Reducing Barriers to Employment for People with Significant Disabilities

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I. Introduction

70% of people with significant disabilities are unemployed (Nerney, 2001). Those few people who are employed often get too little pay for jobs unrelated to what they want and can do. The New Mexico Developmental Disabilities Planning Council funded this project to find and share successful ideas for employing people with significant disabilities. These ideas come from New Mexico and around the United States. What are significant disabilities? Examples include people with developmental disabilities who have multiple disabilities, as well as those with extensive communication, physical and/or cognitive challenges. This Guide is for people with these types of disabilities who want to work, their families, employers, support staff, and interested others. Use this Guide to learn how to support individuals with significant disabilities to employment success. The Guide describes barriers people experience. The topics, content, and stories give ideas to reduce those barriers. The ideas come to life with success stories about real people. Hands-on, practical information is identified in the References.

II. Best Practice
Employment Support Strategies

The guide includes these employment support topics identified through best practice research, nominated success stories, and Steering Committee input:

1. Choice and Self-Determination
2. Career Path
3. Relationship Networks
4. Career Matching
5. Job Tailoring
6. Financial
7. Employers
8. Employment Specialist
9. Employer and Employee Legal Resources
10. Internet Resources
11. Barriers
1. Choice and Self-Determination

1.1 Whole-Life Planning

**Person/Student and Family Led Whole-Life Planning** - People who are self-determined make more of their own choices and take more control of their own lives and property. People with significant disabilities, supported by family and friends, can lead planning for the lives they want. Many people have looked at how to make this happen (Abery, 1998; Pearpoint, 1998; O’Brien, 1998).

**Individual Educational Plan (IEP) /Transition Plan** - The federal law, IDEA, mandates IEPs for each Special Education student. Each student over the age of 14 must also have a Transition Plan for moving from school to adult life. A team that includes the student, the family, as well as teachers and other staff important to the student, must make each plan. IEP and Transition Planning can be tied to whole-life planning. A student and family can choose to lead their own planning - participating however the student’s capabilities and choices allow. For example, a student may show his/her choices by what (s)he does rather than what (s)he says. Effective transition planning starts at a young age. Student and family involvement in personal decision-making helps students reach their dreams (Pleet, 2000; Sale, 1997; Wheymeyer, 1992).

The National Transition Alliance for Youth and Disabilities (NTA) recommends “student-focused planning and development” as well as “family involvement” (Kohler, 2002). Kohler (2000) shares that NTA has a lot of ideas about how to make this happen; for example, teaching students about having more control over their own lives and supporting what students and families want to have happen with the community resources and training they need.

Although students and parents see many gaps (Stevens, 2001), New Mexico has initiatives to support these best practices (Allen, Blalock, Bowman, 2001; Brito, 2000). As one example, self-determination curriculum is being taught in many schools. There are “how to” booklets about transition that include “student-led IEPs” (PRO, 2002). A recent project promotes student-led IEPs in numerous districts (Damian, 2002). The Advocates Alliance Transition Project addressed all NTA best practices listed. (See: cdd.unm.edu/csa/advall/trans.html)

**Individual Support Plan (ISP)** - The New Mexico Department of Health Long Term Services Division (LTSD) mandates that each person served on the Adult Developmental Disabilities Medicaid Waiver (DD Waiver) has an ISP. A team supports the person to identify life vision and related goals that include any employment choices. This plan has goals, objectives, strategies and other information to support the person’s vision. Services, including Supported Employment, are based on this plan. (For more information, call LTSD, 1[877] 696-1472)

**Vocational Profile/Career Development Plan** - LTSD also mandates that adults served on the DD Waiver have a Vocational Profile. This person-centered career-planning alternative replaces traditional vocational evaluation that often labeled people with significant disabilities as unemployable. The Profile explores the person’s interests, strengths, capabilities, dreams, and important relationships. An example of a Profile provided by LTSD shows how a team used a Profile to support a person with a significant disability with little or no work experience. The team recorded information about the individual in the areas described above and found new roles the person could be supported to explore as well as barriers (Bourassa, 2002). “It …assist[s] individuals with severe disabilities, their families, friends and staff to reach specific employment outcomes. [Done correctly,] it provides a complete picture of the person rather than focusing attention on one or two skill areas” (Callahan, 1997). (For more information, call LTSD, 1[877]696-1472).

**Planning Alternate Tomorrows with Hope (PATH)** - PATH is one of many whole-life planning process that people with significant disabilities have used successfully. (For more information see References Section III) Each PATH has a recorder who draws and writes down what the person wants in their life so that non-
1. Choice and Self-Determination (continued)

readers can follow the process. A facilitator leads the process. The person invites people most important to them to the PATH. They support the person to identify his/her dreams by what they have observed to be the person's capabilities and likes. As one example of how the PATH can be individually adapted, it can be facilitated in short sessions for people with low stamina. The 2 hour PATH includes: life dream, goals, life now compared to goals, people to sign up to make the dream and goals happen, how to build the person's strength, planning for the next six months, month and first steps – including who will support follow-up (Ibañez, 1999). (For more information, visit the web: http://www.inclusion.org/).

1.2 Self-Directed Services

Self-Directed Services - People with disabilities and/or their family can take charge by self-directing services. Self-directed services offer more flexibility in hiring staff and what they are paid. People and families need supports to do self-directed services (Hewitt, 2001) based on personal needs and capabilities. Examples of supports can include screening staff selected, training. An employee with disabilities can also direct their employment supports. Examples of choices the employee can make include: calling meetings as needed, deciding who comes to the meetings, choosing employment support options, deciding when employment supports can fade, deciding when more supports are needed because some type of change is happening or desired, and expressing how satisfied the employee is with what’s happening at work (Brooke, 1998). New Mexico is working on a Self-Directed Developmental Disabilities Waiver. This will give New Mexicans this choice.

