

Working Together To Reach Supported Employment Goals

A Customer's Guide To Using Vocational Rehabilitation and Other Resources to Get and Keep a Job in the Community

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Support Service Brokerage Staff
and
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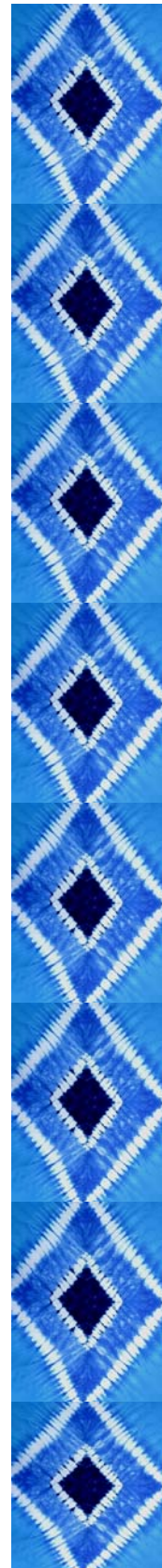


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Introduction

Why Did We Write This Guide?

In 2003, a group of people from all over Oregon started to have meetings. They talked about how to help people with developmental disabilities find jobs. They shared ideas about how to help people keep their jobs. Members of the group are Brokerage Directors and Personal Agents, VR Counselors and Branch Managers, family members and advocates for people with developmental disabilities. There are representatives from both DHS' Staley Implementation Team and OVRs' Administration Unit who helped too. The group's ideas and suggestions are written here to help you find your next job.

This book tells how the Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVRs), Support Services Brokerages and County Developmental Disabilities Programs work together to help people with developmental disabilities get and keep a job. This book tells you about:

- What happens
- Who helps you
- What you need to do
- Where you can get more help and information

What is Supported Employment?

- Paid work that happens in your community where most of your coworkers are persons without disabilities.
- Support to help you find and learn a job. This could mean finding a job that fits your skills or creating a job that matches your strengths and abilities.
- Support to help you keep a job. This could mean teaching your boss and coworkers about your abilities and needs, or having someone help you at your job site every day or when help is needed. The help may come from someone who works at your job site or someone who comes to visit regularly.

Why Should I Go To Work?

There are lots of reasons people work. Some of them are:

- Show your skills
- Make new friends
- Be part of the community
- Be healthy
- Earn money

Whatever your reason, there are people and organizations who want to help you succeed! This book will help you find them and learn how they can help you.

Deciding to Work

If you think you want to work, you should talk to people about their jobs. Where do they work? What do they do? Tell your family you want a job. Tell your Personal Agent (PA) or Services Coordinator too. They will assist you to get the help you need. Ask them to make an appointment to meet a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor. Make getting a job part of your ISP, which you will write with your PA or Services Coordinator.

Working means you have responsibilities. Will you:

- Be on time?
- Do what you say you will do?
- Have a positive attitude-even if sometimes you have to do things that you don't like?

Other things you may know or need to learn about:

- What you like to do and what you don't like
- How your disability might make it hard to get or keep a job
- Health or other issues that must be considered when choosing a job

Who will you ask to be a part of your employment team? You will pick the people who will be helping you find a job. Think about your family and friends, your VR Counselor and possible job developers or job coaches. Don't forget teachers, classroom aides and your OT or PT. There may be others. Make a list so you can talk to your PA, Service Coordinator and VR Counselor.

Do you have the information that you need to help you make informed choices about your employment options?

- What tasks to workers do?
- What are some possible job goals that match your skills and interests?
- What supported employment options are available?
- Which agencies or people can help you reach your goal?

What is My Family's Role in Helping Me Get and Keep a Job?

Your family can be a part of the team that helps you get and keep a job. If you have a guardian, he or she must be part of your team. Families can play an important role in how you feel and how successful you are at work. They can:

- Help you become independent and gather information you need to make good decisions
- Help you try new things and learn skills needed for work

- Gather papers your Personal Agent, VR Counselor and Job Developer will need to help you get a job
- Identify interests, strengths, and support strategies
- Help solve problems creatively
- Help you meet your schedule, find transportation, manage money so you can go to work
- Share their personal networks and contacts

How Will I Get Started?

