

Selecting a Supported Employment Agency

Making Choices, Becoming Empowered A Guide for People with Disabilities



People receiving support through NJ's Division of Developmental Disabilities are able to choose the agency from which they receive supported employment.

This publication provides information and ideas that can help them make the choice.



Congratulations! You have decided that you want to work!

This guide is to help you choose the best supported employment agency for you. This is one of the first of many choices you will need to make in your career. You may want to ask your family and/or friends to read this guide with you so that they can help you make this important decision.

Before we start, here are some words you should know:

- **Competitive Integrated Employment** means that the job is in the community, is open to anyone with or without a disability, is in a workplace where most of the employees do not have a disability, and the pay is minimum wage or higher.
- **Supported Employment** is a service for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities that helps them get and keep competitive integrated employment.
- A **Supported Employment Provider** is an agency that provides the service of supported employment.
- **Job Coach, Employment Specialist, and Job Developer** are all names for the same job. People with these jobs help people with disabilities explore career goals, search for a job, learn the job after hire, and provide support to keep working.

There are a lot of agencies in New Jersey that provide supported employment services. This guide will explain what to look for in a supported employment agency. You should plan to talk to 3 or 4 agencies so you can see how they are alike and how they are different. This guide also offers questions that you can ask so you can compare their answers.

Person Centered Assessment/Discovery

“Person Centered Assessment” and **“Discovery”** mean the same thing: it’s a way of learning about you and your goals, what you are good at, support needs you have, what you love to do, and things you know about. Your supported employment agency should agree that you (with help from the people who know you most) are the best person to make decisions about your work.

Assessment/Discovery happens before you start looking for a job. When you and your job coach do Discovery, he or she will want to learn everything they can about you. They will visit you in different places, like your home, where you worship, where you go for any activities, internships, and/or to volunteer, etc. Your job coach will ask you about all the things that you do, and what you like and don’t like about each of them.



Person centered assessment is not done to make sure you are “ready to work.” It is done to learn about your skills and make a plan to find a job that is right for you. Don’t trust an agency that tells you that you are “not ready to work.” If you decide that you are ready, then you are!



Here are some questions to ask about Person Centered Planning:

How will you help me find out what jobs may be right for me?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____

How will you find out about the people that are important to me and get ideas from them?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____

How will you find out about places, things, and activities that I like?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____



How will you find out what I will need from you to do well at a job?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____

How will you find out about how I let others know what I need or how I feel?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____

How will you use all the information you find out about me to plan our job search?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____



The job coach should know that bosses don't hire to be nice. They hire because they need good workers. After doing Discovery, your job coach should know and value your skills and help you find a job where a worker like you is needed. The agency should know the businesses in your area and what they are looking for in a good worker. This is how great job matches are made.

The agency should also be open to meeting new businesses and finding out the work they do and what kind of workers they need.

Here are some questions to ask about how the job match works:

How do you know the kind of workers local businesses need?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____

How many employers do you work with?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____

The Job Match

How do you work with new employers that you have not worked with before?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____

The Agency Sticks With You

It is a good sign if the agency has helped a lot of people get and keep good jobs. The agency should also know how to help people “move up,” such as getting more hours, pay, or new tasks to do. Things you like and what you are good at will grow and change over time. It is important the agency you pick helps people who have worked for a while get new jobs if that is what they want to do.



Here are some questions to ask about how the agency will stick with you:

How long does it usually take for a job seeker to get a job?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____



The Agency Sticks With You

How long do most people stay at their jobs after hire?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____

How do you help people “move up” or change jobs if they want to?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____

How will my job coach make sure I’m happy with my job and that my boss is happy with my work?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____

The Job Coaches are Skilled and Trained

A good supported employment agency will hire skilled staff and give them training so they can help you succeed.



One way that staff can show they are good at being a job coach is if they have passed the national CESP exam. This means they are a “Certified Employment Support Professional.” A CESP is someone who has passed a test in the area of supported employment.

By passing this test, the job coach shows that they know a lot about how to best help job seekers reach their goals.