1.3 Assessing Satisfaction with Supports

Assessing Satisfaction with Supports - Who knows best if employment supports are working for a specific person? The person receiving those supports is an expert on what works and does not work. Employment support programs “…often overlook [people with disabilities] when evaluating how effectively [employment supports] are meeting their needs” (Parent, 1996). Employers and Employment Specialists can determine employee satisfaction with supports by asking informal or survey questions. The ideas for finding out what a person with significant disabilities truly thinks and feels can be used for whole-life planning, career matching, learning the workplace culture and any other areas where the person’s opinion matters. “Yes” or “No” questions should be avoided as a person with a significant disability who has been taught to be compliant to people in authority may try to please the questioner by answering “yes”. For the same reason, questioners must be careful to avoid body language that “leads” a person to a desired answer. Observation can be an important way to measure satisfaction for a person with significant communication challenges. Observers can use a “communication dictionary” developed by the ISP team that shows what gestures, body movements, and vocalizations the person uses to express happiness or satisfaction. This can include the person's stamina, how long it takes for the person to make a response (it may be an hour or a day later), and what time of day is best for the person. The person may also communicate satisfaction using aids identified as effective for that person, such as pictures, photos, objects or communication devices (Stevens, 1999). Examples of topics include: happiness with job, co-workers, pay, friends, training, benefits, supervision, job conditions, job coach, and suggestions (Parent, 1996; Stevens, 2001). A Steering Committee self-advocate says, “Family, friends, co-workers and supervisors can assist a person with significant disabilities by giving their observations of what supports are working and what are not (see 3. Relationship Networks and 7. Employers).
1. Choice and Self-Determination  

1.4 Self-Employment

Self-Employment - After a person with a significant disability identifies dreams, capabilities and interests as well as any barriers through whole-life planning, the person may make the dream come true through self-employment. Although it may grow out of “lack of other opportunities”, successful self-employment is tied to the person’s “genuine interests and talents” and gives a way to reduce isolation and increase choice and flexibility (Hagner, Rizzo 2002). It’s hard work to run a business. Support people have to make sure the person with the disabilities stays in control. Also, the person needs people with business expertise to advise him/her about how to build the business into a profit maker. Careful planning is needed to make sure the person’s benefits are not lost (Hagner, 2002). Another important step is business planning. An article by Giffin (2002) uses a case study to share how to develop a small business plan. Doyel (2002, 2000) describes how risks of self-employment can be minimized with good planning and support staff members that believe in the person’s capabilities to run a business (See 10. Internet Resources, for web resources on Self-Employment for People with Disabilities).

2. Career Path

2.1 Link to Whole-Life Planning

Link to Whole-Life Planning - Career planning starts with whole-life planning. Using the communication ideas described earlier (See 1.3: Assessing Satisfaction with Supports), the person can be supported to choose a career that matches his/her life dreams and goals, capabilities, and needs. This career choice develops over time rather than in “one shot”. The person needs a chance to try out the career to see if the reality matches the dream. If one career is not a match, the whole-life planning team supports the person to identify another. Rather than just a short-term job to pay the bills, the person seeks a life career. In this way, the person can avoid being placed in jobs that are unrelated to her/his dreams and capabilities resulting in frustration.

2.2 Career Advancement Opportunities

Career Advancement Opportunities - A career path is a process. A person can start at an entry-level job that matches his/her skills in the chosen career. Then, the person can move up into a more skilled job with more pay as her/his skills develop. Each person can also identify which career benefits are important. Maybe one person would like an employer to pay for time off to go to training classes. Paid vacation, wellness, bonuses, or childcare could be important to someone else. Part of career path planning is to find out how people, working in the career the person desires, typically advance. A Job Placement Specialist can research what opportunities potential employers offer for career advancement. The Vocational Profile includes a strategic plan where the team checks progress in areas such as career advancement periodically once a person is employed. A self-advocate Steering Committee member sums it up by saying, “A person doesn’t want the job to stay the same forever. A person wants to grow and add responsibility and get promoted. A person wants direct honest feedback so they can get better.”
3. Relationship Networks

3.1 Family Supports

**Family supports** - Families may have a lot of ideas about who to see and where to go to help their family member get a job. They may also have some really concrete ideas about what types of work settings would match their family member’s vision, capabilities and needs. Just as important, they may have insights into what does not work. Be sure to invite, rather than require, families to partner in this effort. It is also important to keep checking with the family during job development to see if anything has changed. If the family volunteers to employ their family member, help the family look at this decision carefully. “This situation may place that employer in an awkward position – especially if there are problems related to employment, and he or she is uncomfortable mentioning these problems or taking some type of job action (e.g. firing or laying off the employee)” (McDonald, 1996). Families may also be willing to volunteer supports that make the difference between job success and failure. For example, an uncle might be willing to drop his nephew off at work if it’s on the way to his work. A mother might be willing to review written job instructions at home with a daughter to be sure she understands. However, “When considering individual family members as sources of support, be sensitive to when someone may ‘volunteer’ out of a sense of duty or obligation.” Check out the amount of time involved, for how long and support the family to compare that with other obligations to be sure this support can really happen (Callahan, 1997).