Your Personal Agent or Service Coordinator will share information with you. They will help you get an appointment at your local Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVR) or Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB) Office.

Organizations to Help You Find and Keep a Job

There are many places where you can get help to find and keep a job. Some of them provide all kinds of services to people with disabilities. Others only help people with specific disabilities or only assist people with employment. Use all the help you can find from each place. Getting information will help you make informed decisions about working. It will also help you know how earning money from a job will affect your benefits like SSI/SSDI, Oregon Health Plan and housing assistance.

Services to People with Developmental Disabilities

If you are reading this book, you have already received services through your local County Developmental Disabilities Program (CDDP). They will tell you how to find a Support Services Brokerage or a County Services Coordinator/Case Manager. That person will be one of many who will help you find and keep a job.

Most people who live in their own home or with their family receive services through a Support Services Brokerage. Support Services Brokerages are organizations that work with the State of Oregon. There are nine Support Services Brokerages in the state. They focus on helping people who live near their offices. At the Brokerage, you will have a Personal Agent (PA) who can help you with planning for your job. The PA will also talk about how working will affect your benefits. They will also work with you to find other people who want to help you find a job.

If you live in a group or foster home you can ask your County Services Coordinator/Case Manager to help you plan for a job. Your Services Coordinator can also direct money that is available so you can keep your job. If you are waiting for brokerage services, your County Services Coordinator may help you with your job goals.

Employment Services for People with Disabilities

Oregon's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVR) and the Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB) help people with disabilities to find jobs. They can provide planning, funding, and support based upon your employment ideas, dreams and needs. Their services are focused on helping you decide what kind of job you want; helping you to find and learn the job; and making sure you can keep the job. They cannot give you long-term funding for supported employment. Your VR Counselor will work with you and your PA or Services Coordinator to make an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). Your IPE is

based on a job goal that you and your team agree on. There are 6 OCB branch offices in the state (see <http://www.cfb.state.or.us/vocational.htm>) There are 29 OVRS branch offices in the state as well as many more locations where VR Counselors work part-time during the week (see http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/EMPLOY/TLFRSTAF/contact_us.shtml).

Social Security

“One of the Social Security Administration’s (SSA) highest priorities is to help people with disabilities achieve independence by helping them to take advantage of employment opportunities.”

--Social Security Administration Summary Guide to Employment Support (Red Book)

The Social Security Administration has many programs to help people get and keep a job. Three of the programs are Benefits Planning, Ticket to Work and Social Security Work Incentives (SSWI). SSWI are Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE) and Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS). Your Services Coordinator, VR Counselor or PA can help you learn about these programs. You can also check the SSA website (<http://www.ssa.gov/work/>) to get more information.

Other Resources

You may be eligible for other help to get or keep a job. Your Service Coordinator, VR Counselor or PA can help you learn about:

- A special project between Senior and Person with Disabilities and OVRS called the Employment Initiative.
- Your high school transition plan and school district resources.
- One Stop Career Centers and Workforce Investment Act Programs
- Youth Transition Program
- Individualized Training Accounts
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit
- Benefits Analysis through the Oregon Advocacy Center
- Small Business Administration (SBA) – for developing your own business
- Independent Living Centers

Taking the First Step

Preparing to Meet with VR

Because you decided to go to work and talked about it with your PA or Services Coordinator (SC), it is time to take the first step to find your new job. Ask your PA or SC to call the Oregon Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVRs) to set up an application meeting. If you have a guardian, he or she must go too because they must sign all the papers. Many OVRs office have group meetings every week to share information about how they help people get a job. These meetings are called “orientation.” You may want to go to one of these before setting up the meeting with your counselor.

Wanting to work is the most important reason for you to get help with your employment search. Your OVRs VR Counselor needs to know more about you and your disability before they can help you look for work. To get their help, you must be eligible based on the laws they must follow.

Your PA or SC will help you and your family gather the paperwork for VR. They will review the Essential Worker’s Characteristics and VR Eligibility Checklist with you. A sample of these papers is in the back of this book. It will help if you bring as much information about yourself as you can to your meeting with VR. VR has up to 60 days to tell you if you are eligible for their help. If you bring all the information VR needs to this meeting, your Counselor can make you eligible the same day.