Another way to learn about staff is to ask how the agency helps people on the job. There are a lot of ways job coaches can help a person learn a new job. Here are some of the common ways and what the words mean:

- **Task analysis:** Breaking the job down into small steps so you can learn each step one at a time.
- **Accommodations and modifications:** Changes (big or small) to a task or work area that help a worker do well.
- **Prompting Strategies:** Ways to teach, remind, and support a worker.
- **Natural Supports:** The people and things at work that help everyone. Your job coach should help you get to know the natural supports so you need your job coach less and less.



Here are some questions to ask to find out if the job coaches are skilled:

What kind of training do your job coaches get?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____



The Job Coaches are Skilled and Trained

Are any of your job coaches a CESP?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____

Have your job coaches worked with a person with my disability before?

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____

Give me an example of some work accommodations that someone you support uses at work.

Agency 1 Answer: _____

Agency 2 Answer: _____

Agency 3 Answer: _____

Making Your Choice

Take time to review your notes from the meetings with the supported employment agencies. You may want to ask your family, friends, and others that care about you to help you choose.

- Which agency seems best able to help you find the best job match?

- Which agency seems best in each of the areas you learned about in this guide?

How Does the Process Work?

Before you can get any employment support from New Jersey's Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), you must first meet with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS). You may be able to access supported employment services through DVRS. For information on DVRS, you can visit: <https://careerconnections.nj.gov/>

If you cannot get employment services through DVRS, you can then use the employment services from DDD.

If you do not yet have DDD services, you will need to go through the DDD intake process, and then get a Support Coordinator. This person can help you navigate the DDD system and is a helpful person to have on your support team. Resources for finding and selecting a Support Coordinator are available through The Boggs Center using the following link: <http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/products/SelectingandEvaluatingSupportCoordinationAgency.html>

Once you have a Support Coordinator, he or she will work with you and people important in your life to develop an Individualized Service Plan (ISP) and find some supported employment agencies based on where you live. You can also ask other people that work with a supported employment agency if they are happy with the support they get.

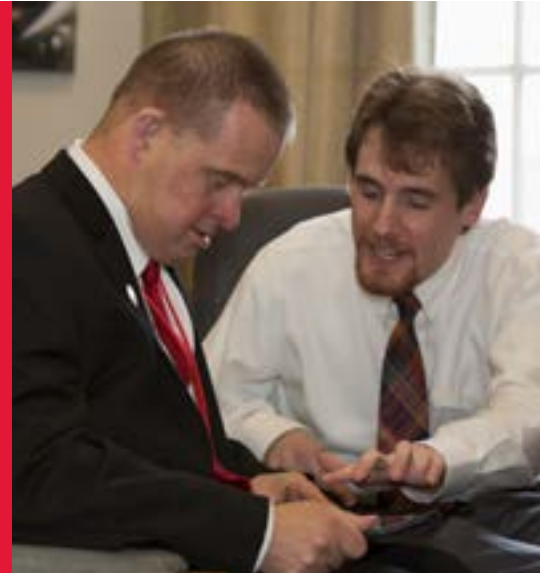
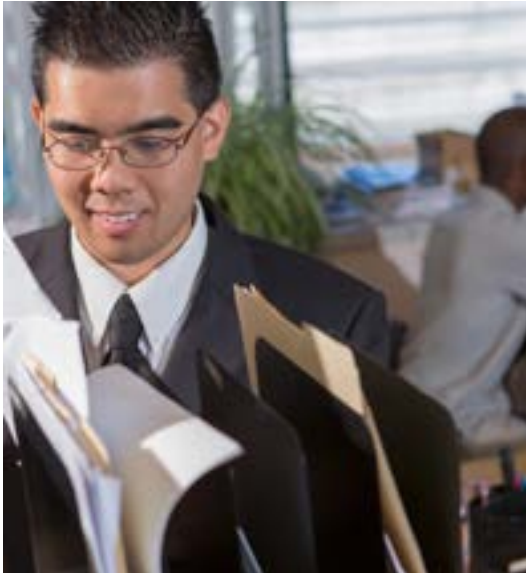
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- Preparation of this document was supported by the
- NJ Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities
- (Contract #04ME19C)
- June 2019

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