3.2 Career Advancement Opportunities

**Community Resources** - The community offers rich resources in building relationship networks to support a person to employment success. Family, extended family, neighbors, friends, church members, the mail carrier – anyone the person has links with, may become part of that person’s relationship network. One way to discover someone’s community connections is called mapping (Mount, 1989). The person, family and friends help map a picture of what’s important to the person. One useful map identifies places in the community where the person “hangs out”. These maps use pictures to help non-readers relate to them. They are important sources of information. For example, one woman’s “places” map showed that he liked to “hang out” at the library and other places like an ice cream shop. Her vision showed interests related to both places. Her team developed a job he could do at the library. As another example, the Advocates Alliance project created a database of community resources useful to transitioning students. Project staff met with students, families, teachers and community members to identify potential resources. Then, using resources like the phone book, agency listings, the Council of Churches, staff visited people around the towns to interview them and collect information useful to transitioning students. They made these resources aware of transition, invited their partnership and wrote follow-up thank you notes. From all of this, they created a database that teachers, students, and families could use to support transition (Ibañez, 1999). Identifying and building “Circles of Friends” can be important job supports (Perske, 1988). “Such a group may agree on roles in monitoring, counseling, problem-solving, training, job development and other roles” (Peterson, 1995).
4. Career Matching

4.1 Personal Connections

Personal Connections - Personal connections are the foundation to whole-life planning. They are key to career matching and personalized career development (Hagner, 1996) found that “Most of us locate jobs through social connections. When a job lead comes from a neighbor or fellow church congregation member, discussions with employers can be more personal and lead more easily to ‘job creation’ and a good job match.” In New Hampshire, half of job placements surveyed were gained through personal connections. These contacts included: Employers, agency staff members, the person who was looking for a job, that person’s family, as well as ‘inside’ knowledge about a company” (Hagner, 1996). One technique for finding personal connections is for the person, friends and family to draw a “relationship map” (Mount, 1989). This is a map with the person in the center of a series of every larger circles. The names or pictures of the people closest to the person’s heart go in the inner circle. The names of pictures of people that are just acquaintances go in the outermost circle. In the example given in 3.2 Community Resources, the woman who “hung out” at the library, also had made friends there who were willing to help her get a job. Relationships do not have to be limited to people. For example, you may discover that a person’s closest relationship is with a dog. This could open employment paths that relate to working with animals – if that matches the person’s capabilities, interests, and choices.

4.2 Supported Employment Community Providers

Supported Employment Community Providers - The New Mexico Department of Health, Long Term Services Division (LTSD) funds 56 Supported Employment Providers through the Adult Developmental Disabilities Medicaid Waiver. In its 2000 Annual report, LTSD says that its philosophy is that “…everyone who wants a job should have one.” (For more information, visit the web: www.health.state.nm.us/ltsd/adds.html)

Supported employment providers offer a range of employment services. For example, they can help do ISPs, Vocational Profiles, career matching, and job coaching.

4.3 One-Stop Career Centers

One-Stop Career Centers - There are 24 One-Stop Career Centers in New Mexico. The Workforce Investment Act created them. One-Stop Career Centers help people find jobs. Their services are free. They offer three types of services: core, intensive, and training. Core services include supports like job searching, job placement, information on transportation and childcare, and workshops. Examples of intensive services include developing employment plans, career planning and guidance, help doing job searches, group counseling and basic skills. One-Stops also offer training such as in the classroom or on the job. One-Stop Career Center customers can use faxes, telephones, copiers, computers, assistive technology, and TDD/TTY free of charge. They can get help writing resumes and learn how to do interviews. They can even be evaluated to help them find the right job. (For more information, visit the web: cdd.unm.edu/csa/nmone.htm)
4. Career Matching (continued)

4.4 Vocational Rehabilitation

**Vocational Rehabilitation** - The purpose of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is to “…help people with disabilities to achieve a suitable employment outcome.” (For more information, visit the web: [www.dvrgetsjobs.com/](http://www.dvrgetsjobs.com/)). DVR can help eligible customers with planning, evaluation, training and job searching.

4.5 Resumes and Portfolios

**Resumes and Portfolios** - A good resume and/or portfolio can open doors to the career path of the person’s choice. For example, the person's life experiences related to a job interest can help win the job. The person can develop a portfolio documenting his/her experiences with letters and photos to present to the prospective employer.

4.6 Job Sampling

**Job Sampling** - if a person wants to learn more about a job before choosing that career, job sampling is one way to do that. The job may be a brief volunteer or paid position. The person with a disability must be fully informed that this is a time-limited job sample rather than a continuing job. South Main Peter Piper Pizza in Las Cruces is one example of a New Mexico employer that supports job sampling by transitioning students. The employer introduces students to job tasks, provides on-the-job training, and encourages students to complete tasks correctly. Job sampling is most meaningful when it is individualized to match a student’s vision, interests, and capabilities.

4.7 Characteristics of Businesses and Professionals Who Make Successful Placements

**Characteristics Of Businesses And Professionals Who Make Successful Placements** - Rehabilitation staff say that employers who are flexible, open, and willing “to take risks” make placements successful. Employers report that rehabilitation staff that provide “follow-up”, are responsive, and knowledgeable make successful placements (Fabian, 1995). One conclusion is that Employment Specialists need to focus on “customer satisfaction” with supports offered that include both the employer and the employee.

4.8 Matching A Person’s Interests With Employer Needs

**Matching A Person’s Interests With Employer Needs** - “It is important to recruit [employees] for their capabilities and interests that match [employer] identified needs” (Stevens, 2001). Employers who want to recruit diverse employees need to identify the capabilities they need from those employees. The Employment Specialist can assist the employer to identify roles diverse employees can play to meet employer needs. Then, a match can be made using the results of whole-life planning.
4. Career Matching (continued)

4.9 Factors That Affect Job Placement

Factors That Affect Job Placement - Both “negative attitudes and prejudice” are “the most significant barriers to job placement” (Fabian, 1995). A self-advocate Steering Committee member comments, “I had one job that the employer had such low expectations that I was never given any training or anything meaningful to do. I was a token.” Many rehabilitation staff also cited the “poor jobs, poor economy” as barriers as well. However, employers cite barriers that could be corrected such as “lack of training and information about people with disabilities” (Fabian, 1995). (See 8.2: Employment Specialist as a Consultant to the Employer). In that role, the Specialist can effectively provide or arrange the training and information needed by employers about people with disabilities. (See 7.7 “Nuts and Bolts”, under 7. Employers) for employment logistics such as transportation that may affect job placement as well.

