

# FROM READINESS TO RESULTS: ADVANCING EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Resources and Programs to Promote Employment



Annie Baghdayan, PhD, BCBA-D, LBA  
University of Oklahoma Outreach/CCE



# PRESENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

NCDDET Mission

Programs

Types of Employment

Resources



# NATIONAL CENTER FOR DISABILITY EDUCATION & TRAINING

The University of Oklahoma Outreach is a lifelong learning organization dedicated to helping individuals, businesses, groups, and communities transform themselves through knowledge.




Nationally recognized for its pioneering efforts in continuing education, University Outreach extends the educational resources of the University of Oklahoma on campus, online, and at locations around the world.



Established in 1965, NCDET initially delivered short-term, in-service training in supervisory and management skills to vocational rehabilitation professionals from across the country.



Thousands of professionals from public and private vocational rehabilitation agencies visited the Norman campus to receive training from the former Rehabilitation, Administration and Management program.



***“THE MOST IMPORTANT  
PART OF INTERACTING  
WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS  
A DISABILITY IS SEEING  
THAT PERSON FOR WHOM  
HE, SHE OR THEY ARE, NOT  
WHAT DISABILITY THE  
PERSON HAS.”***

*–Disability Etiquette: How to Respect People with Disabilities*

# DISABILITY



- With respect to an individual, the term "disability" means:
  - a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual;
  - a record of such an impairment; or
  - being regarded as having such an impairment.

# DISABILITY



- **Major life activities** include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working.
- A major life activity also includes the operation of a **major bodily function** including, but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, and digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions.





**Brain Injuries**



**Attention-Deficit  
Hyperactivity Disorders**



**Physical Disabilities**



**Blindness or Low Vision**

## **Types of Disabilities**

Federal law and the university define a "disability" as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits or restricts the condition, manner, or duration under which an average person in the population can perform a major life activity, such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, or taking care of oneself.



**Psychiatric Disabilities**



**Deaf  
Hard-of-Hearing**



**Speech and Language**



**Learning Disabilities**




**Medical Disabilities**

# BACKGROUND

## **More than 61 million Americans have a disability**

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 had the goal of integrating people with disabilities into all aspects of American life, especially the workplace (Title I)

## **• Businesses' sensitivity to folks with disabilities can help them:**

- Expand their practice
  - Better serve their customers
  - Develop an audience
- ## **• It helps patrons:**
- Feel welcome
  - Feel more comfortable
  - Work more productively
- 



# KNOWLEDGE IS POWER



- Don't let fear and uncertainty keep you from getting to know people with disabilities.
- Fear of the unknown and a lack of knowledge about how to interact can lead to uneasiness when meeting a person who has a disability.
- **Remember:** a person with a disability is a person with feelings.
- Treat him or her as you would want to be treated, and then let common sense and friendship break down any barriers you may encounter.

# STIGMA

- Disability is a fact of life that is often misunderstood and stigmatized.
- Many people still hold negative attitudes towards individuals with disabilities.
- To combat this stigma, it is important to understand the facts surrounding disability.
- We will unravel the misconceptions surrounding disabilities and educate others on the realities of living with a disability.

# MYTHS VS. FACTS: EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Myth	Facts
People with disabilities can't perform jobs as well as others.	
Accommodating a disability is expensive.	
They are more likely to be absent.	
Employees with disabilities increase legal risks.	
They can only do low-skill or entry-level jobs.	
Disability means a visible or physical limitation.	
Hiring people with disabilities doesn't benefit the company.	

