or access an online job board, when meeting with their employment specialist
- Talk to friends and family members about their careers
- Prepare to write a resume by bringing in a list of jobs they have held
- Cut out five ads from the help-wanted section or print out five online job listings that look interesting
- Pick up job applications at places they would like to work
- Research a company online
- Make a list of three to five people who might be willing to serve as personal or professional references and call them
- Give copies of their resume to people who are acting as references
- Call three employers that they are interested in working for
- Take a tour of a business in a field they are interested in working in
- Make a list of questions to ask on an informational interview
- Go on an informational interview

Tasks Employment Specialists Can Do

- Contact employers they already have relationships with on behalf of the job seeker
- Call the job seeker's references (with the job seeker's permission) to see what they will say to an employer
- Help update the job seeker's resume
- Help the job seeker create a cover letter, and discuss how to customize it for different positions
- Help the job seeker to identify specific employers to target
- Keep the team on track with each task in the 30-day plan

Tasks Other Support People Can Do

- Use their own connections to network on behalf of the job seeker
- Proofread the job seeker's resume
- Assist the job seeker in reading job postings, either in print or online
- Help the job seeker identify local businesses that might be a good fit for him or her
- Practice interviewing with the job seeker
- Accompany the job seeker on a shopping trip to buy interview attire and accessories

Case Study: Chris

(Plan 1: Career Exploration)

Chris is a 28-year-old man with cerebral palsy who uses a motorized wheelchair. He has difficulty expressing himself quickly and his speech can be difficult to understand. Chris loves sports and has held several volunteer coaching positions. When he began working with his employment specialist, Sue, his first goal was to find a paid part-time job as an assistant coach in baseball, football, or soccer. Chris and Sue were not sure what types of opportunities were available in this area, so they made a 30-Day Placement Plan to research it.

JOB SEEKER: Chris

PLAN DATES: February 1 – March 1

CAREER GOAL: Part-time assistant coach (paid)

SKILLS AND STRENGTHS: Loves sports; very knowledgeable about rules of baseball, football, and soccer; very social; great around children and teens

Person Responsible	Task	Due Date
Chris (with help/ input from parents)	Make a list of the schools in Chris's neighborhood that he can get to and any contacts he has there.	Feb. 8
Sue and Chris	Call people on the list Chris develops to see if they ever hire paid assistant coaches (not necessarily so that they will hire Chris, but just to see if the positions even exist).	Feb. 15
Sue	Contact local colleges to see what types of jobs they hire for in their athletic departments.	Feb. 21
Matt (Chris's brother)	Talk to football, soccer, and baseball coaches at Matt's school about assistant coach positions and let Chris know the results.	Feb. 21

Case Study: Chris

(Plan 2: Employer Outreach)

After contacting many schools, Chris and Sue found out that most did not have funding available to pay for an assistant coach and those that did had very high requirements for the position. One school only hired assistant coaches who were currently enrolled in a graduate program at the school, and another had a policy of only hiring former players.

Sue started to talk to Chris about other avenues for employment, and asked him specifically what he liked about being an assistant coach. He said that he enjoyed all team sports, interacting with people, and giving advice and assistance. Together they generated a list of employers that incorporated the aspects Chris liked about coaching (e.g., YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, after-school programs, camps, gyms). They decided that a job at the front desk of a sports-related business or working with people around athletic pursuits would be great. Together they devised a plan to look for employment in these areas.