5. Job Tailoring

5.1 Job Tailoring Costs

Job Tailoring Costs - One fear potential employers of people with significant disabilities have is that the changes they will have to make to the work place will cost too much. A study by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) found that “69% of employees with disabilities required no special assistance and that half of the accommodations may cost less than $500 to implement (52%), with the typical cost being about $200” (JAN, 1994). JAN has useful, free information about job accommodations, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and how to employ people with disabilities. JAN includes suggestions for typical accommodations for people with developmental disabilities. (Visit JAN on the web: www.jan.wvu.edu/)

5.2 Job Carving and Restructuring

Job Carving and Restructuring - Sometimes people with significant disabilities, for example, who are medically fragile or have psychiatric problems, can do, or choose to do, only small part or parts of a job, but not the whole job. The first step is to determine a person's capabilities, needs and interests through whole-life planning. Next, the work duties the employer needs completed can be analyzed. Those duties can then be compared with what a person wants to do and can do. Then, with a flexible employer, specific job tasks can be matched to what the person can do. A job can be built to match that person. This is called “job carving”. “The utmost care must be taken not to create jobs that devalue people with disabilities by physically separating them from other workers or by having them perform tasks that are considered bothersome, dangerous or unpleasant” (Griffin, 1996). One study found that employers were willing to meet requests for time off, sick leave, or changes in hours as long as it “did not disrupt the operation of the business” (Unger, 2002). Employers have restructured work schedules to match such needs as health and stamina. One employer designed an entire data entry system around the abilities of an employee with a significant disability (Ibañez, 2001).
5. Job Tailoring (continued)

5.3 Job Sharing

Job Sharing - Again, some employees may not be able to perform all of the job duties or work the hours the job requires. Another solution is to share a job with one or more co-workers (Nisbet, 1988).

5.4 Mentoring

Mentoring - A self-advocate Steering Committee member comments, “Peer mentors can help, too. They tell us what they have done to get their job and show us what it looks like to work somewhere.” A study of employers who have hired employees with significant disabilities agreed. “The most frequently cited employer or workplace support available was the use of a coworker mentor (40.9%) followed by the employment specialist providing initial training (31.3%)…90.6% of employers used co-worker trainers” (Unger, 2002). Co-worker mentoring may paired with required, one-to-one personal assistance.

5.5 Home Work Station/Ergonomic/Accommodation Support

Home Work Station - As home offices become more popular, some employers will let an employee with a significant disability work at home (Ibañez, 2001).

Ergonomic/Accommodation Support - Employers and Employment Specialists can partner with the employee to assure that a workstation meets the specific physical needs of the employee. For example, is the height of the workstation right for a wheelchair? Is a screen reader needed for someone who cannot read or who is blind? Is a larger track ball needed? Is a larger keyboard needed? Should key entry speed be slowed? Employees may need specific job tools. Visual icons, differing font size, highlighting, simple wording, or translation may enhance a specific employee’s performance (Stevens, 2001).

6. Financial

6.1 Financial Statistics

Financial Statistics - 7.5 million Americans with disabilities receive [federal disability] benefits... 72% of Americans with disabilities want to work. However, in part because of disincentives in Federal law, less than 1 percent of those receiving disability benefits fully enter the workforce” (Brooke, 2002).

6.2 Social Security Work Incentive Plan to Achieve Self Support (PASS)

PASS - SSI created PASS to encourage people with disabilities to work. PASS gives people a way to put money or resources aside to achieve work goals identified through whole-life planning. A PASS also lets a person still get SSI payments while they work
6. Financial (continued)

toward making their own living. PASS can pay for services like training, education and supports that help people move toward getting off SSI benefits. Examples of support services include: help getting or keeping a job (for example, job coaching), vocational evaluation, transportation, job equipment, buying a business, or other work-related supports. (For more information, visit the web: www.passonline.org)

6.3 Ticket to Work

Ticket to Work - Ticket to Work is another program that encourages people with disabilities to get jobs. This program gives people with disabilities a voucher type ticket so that they can choose their own vocational supports (including education and rehabilitation). It lets people on SSDI keep their Medicare benefits while they work so that they don't have to worry about losing health coverage because they got a job. People with significant disabilities may also be eligible to keep receiving benefits after they have more money coming in from a job (Brooke, 2002). Anyone who gets a Ticket to Work should get benefits advisement first (See 6.7: Tracking and Reporting Wages to Social Security for free benefit advisement resources in New Mexico). (For more information, visit the at: www.yourtickettowork.com)

6.4 Individual Development Accounts

Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) - IDAs were established by The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1995. IDAs give low-income people a way to have savings grow. IDAs are matched to savings accounts. The person puts in money that is matched by the government at “one to four times the size of the deposit”. These savings can be used for education, training, to fund businesses, and to buy a home. States do not count IDAs when they are determining eligibility for government assistance. (For more information, visit the web: www.welfareinfo.org)

6.5 Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) - See an explanation of DVR in 4.4: Career Matching. For those approved, DVR can pay for planning, evaluation, training, job searching and other services. (For more information, visit the web: www.dvrgetsjobs.com).