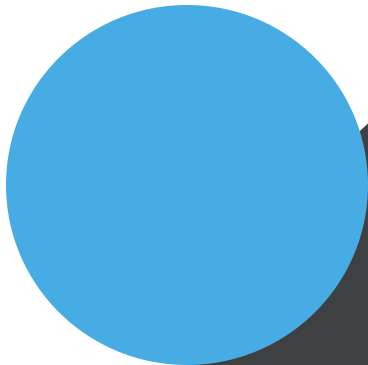
# MYTHS VS. FACTS: EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Myth	Facts
People with disabilities can't perform jobs as well as others.	Many people with disabilities perform as well or better than their peers, with equal or better productivity and safety records.
Accommodating a disability is expensive.	Most accommodations cost <b>little to nothing</b> —58% cost <b>nothing</b> , and the rest typically under \$500.
They are more likely to be absent.	They often have <b>equal or better attendance</b> records than those without disabilities.
Employees with disabilities increase legal risks.	Treating employees fairly reduces legal risks. Hiring people with disabilities is protected by law and doesn't increase liability.
They can only do low-skill or entry-level jobs.	They hold roles in <b>all sectors</b> , from tech and education to law, healthcare, and management.
Disability means a visible or physical limitation.	<b>Not all disabilities are visible</b> —many are cognitive, mental health-related, or sensory impairments.
Hiring people with disabilities doesn't benefit the company.	Inclusive hiring leads to <b>stronger brand loyalty</b> , a <b>broader talent pool</b> , and often improved <b>employee retention</b> .



# **NCDET PROGRAMS**

Promoting Employment



# NATIONAL CENTER FOR DISABILITY EDUCATION & TRAINING

## Providing Customized Training and Support

- Through innovative training, direct service, and cutting-edge research, NCDET advances independent living, employment, and career opportunities for people with disabilities, while improving their lives and the communities in which they live.
- Pre-Employment Transition services
  - Peer mentoring program
- Oklahoma Project SEARCH
- Employment support professional training
- Oklahoma work incentives planning and assistance
- Employer/business disability awareness training/support
- Behavior analytical support



# WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA)

The US Department of Labor defined a broader vision for youth with disabilities

- Emphasized the provision of services and funds to ensure youth with disabilities, ages 14–21, have opportunities to receive training and other services necessary to achieve competitive, integrated employment.

