

Choosing a Service Provider

Take the time to learn about what support options are available to you. Choosing your own provider is one of the first steps towards putting you in the driver's seat.

Your support provider should be a bridge builder who helps you meet your goals and builds supportive relationships with employers, coworkers, neighbors and other community members. It is very important that you choose someone you can work with. The County provides a list of qualified providers and information about each agency or contractor. You should plan on visiting with two or three different agencies and asking as many questions as you need to feel informed. Ask a family member or your Personal Agent to go with you.

In order to make your interview time the most valuable, think about what is most important to you and develop questions that will get you that information prior to your meeting. A list of interview questions has been included to assist you. You will also need to be prepared to state your expectations, goals and what you are willing to do to help. This is a partnership and the provider will be checking to see if you can work together.

- **Think about what kind of questions to ask**

- What experience does he/she have working with people with disabilities?
- What kind of services does he or she offer? (for example: job development, on-the-job training, follow-along, community connections)
- Will I be updated weekly, bi-monthly, monthly? (What is your preference?)
- Can I call the job developer during the job search process?
- Describe some "typical" jobs or volunteer situations that have been developed through your agency.
- Explain your strategies behind developing jobs for people with disabilities.
- Explain how you develop connections in the community.

- **Be clear about your needs**

- Explain your expectations as clearly as possible.
- Ask the person whether he/she can meet those expectations.

- **Do you like this person?**

- Do you trust this person?
- Does he/she treat you with respect?
- How does this person present him/herself?
- How does he or she present the people he/she serves?

INTERVIEWING EMPLOYMENT VENDORS

Examples of Questions to Ask When Interviewing Service Providers:

The following questions are intended to prepare you to interview an employment vendor about their employment services and the quality of those services.

- Would you be willing to interview with us at our home?
- How does your agency develop job leads for people?
- What companies have you placed people at and in what types of jobs?
- What is your marketing approach with a new, prospective employer?
- How many people does this agency serve in supported employment?
- Do you provide training for employers, employees or family members?
- What type of feedback on job development and training do you provide for the family? How often?
- When you are doing job development will you provide transportation for the individual, if necessary?
- Will the job developer also provide the on the job training or will another individual be hired to do so (i.e. job coach, natural supports set up, co-worker trainer, etc.)?
- How long do you usually provide job coaching for a new worker and will you set up natural supports on the job site as part of the on the job training?
- Describe some of the factors you consider when matching an employment site and the individual?
- What kind of activities will you do with the individual to better acquaint yourself with them?
- What/how do you charge for your services?
- How do you determine your fee for the necessary services?
- Would your agency be willing to negotiate your fees?
- Would you be able to continue job development after the funding has run out?
- Do you help support or develop transportation services for the individual when a placement has been determined?

Reminders:

- These questions are only a general guideline developed to assist you with preparing yourself for the interview process. As you prepare, you will begin to think of questions that may be more specifically related to your particular needs as a consumer. Don't hesitate to ask any question you may have during the interview process!
- Prior to meeting with the vendor, it is suggested that you have a firm understanding of what program you are affiliated with (Self-directed Services, Personal Agent Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Transition, etc.). You will also need to understand what funding sources are available to you that may be used to pay for employment supports (for example, State DDD funding, Social Security Work Incentives, private pay). Providing the vendor with program information will save

both of you time. This information will assist the vendor in understanding what type of services you may be inquiring about and funding available to assist you in your program development.

- As you begin to interview vendors, the process will raise additional questions that you may have never thought of. This is okay! If you feel the need to do second interviews to complete a more specific comparison of services, take the extra time to re-interview. There is no timeline, but your own, for the selection of a service provider!

* This handout was developed by Lynnette Andrews, O'Neill & Associates, with contributions from staff at Washington Initiative for Supported Employment, Debra McLain and others who support self-directed services for people with developmental disabilities.