6.6 Tax Incentives for Businesses

Tax Incentives for Businesses - Businesses may receive federal tax credits/deductions for accommodating people with disabilities or increasing access. (For more information, visit the web: www.diversityworld.com).

6.7 Tracking and Reporting Wages to Social Security

Tracking and Reporting Wages to Social Security - “An important job support consideration is identifying a person to track and report wages to Social Security…. The
6. Financial (continued)

result of not reporting wages to Social Security could mean loss of SSI benefits for the individual (i.e. medical coverage, housing and food support). The person identified to track and report wages is responsible for reporting to Social Security monthly income earned by the person, and keeping the records [and explaining] to the individual and/or family member/advocate about income changes in the monthly social security check” (Ibañez, 2001). Benefits Advisors can also offer important advice about how to track and report benefits. The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Benefit Information Center provides free information about these benefits management services statewide at 1(800) 318-1469 or on the web at: www.succeedvr.com. They can also advise people about benefits and Ticket to Work.

6.8 Employment Benefits

Employment Benefits - An important part of determining a person’s career path is to see what employment benefits the person would like. Career matching seeks employment benefits. Keeping existing benefits in mind, an employer may provide benefits of financial value to the person. For example, the employer may pay for continuing education and other skill building desired by the person. As another example, an employer may provide wellness opportunities that the person otherwise could not afford.

7. Employers

7.1 Workforce Diversity

Workforce Diversity - The latest Census shows that the population is becoming even more diverse. At the same time the labor pool is aging and traditional sources of employees are shrinking. More and more employers are seeking diverse work forces from non-traditional sources. That includes people with significant disabilities. There are a lot of reasons why this makes economic sense to employers. For one thing, a business is more likely to attract diverse customers if those customers see that the employer hires people like them. Employers can build capacity in diverse workers, which means when traditional workers leave, there will be people to replace them. Employers can also avoid expensive lawsuits under laws like Equal Opportunity or Affirmative Action by hiring fairly in the first place. Some employers also just want to do the right thing (McInnes, 2002).

7.2 Organizations with Partnership Vision

Organizations with Partnership Vision - Some organization visions include partnering with people with disabilities. The Long Term Services Division, the New Mexico Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, and the Center for Development and Disability are examples of New Mexico organizations with this philosophy. Hiring diverse employees makes sense as the labor pool ages and shrinks. In fact, a recent study of community provider recruitment and retention recommended hiring from non-traditional labor pools such as people with disabilities and their family members (Stevens, 2002).
7. Employers (continued)

7.3 Recruiting Employees with Disabilities

**Recruiting Employees with Disabilities** - Employers interested in employing people with disabilities can use a variety of recruitment strategies. First, analyze roles that people with disabilities can play in an organization. The answer may be obvious: people with disabilities will fill the same roles that other employees do. If the work of the organization is about disability, employees with disabilities can also be content experts. Next, the employer can analyze and minimize any barriers to employing people with disabilities. For example, if the employer requires credentials, how might life experience be substituted for credentials? The employer can also tailor getting the word out about job openings. For example, potential employees might include non-readers. In that case, instead of relying only on newspaper ads, the employer might advertise on the radio, go to a People First meeting, or put flyers up in places where people with disabilities go (i.e. Rehabilitation Centers, Supported Employment agencies, or Independent Living Centers). The employer can even assist potential applicants by providing resume templates or coaching about the screening process (Stevens, 2001).

7.4 Workplace Culture

**Workplace Culture** - It is important to learn how to be part of workplace culture. This affects job success and satisfaction. Workplace culture is the way people typically do things at a specific organization. It is what people expect of each other, what actions or symbols mean, and what they think is important. You can see this in how people at the workplace celebrate, talk to each other, dress, and act (Hagner, 2000). Hagner (2000) created a survey to help people figure out a workplace culture. The survey looks at factors ranging from how long other workers have been on jobs, to job sharing, schedules, gathering places, training, equipment, language, staff meetings and other factors. For existing employees, the survey compares what is happening with the employee with disabilities to what is happening with other employees to see the level of inclusion. Callahan (1997) offers tips for finding out about workplace culture. The Employment Specialist should set aside time to observe what is happening in a workplace. They may want to do the following: Ask other workers to share any tips that might be useful to new employees. Find out “who’s in the know” at the organization – both formally and informally. See where a new employee should go to get a question answered. Observe what employees wear to work. Ask a lot of questions. For people with specific disabilities, for example: Autism, learning the social culture may be very challenging. Also, some people “…will not want to participate in the workplace social stuff. They want to do their work and be left alone.” (Self-advocate Steering Committee Member with Autism).

7.5 Co-Worker Supports and Other Natural Supports

**Co-Worker Supports and Other Natural Supports** - Natural supports are unpaid supports that occur typically and naturally. People with significant disabilities can learn and access these natural supports to be more successful at work. One example of a natural support would be a bell that rings to signal to all employees that it is break time at work. Another natural support might be email notices that could be accessed with adaptive equipment like a screen reader. Orientation and on-the-job training given to all employees is another example that can be accessed and adapted for employees with significant disabilities. Co-worker supports are one of the most important natural supports. DiLeo

Continued on Page14
7. Employers (continued)

Employers who hire employees with significant disabilities have very useful information about what supports those employees need. Unger (2002) asked employers to describe what supports their employees with significant disabilities needed. The employers described four varieties of support. The majority (63.1%) needed training to complete their job tasks independently. The second biggest category (22%) needed help “fitting in” to the culture of the workplace and to learn the work routines. The next category (14.3%) was “employment benefit needs” so the person would know how to appropriately use benefits “such as sick leave, pay raises, and employee assistance.” The last category (6%) of support needed by employees with significant disabilities was how to advance in their careers – for example, “learning additional duties” so that they could be promoted. Unger (2002) also found that by far the most frequent training need for employees with significant disabilities (32.8%) was “learning how to do the job.” The next four most frequent training needs were: 1) “remembering how to do the job” (16.1%); 2) completing all regular job duties” (14.6%); 3) “signing in and out of work” (13.1%); and 4) “orienting around the workplace” (8.6%). Most employers (90.6%) used experienced co-workers to do the training needed by individuals with significant disabilities. With a little over half (54.7%) of the employees, employers also asked supervisors to give instruction. Additionally, employers used “orientation meetings (43.0%), and company videos (30.2%).”