The Application Meeting

This will probably be your first chance to meet your VR Counselor. It is important that you make a good impression and show that you are motivated and responsible. You must show the VR Counselor you are ready to look for a job. If you feel that you can thoroughly answer all the questions yourself, then you and your PA or SC can go to the application meeting. If you need some help answering all the questions, it is a good idea to bring a family member or advocate to help you at the meeting.

At this meeting, you will learn about OVRs. You will learn about how OVRs helps people find jobs. It will also be a time for everyone to get to know each other. It can be hard work to get a job. It is important that everyone works with you as a team - your “employment team.”

What will we talk about at this meeting?

Proof that you are eligible for VR: If you get SSI, SSDI or SSDAC you are eligible for VR services. Bring your Social Security determination letter or a copy of your check to show your VR Counselor. Your VR Counselor may need more information to help you. Your counselor will read the Essential Worker Characteristics and VR Eligibility Checklists. Your counselor may ask you some questions to understand what you and your PA or SC wrote there.

Your Interests and Skills: Your VR Counselor will ask about work you have done at home, at school or in the community. Don't forget to tell them about chores and volunteer jobs you have done. They want to know what you are interested in and what your abilities are. If you have not had many chances to show your interests and abilities, the VR Counselor will talk about things you can try that might help your team learn more about you.

Your Support Needs: Your VR Counselor will ask questions about things that make it hard for you to work. This is important information. It will help your counselor know what kind of help you need solve or avoid those problems. This will also tell the team what kind of help you need to get and keep a job. For example, if you may have trouble finding a way to get to work or need special equipment to do your job, it is important to talk about these things.

Job Ideas: When he or she knows your interests, skills, and support needs, your VR Counselor will share more ideas for jobs. This includes asking a company to create a job that fits your skills. If you have strong ideas, be sure to speak up and share them.

Benefits Planning and Plan Resources: Your VR Counselor will ask you about your benefits. He or she will need to know about other kinds of money or people who can help you get and keep your job.

Services: Your VR Counselor will talk about the services that they can give you. The services you get depend on what you need. No one gets every service VR can provide. Because everyone is different, your services may be different than other people's services. Some of the services are:

- Helping you pick a type of work and learning about jobs that match your goal.
- Paying a certified Employment Consultant or an agency to help you find a job.
- Finding a professional to create special equipment you need to do your job.

- Developing a plan for how you will learn your job.
- Identifying and developing natural and paid supports for you to keep your job.

General Timelines: Because everyone is different, it is impossible to guess what your job will be or how long it will take to get it. At this meeting you and your team will want to start a discussion about:

- What information the team needs to help you pick a job goal
- How the team will know if the job goal is a good match for you.
- When that information will be available.
- Who will help to gather the information

What's next?

If you are ready to participate with the employment team, the VR Counselor will open a file for services. If you aren't, the VR Counselor will suggest things you can do to become ready so you can come back to VR later. If your file is opened your employment team will set up the next meeting. At that meeting, the team will do an Employment Focused Person Centered Plan (EPCP) or start to write your Individual Plan for Employment (IPE).

Learning About Jobs

You and your family can share a lot of information with your employment team. This includes your life experiences and things about you that can either help or be a challenge to your new job. Person Centered Planning (PCP) is one way to help everyone organize this information. Although you may have done a Person Centered Plan before, you and your team can make a PCP all about working. You should invite people who know and care about you, your VR Counselor and PA or SC to this meeting. You can also invite community members who can tell you more about jobs. Remember, the more people interested in your job search, the more contacts you have to tap for ideas.

At the meeting, your PA or SC will usually make sure everything is talked about. Sometimes a special consultant will be hired to do this. At the meeting, your team and guests will talk about:

- Experiences that gave you skills to use at work
- Your strengths, gifts, capacities and abilities
- Specific information on what you need to be successful at work
- Challenges and support strategies
- Resources
- What work setting fits for you
- Names of people who can assist with the employment process

After the meeting, you will have an Action Plan that may become part of your Individual Plan for Employment.

Sometimes the team needs to know more about you before they can help with an Employment Focused Person Centered Plan. Your team may ask you to try out a job in the community to answer questions about what you can do or what you like. This is called a Community-based Assessment. For this assessment, you will spend a short period of time in your community in a place where you have the support you need. This could be one day, a week or longer. The assessment may be done at a non-paid job, through work in a school setting or through community activities.

