

Support Coordinator FAQ

Supporting Individuals in Exploring Employment

1. Can everyone work?

The simple answer is yes. A lot of people with all levels of support needs, including people with significant support needs are successfully employed because of new job opportunities, natural supports and services, and technological advances to name a few.

2. Are all employment service organizations equipped to help all people?

No. Not all organizations are equipped to provide employment services, that is why it is important to make a referral to the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). DARS will assist the individual in making an informed choice by choosing a provider who will best support the individual's needs. If categories are closed and a referral to DARS is not needed contact DBHDS for recommendations based on unique support needs.

3. What is a meaningful conversation?

A meaningful employment conversation starts with the belief that everyone can work. It acknowledges that a reframing of work may need to occur as some of today's jobs (and those of the future) look different than jobs 5-10+ years ago. It ensures that everyone has all of the information they need to make an informed choice. It focuses on the person's awareness of the personal, social and financial benefits of employment. It considers the person's grasp of and experience with work and leads to actions that ensure any decision to work is pursued and any decision not to work is explored and explained.

4. What is an employment related goal?

A meaningful employment related goal focuses on removing barriers to employment or the information needed to make an informed decision regarding employment. Employment related goals should focus on what is important to the individual related to their desire for employment. Person centered planning practices should be implemented to ensure the person's autonomy, needs, preferences, desired outcomes, likes and dislikes are implemented into their employment goal.

5. What information should I provide to an individual and family about employment services available?

When talking about employment, guide the conversation to what people are interested in for work and/or concerns they have about working. Discuss the variety of supports available and explain that an assessment regarding employment support needs will be completed, but do not promise any specific type of employment or employment supports/services.

6. What if a family has concerns about their loved one working?

Some families may not believe their loved one can work. Some are concerned about health and safety at the workplace. Others are concerned about the loss of or impact on financial benefits. There are many places where families can get information and support. You do not need to have all the answers. You just need to know where to point people. There are benefits planners available across the state through DARS and the Waiver. There are Family to Family and Peer to Peer mentor programs supported by DBHDS and the Waiver that can pair people with disabilities and families for emotional, informational, and systems navigational support. Encourage the individual or family to contact ESO's or DARS to gather additional information.

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Supporting Individuals Once Enrolled in Employment Services

1. What can I expect from an employment service organization?

Employment Service Organizations (ESO) are not your typical Habilitative provider. They stay only as long as needed and work hard to limit that amount of time. Some services provided include:

- **Job development:** used for determining the person's needs, interests, hobbies,; researching jobs that match these identified areas; may or may not be at a regularly scheduled time.
- **Situational Assessment:** allow the person to try different employment opportunities through short-term job try-outs. Individuals can fully explore their vocational interests and options in order to gain a good understanding of what certain jobs entail so that they can make informed choices about the type of work they would ultimately like to pursue.
- **Placement and Training:** supports the person through the employer with orientation and training, learning all job duties, developing natural supports on the job, creating a routine with their work, and when necessary accessing reasonable accommodations and addressing any issues or concerns that arise on the job.
- **Follow along:** involves the job coach touching base with the individual, the employer and with permission other members of the person's team. Follow along is limited and if it exceeds 50% of the time a person is on the job then workplace assistance should be explored and implemented.

2. What do I do when a family member calls with a concern about the job, schedule, ESO provider, etc.?

Support Coordinator can act as the liaison between the family and the job coach or can direct the family to contact the ESO. The support coordinator should not contact the employer directly and should discourage the family from doing the same. Business relationships are cultivated over years and one negative experience can influence a business's decision to hire additional people with disabilities. As you do not ask others to contact your employer on your behalf, we should proceed in the same vain with supported employment.

3. Should I visit people at their job?

While it helps to observe people in a variety of environments, including their place of employment, any visits must be coordinated at the request of the individual and through the job coach to ensure that it is not disruptive to work. It is important to understand that some employers may not give permission for visits during work time due to security or other concerns. It is important to respect the employer's rules for visiting. Best practice would be not to visit the jobsite unless you are invited by the individual.