7.6 Employer Experience

Employer Experience - Employers who hire employees with significant disabilities have very useful information about what supports those employees need. Unger (2002) asked employers to describe what supports their employees with significant disabilities needed. The employers described four varieties of support. The majority (63.1%) needed training to complete their job tasks independently. The second biggest category (22%) needed help “fitting in” to the culture of the workplace and to learn the work routines. The next category (14.3%) was “employment benefit needs” so the person would know how to appropriately use benefits “such as sick leave, pay raises, and employee assistance.” The last category (6%) of support needed by employees with significant disabilities was how to advance in their careers – for example, “learning additional duties” so that they could be promoted. Unger (2002) also found that by far the most frequent training need for employees with significant disabilities (32.8%) was “learning how to do the job.” The next four most frequent training needs were: 1) “remembering how to do the job” (16.1%); 2) completing all regular job duties” (14.6%); 3) “signing in and out of work” (13.1%); and 4) “orienting around the workplace” (8.6%). Most employers (90.6%) used experienced co-workers to do the training needed by individuals with significant disabilities. With a little over half (54.7%) of the employees, employers also asked supervisors to give instruction. Additionally, employers used “orientation meetings (43.0%), and company videos (30.2%).”

7.7 Nuts and Bolts

Nuts and Bolts - Employment “nuts and bolts” (logistics) may make the difference between success or failure. One big factor is transportation to work. A self-advocate Steering Committee member identified reliable transportation as being one of the biggest ingredients, and, sometimes, a barrier, to his employment success. Hagner (2000) has many ideas about transportation. He recommends first checking out how other employees get to work from their homes. This could be done by asking other employees. Also, take a look around. Is there public transportation available? Is there wheelchair accessible transportation if the person needs it? Does the person know how to use available transportation? If so, is there a bus stop near work? Does the person have to cross a busy street from that bus stop? Does the person have street crossing skills? Also, does the employer offer any transportation supports to employees like vouchers or other subsidies? Another idea to investigate is if other employees have carpools. Look for carpooling “notices …
7. Employers (continued)

on a bulletin board or in the company newsletter” (Hagner, 2000). The work may need to be close to the person’s home or accessible transportation may need to be available for the person to take the job. Career path planning and matching should consider logistics like how the person will get to and from work, where and when to eat lunch, or what is appropriate to wear to work.

8. Employment Specialist

8.1 Specific Skills to Support the Person

Specific Skills to Support the Person - An effective Employment Specialist has many skills to support the person. The Specialist must know: the specific capabilities the job requires, how the person’s capabilities compare to what’s needed on the job, where the person can best learn the job tasks, who should teach the person the tasks, how to support the person to learn the task if the Specialist is the teacher, and how to fade supports (Stevens, 2002). One way to find out about work tasks is to do an “environmental assessment”. This means seeing what the person can do compared to others doing the task. This takes four steps:

1. look at how co-workers complete this task
2. look at how the person being supported completes this task
3. compare #1 and #2 to see any differences and if the work environment is a good match for what the person wants and who the person is
4. if it is a good match, give specific supports, accommodations, and teach to eliminate any differences between #1 and #2.

A second way to analyze work tasks and routines is called tailored task analysis. This is a way to break down job tasks into steps the person can do (Stevens, 1994).

The Employment Specialist who is the teacher matches techniques to the person. One person may need a visual schedule that uses photos, drawings, objects, pictures or other symbols the person can understand to show what happens next. Another person may need to see a task modeled or have his or her hand guided to complete a task. Another person may need a slower pace to process information. As the employee gains work skills, the Employment Specialist fades or decreases support. In this way, the person gradually completes more and more of the job tasks. Another way that an Employment Specialist can fade supports is by building employer supports (Stevens, 1994). (See 7.5: Co-Worker supports and Other Natural Supports)

8.2 Consultant to the Employer

Consultant to the Employer - Dale DiLeo (1995) describes a five-step process that transforms an Employment Specialist from a job coach to a consultant to the employer. The Employment Specialist must first “learn as much as possible about specific employers and what they do.” Next the Employment Specialist identifies how the employee “can benefit … employers”. The Specialist

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8. Employment Specialist (continued)

presents the person seeking employment as having solutions to employer needs. As the Employment Specialist is successful, (s)he builds a network of employers who are pleased with the supports the Specialist has offered to employees. These employers can give recommendations to other employers. This opens the doors to other jobs. The Employment Specialist becomes a resource to employers – not just for potential employees but for ideas that can benefit all employees. The last step is “when the employer calls, jump”. The Employment Specialist is a troubleshooter. Quick responses and consistent good service builds trust and respect. One tip is to “under-promise and over-deliver” (DiLeo, 1995).