JOB SEEKER: Chris

PLAN DATES: March 1 - April 1

CAREER GOAL: Front desk at sports-related company or a job working with people around athletic pursuits

SKILLS AND STRENGTHS: Loves sports; very knowledgeable about rules of baseball, football, and soccer; very social; great around children and teens; likes to give advice

Person Responsible	Task	Due Date
Chris (with help/input from parents)	Make a list of the health clubs, after-school programs, and sports-related businesses in Chris's neighborhood that he could get to, and any contacts he knows there.	Mar. 7
Matt (Chris's brother)	Get the name and phone number of the manager of the health club Matt belongs to and information on the YMCA where he plays basketball.	Mar. 10
Chris and Sue	Call the people on the list of businesses Chris develops. Call the contacts that Matt gives Chris.	Mar. 14
Chris (with Sue or other support person)	Visit four places where Chris is interested in working and see if they are accessible for him.	Mar. 21
Sue	Re-contact some of the athletic departments she talked to the previous month to set up an informational interview for Chris.	Mar. 21

Case Study: Jane

Jane is a 45-year-old woman with schizophrenia and a developmental disability. After working in a local supermarket as a bagger and cart retriever for eight years, she wanted a job that would be more interesting and less physical. So she got back in touch with her employment specialist, Emily. Together, Emily and Jane came up with several work possibilities, including a job in customer service or at a veterinary hospital. Since Jane wanted to be as independent as possible with her job search, Emily suggested that it might be helpful for Jane to visit a One-Stop Career Center. They visited www.servicelocator.org and found the career center closest to Jane's home. They also put together a 30-Day Placement Plan for Jane that outlined some tasks they could do that month towards finding a new job.

JOB SEEKER: Jane

PLAN DATES: February 1 - March 1

CAREER GOAL: Customer service or veterinary assistant

SKILLS AND STRENGTHS: Loves animals, particularly cats; likes to assist customers; friendly; experienced in caring for her own cat

Person Responsible	Task	Due Date
Jane and Emily	Visit the local One-Stop Career Center and attend an orientation.	Feb. 2
Jane and One-Stop staff	Attend resume development class at the One-Stop.	Feb. 9
Jane and Emily	Start updating resume and format it on the computer.	Feb. 15
Emily	Contact local veterinarians about what types of job openings they typically have.	Feb. 17
Jane	Contact Jane's cat's veterinarian to learn more about possible openings at the clinic.	Feb. 17
Jane's friend and Jane	Write cover letter to Jane's veterinarian.	Feb. 21
Jane	Hand-deliver resume and cover letter to Jane's veterinarian.	Feb. 23
Jane and One-Stop staff	Attend interviewing workshop at One-Stop to get practice and feedback.	Mar. 1

30-Day Placement Plan

Job Seeker: _____

Plan Dates: _____

Career Goal: _____

Skills and Strengths: _____

Person Responsible	Task	Due Date

SIGNATURES:

Job Seeker

Employment Specialist

Other

Other

Plan will be updated on _____ (30 days from when the plan was created)

CONCLUSION

By breaking the job search into a series of small steps, a 30-Day Placement Plan makes the process much more manageable. It also creates a team approach that supports the job seeker while keeping them in charge of their own career goals. Finally, it creates a tool for tracking progress in the job search.

RESOURCES—WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

BOOKS AND ONLINE MATERIALS

Your Job Search Journal. Massachusetts One-Stop Career Centers. <http://bit.ly/gakDFD>

Publications for Job Seekers. Labor and Workforce Development. <http://tinyurl.com/35la675>

Demystifying Job Development: Field-Based Approaches to Job Development for People with Disabilities. David Hoff, Cecilia Gandolfo, Marty Gold, & Melanie Jordan. TRN, Inc., 2000.

What Color Is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters & Career-Changers. Richard N. Bolles. Ten Speed Press, updated annually.

Job Search Handbook for People with Disabilities. Dr. Daniel J. Ryan. Jist Publishing, 2004.

What Should I Do with My Life? The True Story of People Who Answered the Ultimate Question. Po Bronson. Simon & Schuster, 2003.

ICI PUBLICATIONS

(available at www.communityinclusion.org)

Starting with Me: A Guide to Person-Centered Planning for Job Seekers. Tools for Inclusion, Issue No. 14.

Networking: Your Guide to an Effective Job Search. Tools for Inclusion, Issue No. 7.

More Than Just a Job: Person-Centered Career Planning. Institute Brief, Issue No. 16.



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