When you are done, you will have shown what you like, what you are good at and what skills you have. This assessment will give you and your team detailed information on specific tasks you can do. It will show how you learn new things. It will tell your team what support you need at your job to be successful. It will help you and your team know what kind of supervisor and coworkers you need do your job well. This kind of assessment takes about 20-30 work hours.

The information from your Employment Focused Person Centered Plan is summarized in a report. You and your employment team use this information to help you decide on your employment goal. It also helps you and your team know what to write in your Individual Plan for Employment to help you get and keep your job.

Getting Ready to Work

Now that you have decided on a job goal, you and your employment team will write your OVRs Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). You already have an Individual Support Plan (ISP) with the Brokerage or County. Your Individual Plan for Employment will be a new part of your ISP. This can be confusing, so ask your PA, SC or VR Counselor to help you to understand all the pieces.

The IPE is an agreement between you/your guardian, your VR Counselor and others on your employment team. It shows how the team will help you find and learn your job. Your plan will list:

- What services you will receive
- Who will provide the services
- An estimate of how many hours of services you will receive
- How the team will know if your provider is doing a good job for you
- The cost of services
- How the services will be paid for
- Each employment team member's responsibilities
- How often the team will talk to each other to see how things are going
- How you will show that you know your job and are doing it well
- A plan for ongoing supports to help you keep your job after OVRs closes your file

Your IPE can be changed as needed. There are many reasons to change a plan. You may need more help if your new job is harder than expected. You may not need as much help as the team had guessed. You and your team may decide to work together a little longer until your new boss says, "Things are fine!"

Understanding and Signing the Plan

By signing the IPE, you are saying that you understand and agree to what it says. If there are parts of the IPE that you do not understand or do not agree with, do not sign it until the problem is solved. Instead, ask questions and discuss your concerns with the team so that your plan can be written in a way that meets your needs. If you still cannot reach agreement, you can get help through the Client Assistance Program at 1-800-234-2081 (Voice) or 1-800-556-5351 (TTY).

Finding and Learning a Job

The process of finding a job is called “job development”. It is the responsibility of every employment team member to help you find and learn your job.

There are many ways to find a job, and they can all be useful. People who have a lot of barriers that make it hard for them to get a job often need a “customized” approach to job development. In customized job development, a job developer focuses on your skills, interests, and abilities. The job developer looks for an employer who can benefit from your contributions. Then the job developer works with the employer to develop a series of tasks that matches your skills. This may be part of an existing job or an entirely new job created especially for you. This means you get a job and the employer gets a valuable employee; both of you “win” what you want. The following are common words that are associated with finding and learning a job:

- **Job Developer** - Someone who is paid to find or create a job for you.
- **Job Coach** - Someone who assists you to learn and keep your job. This may be the Job Developer or a different person. The Job Coach may be someone who already works at the company or someone who comes only to help you. It is the Job Coach’s job to help you become as independent as possible on the job by seeking natural supports whenever available. As you become more independent your VR Counselor and your Job Coach will spend less time with you.
- **Employment Specialist** – Another name for job developers or job coaches.
- **Job Carving** – Finding tasks, either in existing jobs or ones that are not currently a part of a job, then creating a new job that matches your talents. Job carving can make the company more efficient and can save them money.
- **Job Training or Job Coaching** – Helping you to learn your job.
- **Natural Supports** – Support for you that is not paid. For example, a co-worker reminding you to take a break or a supervisor giving you instructions.
- **Self-employment or Entrepreneurship** – Having your own company. This is becoming more common for people with disabilities of all types. It is a way for many people with disabilities to increase their chances for jobs that they enjoy.
- **Job stabilization** – The point in time when you have learned the basics of your job and you and your boss feel that you do not need more job training. At this point, OVRs funding will stop and other funding must be

used for your ongoing assistance. You and the other members of your employment team will decide when you have reached job stabilization.

How can my family help?

Support job search: The more people involved in the job search, the better. From the beginning, family involvement will help the person searching for a job to be more successful. Sharing contacts, coming up with ideas and assisting the process are only a few of the ways families help you find a job. Coordination of efforts to keep things running smoothly is very important to the process and the result—a job that matches your skills and interests!