8.3 Seek Training and Career Advancement

Seek Training and Career Advancement - The New Mexico Department of Health Long Term Services Division mandates general competency-based training for staff supporting adults through the Medicaid Waiver. (For more information: Visit the web: http://www.health.state.nm.us/ltsd/adds.html). Employment Specialists can also seek training specific to their jobs. One option is apprenticeship training – for example, from master mentors through the “Direct Support Specialist Occupation” (National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals, 2002). Another source of training is distance education. As one example, the “College of Direct Support” offers training related to the nationwide Community Support Skill Standards, competencies developed for human services staff (Taylor, 1996). (For more information, visit the web: www.collegeofdirectsupport.com)

9. Employer and Employee Legal Resources

9.1 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - “The ADA is the most comprehensive federal civil-rights statute protecting the rights of people with disabilities. It affects access to employment, state and local government programs and services; access to places of public accommodation such as businesses, transportation, and non-profit service providers; and telecommunications.” (For more information, visit the web: www.adata.org/whatsada.html)

9.2 Model Legislation

Model Legislation - States can also pass model legislation to reduce barriers. For example, California passed model legislation (AB925) to remove barriers and increase opportunities for people with disabilities to have regular employment. The bill is seen as a major step for people with disabilities seeking regular employment opportunities. The bill coordinates efforts, establishes goals, authorizes personal care services and requires that “one stop” employment centers in local workforce investment areas have services that people with disabilities can access. (Visit the web: www.wid.org)
9. Employer and Employee Legal Resources

9.3 New Freedom Initiative

New Freedom Initiative - This initiative “will help Americans with disabilities increase access to innovative new technologies that help them participate fully in society, expand their educational opportunities, better integrate them into the workforce, and promote their full access to community life. Proposals include: [excerpted] help small business comply with ADA and hire Americans with disabilities, assistive technology research, low-interest loans to purchase computers and other equipment necessary to telework from home, help organizations currently exempt from ADA make their facilities accessible, pilot innovative transportation programs, special education programs.” (For more information, visit the web: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/06/20010619.html)

9.4 Workforce Investment Act

Workforce Investment Act - The Workforce Investment Act created the One-Stop Career Centers to help people find jobs. (See 4. Career Matching, 4.3 One-Stop Career Centers for a description of the services these centers offer.)

10. Internet Resources

10.1 NMONE Training Project

NMONE Training Project - cdd.unm.edu/csa/nmone.htm - The Community Support Alliance at the Center for Development and Disability put together a comprehensive list of employment resources and web links.

10.2 Ability Forum


10.3 American Association of People with Disabilities

American Association of People with Disabilities - www.aapd-dc.org - This large national nonprofit cross-disability member organization works to help Americans with disabilities reach economic self-sufficiency and political empowerment. AAPD works with other disability organizations make sure non-discrimination laws, particularly the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, are enforced.

10.4 APSE

Association of Professionals in Supported Employment (APSE) - www.apse.org/APSElinks.html - APSE offers supported employment information. APSE also has links to resources about: government; products, services and training; legislation; national associations; international supported employment sites and APSE chapters.
10. Internet Resources (continued)

10.5 Arc US

Arc US - [www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org) - This membership organization advocates for people with cognitive and other disabilities to be part of their community. The web site offers resources, web links, and policy statements on topics about the right to employment. Arc New Mexico (800) 358-6493, is the state chapter of Arc.

10.6 Diversity World

Diversity World - [www.diversityworld.com](http://www.diversityworld.com) - Click on “disability” and page down to self-employment/entrepreneurship, email: info@diversityworld.com

10.7 The Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

JAN - [http://www.jan.wvu.edu](http://www.jan.wvu.edu) - JAN is a free consulting service that provides information about job accommodations, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the employability of people with disabilities. The website includes practical, often low cost, job accommodation ideas and examples about people with cognitive disabilities and other developmental disabilities, and resources.

10.8 Self-Employment


10.9 Helen Keller

Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) - [http://www.helenkeller.org/national/index.htm](http://www.helenkeller.org/national/index.htm) The purpose of the Center is to enable each person who is deaf and blind to live and work in his or her community of choice. 516-944-8900 (voice); 516-944-8637 (TTY). 10.10 National Technical Assistance Consortium National Technical Assistance Consortium (NTAC) - [http://www.tr.wou.edu/ntac/index.htm](http://www.tr.wou.edu/ntac/index.htm) Provides technical assistance to families and agencies serving children and young adults who are deaf and blind (birth to 28 years). 503-838-9623 (TTY).

10.11 NM TAP

New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) - [www.nmtap.com](http://www.nmtap.com) Helps New Mexicans with disabilities get assistive technology services.
11. Barriers

1. Choice and Self-Determination:

   1. Common Barriers to Choice and Self-Determination
   2. People with disabilities and families not being given the choice, training or supports to lead their own planning
   3. Focusing on a job goal rather than a career and/or life plan
   4. Paperwork, rather than person-driven plans
   5. Trying to have “one size fits all” rather than a personalized plan
   6. Planning that forces choices unrelated to interests, feeling demeaning and intrusive - i.e. not everyone wants a job
   7. Staff not having the skills and training to facilitate whole-life planning the way it should be done
   8. Mandate-driven yearly/six month planning updates that can be overwhelming and time-consuming for agencies and people
   9. Meetings that last too long for the person and the family (i.e. 3-5 hours)
   10. No method for attendance as well as accountability from non-team members who agree to support the plan
   11. “Passing the buck” to family members and friends to find jobs
   12. “One shot” planning
   13. No strong plan for follow-up

Self-Employment

   1. Self-employment not occurring to the team as a good employment option
   2. Inadequate experience and knowledge to develop business and risk plans

2. Career Paths:

   1. Looking for just any job to pay the bills

3. Relationship Networks:

   1. Employment planning relying only on relationship networks which may burn out the network
   2. People living in isolation who don’t have social/relationship networks
   3. Individuals who have “burned bridges” because of repeated past crises
   4. Unknown personal relationships
11. **Barriers** *(continued)*

