

Guidance for Conversations about Employment 2015

Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs

Pathway to Employment Guidance for Conversations

BACKGROUND

The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) held a Supports Coordination Work Session in August 2015, with support from the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN).

The session focused on:

- How Support Coordinators (SCs) currently engage an individual and their family about community-based employment,
- Current employment resources and strategies that already exist in the state, and;
- The discussion of additional tools that would help bring employment front and center into the Individual Service Plan (ISP) process.

At the invitation of ODP, representatives' of several support coordination organizations (SCOs) from across the Commonwealth, a service participant, service providers and Regional and Administrative Entity representatives participated in the session to provide input and insight into the discussion. The group concluded there are several employment related resources such as the ISP manual, employment supplement and employment manual available for SCs. SCs though are in need of further guidance in how to engage in conversations with people and their teams to become employed in a community job.

One of the recommendations from the work session was to develop a Pathway to Employment Tool/ Guidance that included helpful conversation starters for SCs to use when planning with an individual, their family and teams about employment. The group concluded that it was important not to create additional mandatory paper work or forms that SCs would complete.

The recommendations from the working group has led to development of the following guidance and incorporation of employment related information into the general ISP process including revisions within the ISP manual that will include updates on employment as they become available. ODP will obsolete the employment supplement and the employment manual effective October 30, 2015.

This is guidance and not a mandatory set of sequential questions SCs are to have with service participants. The questions are conversation starters to facilitate discussions regarding integrated community employment. Use these questions to facilitate discussions about the importance of employment at any time during the initial and annual ISP meetings, a monitoring visit or any other time the team is meeting. While SCs will be facilitating the conversation with the individual and their team, it is important to note that all team members, including service providers, have a key role in talking about employment with individuals they support.

ODP is most interested in knowing how effective this guidance will be to SC. A survey will be available as a way to provide feedback between November 5, 2015 and February 2016 (visit: www.selnmembers.org/pennsylvania)

There will also be a follow up forum in February 2016 after SCs have used the tool for further discussion on its usefulness and needed improvements to make it an effective tool for SCs.

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Let's Have the Conversation...

What Employment Pathway am I on?

Achieving employment and community inclusive outcomes are cornerstones of ODP policies and practices. Achieving these outcomes requires individuals to engage with community resources on an ongoing and consistent basis. Employment practices must ensure individuals receive information about feasible employment opportunities. Additionally, prevocational, vocational, adult training and home and community habilitation should promote progress towards a pathway to employment. Supported employment services supporting the person to eventually decrease intensive on the job supported employment services to a support level needed to maintain work.

The following represents ODP principles concerning employment for people supported by ODP:

- All working age people with disabilities can and should work.
- Competitive employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred post education outcome.
- Paid work is an essential part of having control over the life you want.
- Everyone deserves to establish career goals and aspirations, earn a living wage and be valued for their contributions.
- Employment leads to new competencies, and open doors to new relationships and social opportunities.
- Achieving employment and community inclusive outcomes are cornerstones of ODP policies, principles and practices.

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Let's have the conversation: Individual is not working but expresses an interest in working...

What can we talk about to gather information that could be helpful to finding the right job match?

1. What activities are you good at or enjoy doing?
2. Did you know they could possibly lead to a job or business for you?
3. How are you most comfortable meeting new people?
4. What makes you feel most proud or important?
5. Are there things you would like to do that you are not doing now?
6. Did you know you can often keep some of your benefits even if you work? Let me tell you why...



Next steps: SC/Team

- Use "important to and important for" sections in ISP to highlight employment interests.
- Network with family, friends, neighbors and other contacts to seek out job opportunities in field of interest.
- Identify any barriers to address and develop an action plan.

Next steps: Individual

- Use prevocational services on a time-limited basis.
- Utilize OVR services to assist in finding and securing employment.
- Access one stop career centers (Career link).
- Take classes to gain skills, education and training in field of interest.

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Let's have the conversation: Individual is not working and expresses they do not want to work.

What do we do? What can we talk about to really understand why the individual feels this way?

1. Tell me a bit about why you are not interested in finding a job and earning money?
2. Is there anything about getting a job that worries you?
3. Did you know you can often keep some of your benefits even if you work? Let me tell you why...
4. Have you had the chance to explore work or volunteering opportunities to help identify your skills and interests? Would you like to?
5. How do you spend your day?
6. What do you like most/least about your day?
7. If you could change or improve something in your daily life what would it be?
8. What activities are you not doing now that you would like to do?
9. Do you have enough money to do the things you would like to do?
10. What were your experiences the last time you tried something new?
11. What needs to change in order for you to try something new?
12. What would need to happen in order for you to consider finding a job in the future?
13. How are you most comfortable meeting new people?
14. What makes you feel most proud or important?



Next steps SC/Team:

- Use “important to and important for” sections of the ISP to highlight possible interests.
- Identify any barriers to address and develop an action plan.
- Help the individual discover their talents through volunteer work.
- Encourage the idea of work (use success stories).
- Help the individual build community and personal networks.
- Address the supports the individual may need while not working.
- Discuss the available services and supports designed to help the individual find and keep a job.
- Explain there are also job coaches that can help coach and support them during work.
- Help the individual explore information about various jobs and careers.

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Let's have the conversation: Individual is not working and there is team member resistance to work.

What do we talk about to help determine why there is resistance?

1. Talk through each concern the team has related to the person obtaining employment.
2. Identify ways to overcome barriers by talking about possible solutions.
3. Remind the individual and the team about the expectation that everyone can and should work competitively in the general workforce and be a contributing member of their local community.
4. Discuss the possibility of employment by using the conversation starters for when an individual is not working.
5. Help the individual and/or their family to understand the possibilities by addressing concerns and potential barriers and explaining available employment supports.
6. Help the individual and family understand their options and the results of not pursuing employment so they can make an informed choice.
7. Remember, shifting employment expectations associated with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities takes time. There are many reasons why the individual and/or their family may show some resistance to conversations about employment. SC's often need to meet individuals and/or their families where they are, and have an understanding in order to help raise expectations. SC's play a critical role in improving employment outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Keep having these conversations regularly, they will build trust and understanding resulting in individuals and/or their families excited to explore employment as an option.

Next steps: SC/Team

- Use "important to and important for" sections in the ISP to highlight employment interests.
- Identify any barriers to address and develop an action plan.
- Help the individual discover their interests and talents.
- Encourage the idea of work (use success stories).
- Help the individual build community and personal networks.
- Address the supports the individual may need while not working.



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Let's have the conversation: Individual is working.

What should we ask to determine if the individual is truly satisfied in their current position?

1. What is the best part of your job?
2. Do you enjoy working with your co-workers? Your supervisor?
3. Have you considered working additional hours?
4. Are you making enough money to meet your living expenses and have enough "pocket money" for recreation, etc.?
5. If you earned more money, how would you change your everyday life?
6. Are new tasks or responsibilities you would like to try in current job?
7. What do you do at work that makes you feel proud or important?
8. Have you thought about applying for other types of jobs? Tell me about your interests?
9. If you have considered other jobs, we could discuss ways for you learn about those positions.
10. Working additional hours would mean making more money. What are your thoughts on working more hours?
11. Are there things that you would like to do if you earned more money?
12. What new tasks would you like to try in your current job?
13. What do you do at work that makes you feel proud or important?
14. Have you thought about other types of jobs? Tell me what you have been considering?
15. Often there are job shadowing or work assessment opportunities to help someone learn about a particular type of job in an actual work environment. Would that interest you?

Next steps SC/Team:

- If individual indicates general satisfaction with current job, discuss opportunities for progress such as increases in wages and/or hours, expanded job duties, opportunities for new or improved relationships at work, and increased independence if receiving paid supports.
- If individual indicates a desire to change jobs focus on updating information on employment related competencies, continuing education to reach career aspirations and potential of services to assist them in seeking other employment situations.