Provide natural supports: Natural supports can mean many different things, including help from coworkers, friends and families. Relying on natural supports helps fill the gaps in things like transportation to and from the job. A neighbor or a family member can do this. Coworkers can make sure things at work are being done to keep the job placement successful.

Dealing with problems when they arise: Talking about everyday job frustrations is important to make sure things keep going well. Many times just a simple change to solve a problem can help you avoid losing your job. Families can help by talking with and supporting the person with the disability, as well as by helping them to ask for or make a needed change.

What Happens After VR Closes My File?

Vocational Rehabilitation cases can be closed two different ways. Closed as “Rehabilitated” means the person is working and does not need more help from VR to keep the job. In Supported Employment, your file can be closed as Rehabilitated if:

- You have worked at a job with other people who do not have disabilities; you earn money for your work and have worked for at least 90 days.
- You earn the same amount as other people who do the job, or are working toward earning that much.
- You know what you need for long term supports, who will provide them and how they will be paid for.

Closed as “Other” means the file was closed before you got a job. Some reasons this might happen would be:

- A change in your disability
- You decide you don’t want VR to help you
- You were not available to work with VR for a long time
- Long term supports were not available after all
- You decide you want to work only with other people with disabilities

Keeping a Job With Long-term Supports

It is important that you know what support you will need and who will provide it before the first day of work. Planning ahead can save a lot of time and frustration for you and your boss. This helps you be successful. Making sure the job is a good match for your situation and making sure those supports are in place when the job begins are very important. Everyone is different so your long term supports may not be the same as other people's.

Using Your ISP to Keep Your Job

The ISP is the paper that shows the agreement between you/your guardian and your long term job coach or provider to help you meet your needs. Your PA or Services Coordinator and others on your employment team have helped you develop this contract. It shows how help will be given to you and your coworkers so you can keep doing your job well. Your plan will list:

- What services you will receive
- Who will provide the services
- An estimate of how many hours of services you will receive
- How the team will know if your provider is doing a good job for you
- The cost of services
- How the services will be paid for
- Each employment team member's responsibilities
- How often the team will talk to each other to see how things are going
- Who will make sure that your wages and other information is reported to Social Security
- How you will show that you know your job and are doing it well

On the Job

It is important that you like your job. It is also important that your boss likes the way you do your job. Annual reviews are one way to make sure that is happening. Everyone who works gets to meet with their boss at least once a year to talk about how they are doing on the job. You will do this too. At your Annual Review, you will also be able to talk about help you get from your job coach. If your boss adds new parts of your job, your job coach can help you learn them or deal with any other changes that may happen. If you need more support to learn new things, your employment team will help you.

Post Employment Services

Sometimes you can get VR help after your file is closed. Post Employment Services (PES) are available only if the file has been closed as rehabilitated or from PES status within the past three years. PES can be used for limited

services that will not take longer than 90 days to provide. The services cannot cost more than \$1,000. The services must be related to your disability and your job. Examples of services could include hiring a job coach to help you solve a problem with your job, help from your VR Counselor if your boss needs to change your job tasks, or purchasing assistive technology devices or changing your work area to help you do your job better.

New VR File

If PES services are not an option, opening a new VR file may help you keep your job. If you lose your job, you can ask VR to help you find another one. If your old VR file was closed as Other and you want to try again, your VR Counselor will ask you about your life now and how things have changed since your file was closed. This is your chance to show you are ready to get and keep a job. Examples of changes that may have happened include maturity level, volunteer or work experience, new independent living skills or transportation problems being resolved.

Conclusion

Working can be a very positive experience. Using the information in this book can help you find the right job, in the right company, with the right supports. It can help you be successful.

If you have questions about the information in this book, talk to your PA, Services Coordinator or VR Counselor. They will be happy to answer your questions. If they need more information, they can contact staff at OVRs Administration or members of the SPD Staley Implementation Team. A list of the people who helped write this book is in the Appendix. It includes their addresses and phone numbers.

Good luck in finding your new job!

Appendices

Essential Supported Employment Worker Characteristics
Eligibility Determination Checklist
Questions Asked in an Employment Focused PCP
Workgroup Member List

OVRS Essential Supported Employment Worker Characteristics

Essential To Open VR Case

- I want to work at a job in my community.
- I am legally able to work (Green Card, US Citizen, etc.)
- I have a positive attitude about working in some field
- I have a Social Security card and an ID card
- I am in good health
- My place of residence is stable and I can focus energy on working
- I can ask for help when needed (verbally or in another way)
- I have shown an ability to be dependable, to work with others, and accept direction in some environment
- My Team feels that there is a reasonable expectation that the level of long term support to help me keep my job can be developed through one or more sources

Essential to Write VR Plan

- I have specific job goals
- I have been dependable and on time in terms of work with VR Counselor and other activities

Essential at VR Case Closure

- I understand job expectations
- The accuracy and quality of my work is good
- I have good attendance
- I can accept a supervisor telling me what to do
- The long term supports to help me keep my job have been identified and are in place

Desirable But Not Required

- I have good hygiene
- I have proper clothes for interviewing
- I have good references
- I have a good resume
- I have good interviewing skills

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Eligibility Determination Checklist

What Kind Of Information Can Be Used To Determine Eligibility?

- Medical/ Psychological Reports From County Records
- School Reports and IEPs
- Adult Vocational Agency Reports or Case Notes
- Reports From Family and Professionals who know the Customer
- Customer Self Reporting

List and Document Specific Impairments and Diagnoses (list all)

List all Specific Needs and Accommodations Required to Get and Keep Employment (hours worked per week, work schedule, work site, job carving, job coaching, on-going employment support needs, transportation etc. If unknown, indicate so.)

Review and Identify Functional Loss or Needs for Support in Seven Areas (Check and document all that apply. The Team will then work to identify strategies to provide supports or otherwise address the issue.)

1. Communication Barriers

- Does not readily understand others
- Not readily understood by others
- Requires aides for conversation
- Uses single words or short phrases
- Speech is rambling or illogical
- Talks and interrupts excessively
- Unable to converse via telephone

2. Interpersonal Barriers

- Conflict with co-workers
- Isolation or withdrawal from co-workers
- Inappropriate response to others
- Negative work history
- Unacceptable interactions at work

3. Mobility Barriers

- Unable to use public transportation
- Needs on-going assistance in community

4. Self-Care Barriers

- Needs monitoring to prevent injury
- Poor decision making
- Requires assistance personal needs
- Requires assistance handling money

5. Self-Direction Barriers

- Requires constant supervision
- Requires frequent supervision
- Short attention span on desirable activity
- Unaware of consequences of behavior

6. Work Skill Barriers

- Reading, spelling and/or math skills below 5th grade
- Difficulty learning new skills
- Limited task sequence recall
- Requires accommodation or rehabilitation technology
- Significantly reduced speed

7. Work Tolerance Barriers

- Cannot lift more than 20 lbs
- Misses 3 or more days a month
- Must pause to climb stairs

Questions Asked in an Employment Focused Person Centered Plan

Strengths, Interests, and Abilities

What do you like to do?
What are your interests?
What are the things that you do well?
What so others compliment you on?
Past jobs or tasks that you enjoyed doing?
Skills and interests you have shown at home?

What Works For You?

What do you like about working?
What keeps you interested (money, friends, environment)?
What keeps you in a good mood?
What can bring you out of a bad mood?
Specific jobs or tasks
Worksite preferences (time, temp, noise, clothing)
Expectations of a job (pace, detail level, quality)

What Doesn't Work?

What things make it harder to do a job?
What do you dislike?
What do you do when you really dislike something? (Get a description of behavior)

Work History

Jobs, volunteer & school experiences including job titles, dates, what helped in success
What kinds of things do you do at home to help out?
What classes have you taken?

Possible Support Needs

Consider mobility, transportation, self-care, work skills, social skills, time awareness and specific training needs:
What help would you need to get a job?
What help would you need to learn a job?
What help would you need to keep a job?
What would make your job easier?

Ideal Situation/ Possible Jobs

What would the ideal job look like?
What things are really important and should be part of your job?

Where to Look/Who Do We Know?

Brainstorm specific businesses in the community with jobs or work tasks that match the ideal

Think of people you know that work in those businesses

Think of people who might have information about your ideal job

Possible Resources

What family member or friend might help?

Who else in the community may help?

Which agencies will help?

Complete benefits and resource analysis

Next Steps

| What do we need to do to make this happen? | Who will do each step? | When will they do it? | How do we know its been done? |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | | |

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