4. **Career Matching:**

   1. Lack of experience with different jobs and the team not knowing how to provide experience
   2. One-Stop Career Centers unfamiliar with matching the specialized career needs of an individual
   3. Limiting career matches to known, available jobs, which may not match the person’s dreams and capabilities
   4. Career match made with an organization that does not match the person’s preferences, capabilities and needs
   5. The person not being prepared to present his/her capabilities and experience to an employer
   6. Personal connections that are limited, burned out, or not willing to participate
   7. Business used does not match the individual’s vision

5. **Job Tailoring:**

   1. Lack of information about or few accommodation resources
   2. Not knowing about employer resources such as mentorship

6. **Financial:**

   1. Inaccurate or no information about how to preserve benefits while working
   2. Misinterpretation of Ticket to Work pressuring the person to “get any job”
   3. Piecemeal and ineffective focus on funding
   4. Poorly thought-out funding plan that undermines the employee’s ability to do the job – i.e. no transportation funds
   5. Not knowing funding choices

7. **Employers**

   1. A poor match between the employer needs and the person’s capabilities
   2. The employee not “fitting into” the work culture and (s)he does not understand why or other employees do not welcome him/her
   3. Potential employees with disabilities not knowing about available jobs
11. Barriers *(continued)*

4. Potential employees with disabilities not able to get through the “red tape” to compete for a job
5. Employee isolation, for example, with no connections with co-workers
6. No ride to work

8. Employment Specialist

1. Lack of specialized training and career options (McDonald, 1996)
2. Isolation on the job (McDonald, 1996)
3. Doing the job for the person
4. Lack of in-depth knowledge of the person
5. Not knowing how to fade supports so co-workers and other natural supports can kick into place
6. Poor links with families (McDonald, 1996)
7. Spread too thinly by wearing too many hats
8. Not knowing how to deal with unstructured or slow work time, breaks and social interactions
9. Isolating the employee just by always being there
10. High turnover (Glenn, 2000; Stevens, 2002) “Every month we talked to someone different until we gave up there”, (self-advocate Steering Committee member)

9. Employer and Employee Legal Resources

1. Not knowing about applicable laws and what they can offer to employers

10. Internet Resources

How to Get to these Websites if You Don’t Have a Computer....

1. Visit your local public library. You can use a computer for free there.
2. If you are in Albuquerque, use the computer at LINC (The Library and Information NETwork for the Community at the Center for Development and Disability). Call 1(800) 827-6380 for help.

Need Other Resources?

Call The Information Center for New Mexicans With Disabilities at: 1(800) 552-8195
III. References

Many of these resources are available at LINC (the Library and Information NETwork for the Community at the Center for Development and Disability). Call 1(800) 827-6380 for more information. References marked with an asterisk (*) include practical, “hands on” information. References marked with two asterisks (**) are whole-life planning resources — chosen from among the many whole-life planning alternatives.

Articles


III. References (continued)


Books and Workbooks


III. References (continued)


Reports:


III. References (continued)


Training:


**Ibañez, B. & Stevens, J. (1999). Community guide training. Albuquerque, NM: Advocates Alliance Project (funded by New Mexico Developmental Disabilities Planning Council) at the Arc of New Mexico and the Community Support Alliance at the Center for Development and Disability, a Center for Excellence at the University of New Mexico.


*Stevens, J. & Ibañez, B. (2002). Assisting parents with cognitive disabilities. Albuquerque, NM: Community Support Alliance at the Center for Development and Disability, a Center for Excellence at the University of New Mexico.

*Stevens, J. (2001). Natural supports from the inside, out: Promoting, growing and supporting employment of people with developmental disabilities in university and other government settings. Albuquerque, NM: Natural Supports Project (funded by the New Mexico Developmental Disabilities Planning Council) at the Center for Development and Disability, a Center for Excellence at the University of New Mexico.

*Stevens, J. (1994). Specific support strategies. Albuquerque, NM: Community Support Alliance at the Center for Development and Disability, a Center for Excellence at the University of New Mexico.

*Stevens, J., Ibañez, B., & Sweeney-Reyes, M. (1999). Individualized inclusive communication and choice-making. Albuquerque, NM: Community Support Alliance (formerly NET New Mexico funded by the Long Term Services Division) at the Center for Development and Disability, a Center for Excellence at the University of New Mexico.

*Stevens, J. & Sweeney-Reyes, M. (1996). Gentle teaching: Strategies for success. Albuquerque, NM: Community Support Alliance (formerly NET New Mexico funded by the Long Term Services Division) at the Center for Development and Disability, a Center for Excellence at the University of New Mexico.
III. References (continued)

Web Sites:

*Americans with Disabilities Act: wwwadata.org/whatsada.html  
Diversity World: www.diversityworld.com  
Job Accommodation Network (JAN): http://www.jan.wvu.edu  
**Fact Sheet: Person-Centered Planning: http://wwwaamr.org/Policies/faq_planning.shtml  
*New Mexico Department of Health Long Term Services Division: http://www.health.state.nm.us/ltsd/adds.html.  
*New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: www.dvrgetsjobs.com/  
For more information, go online: http://www.dvrgetsjobs.com/Public/AgencyPurpose/AgencyPurpose.asp.  
**PATH information: http://cdd.unm.edu/csa/6.18.02AATSF_files/frame.htm and www.inclusionpress.org  
**Person-Centered Planning: Maps and Paths to the Future: http://www.t tac.odu.edu/Articles/person.html  
*IDA Information: www.welfareinfo.org  
*Ticket to Work: wwwyourtickettowork.com  
*PASS: www.passonline.org.  
World Institute on Disability: www.wid.org  

Other: