

6 Steps for Providing Employment Supports

The process of providing assistance to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in seeking employment and succeeding at a job can be outlined in 6 steps: **Assessment, Planning, Job Search, Job Training, Fading Support, and Ongoing Support.**

- 1) ASSESSMENT of Skills, Interests, and Preferences in Natural Settings through an Individualized, Strength-based Process such as Discovery** – The best way to help someone figure out what types of jobs they might like and be good at is to spend time with them in a variety of settings, and particularly places where they already spend blocks of time, such as their home. Talking with family members and others who know the person well to gather detailed information about activities they enjoy and places they like to be is important too. Through this type of assessment process, a list of skills, preferences, and employment themes can be created.
- 2) PLANNING for an Employment Goal with Supports Needed based on Assessment Outcome** - From the list of skills, preferences and employment themes, a goal can be set and a plan put into place to accomplish it. Through a team process, people who know an individual well can assist them to determine what tasks and activities they enjoy, what tasks and activities they are good at, the places where they like to spend time, and the types of jobs that might bring the three sets of information together. Through this type of planning process, vocational themes can be identified and an employment goal created.
- 3) JOB SEARCH through Connections at Community Businesses that have Job Opportunities Aligned with Assessment** – Once an employment goal has been established, the person seeking employment and their team can consider the variety of community connections they have that can be used to reach out to prospective employers. Typically, when a team thinks about the number of people they know collectively, multiple links to employers within the preferred vocational theme(s) exist. Those links can then be used to begin talking with prospective employers about employment possibilities.
- 4) JOB TRAINING in Conjunction with the Employer and Business Processes** – After a job offer has been made, the new employee often needs assistance to learn to complete assigned job duties. Two critical elements of the job training process are having accurate information about the job description of the person being trained and working directly with the employer to provide the same information given to other new employees as well as to understand precisely how the employer expects the job duties to be completed. Teaching strategies that include breaking tasks down into smaller parts and creative ways to adapt materials and maximize learning should be used.



5) **FADING and Planning for Greater Independence** – Over time, the goal is always to foster the greatest possible independence at work. Through the use of an individualized planning and job search process, a job seeker is able to identify good matches in employment. With effective teaching strategies, a new employee is able to learn to complete many parts of the job with little or no direct support. The last step toward fostering optimum independence is through the development of natural supports in the workplace. By working hard to learn the job and making an effort to be a good team member on the job, individuals with disabilities build relationships with their employer and co-worker that contribute to maximum independence and success. Employment support providers can support the development of such relationships by taking intentional steps to help the employee do their job well, fit into and become a part of the work culture, get to know co-workers, and, above all, not become overly reliant on paid services at work.



David with his supervisor and co-worker who now provide natural supports.

6) **ONGOING SUPPORT** – The last phase of employment supports can be long-term, or for as long as the person stays at the same job. For most people, this step comes six months to a year after employment was obtained, but this timeline varies based on individual learning styles and support needs. Ongoing support can be several hours of direct service per week, daily or weekly face-to-face check-ins at work, monthly contact in person or by phone, and different levels of support in between. Teams, including the employee and the employer, are usually involved in deciding what is needed for ongoing support. At this point, employment supports are in place to insure ongoing success, and the expectation is that help will be provided if issues arise. These can be challenges that need to be addressed, such as a refresher training on one or more parts of the job, or it can be because the employer is adding hours, job duties, and/or responsibilities and the employee needs additional assistance to grow in their employment situation.