## RESULTS:



Grant funds  
and  
collaboration

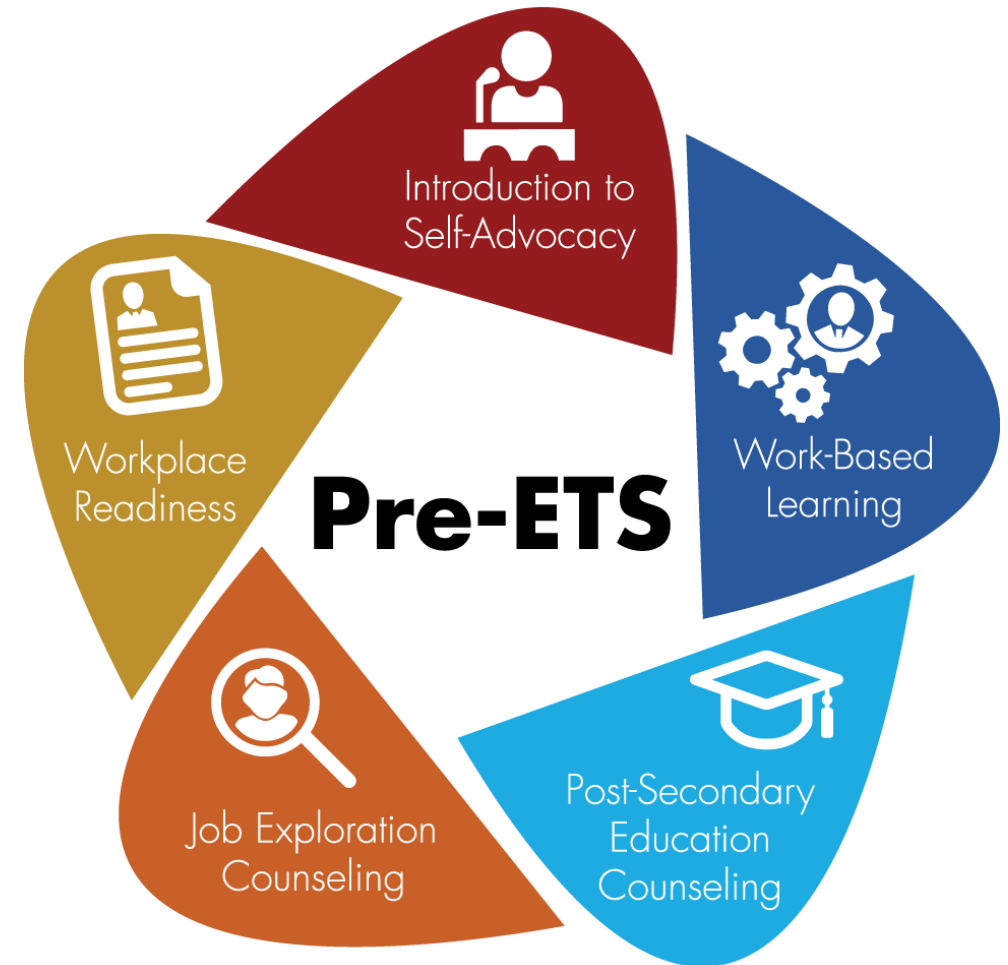


# WHAT IS PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES?

A ***coordinated*** set of activities for students with disabilities and potential WIOA–eligible youth

A ***method*** to access job training and education opportunities for people who have traditionally faced barriers

A ***facilitation*** of movement from school to post-school activities based on individual need—considering strengths, preferences, interests





## WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?



- Students ages 14-21 and enrolled in an Oklahoma school system
- Students who have a documented disability, IEP, or 504
- Students who have submitted a signed Pre-ETS permission slip
- Students **do not** need an active case with Vocational Rehabilitation (DRS)

# PRE-ETS IS...

A **free** service and support.

Designed to collaborate with teachers and current curriculum.

Designed to increase employment and/or post-secondary success.

# PRE-ETS IS NOT...

A professional development program.

A program where teachers are required to collect data.

Something the district/student must pay to utilize.

Designed to increase DRS/teacher workload.

# FIVE CORE PILLARS

**Self-Advocacy  
Peer Mentoring**



**Job Exploration**



**Work-Based  
Learning**



**Workplace  
Readiness**



**Post-Secondary  
Counseling**





# PEER MENTORING

## Mentees

- Age 16–21
- DRS-eligible or potentially eligible youth with disability
- Have interest in post-secondary education and/or employment

## Mentors

- Age 18–26
- Recruited from post-secondary education institutions
- Have interest in assisting others with skill-building, knowledge acquisition, and positive attitudes



# BEST (BUILDING EMPLOYMENT SKILLS TODAY) CAMP

A weeklong summer camp to prepare students, ages 16–21, for employment.

Building Employment Skills Today

# BEST

## Program Details:

- Day Camp: Monday–Friday, 10 AM–3 PM
- Monday: Orientation Day
- Tuesday–Friday: Program Days
- Program lessons are customized to promote success in the students' future job placements
- Speakers (who are professionals with disabilities) are brought in to show the students different careers pathways



# BEST CAMP





# STEP (SUMMER TRANSITION EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM) CAMP

## A 4-Week Paid Internship

The logo for the STEP program. The word "STEP" is written in large, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The letters "S", "T", and "P" are a light teal color. The letter "E" is composed of three horizontal bars of a darker teal color, stacked vertically.

Summer Transition Employment Program

## Program Details:

- Immediately follows BEST Camp
- 4 weeks long, up to 25 hours of work each week
- Must be 16 years old and attend BEST Camp
- Job applications and interviews at the business are required
- Weekly team meetings with cohort (job coaches and other interns)
- Jobs matching career interests (e.g., clerical, food service, retail, manufacturing, construction, aviation, animals)

**2024 IMPACT**

**2024**

**DATA**

**Students with  
Disabilities Served**



**413**

**BEST  
Locations**



**30**

**Counties Hosting a  
BEST Location**



**22**

**Paid Internships**



**361**

# PROJECT SEARCH

**Project SEARCH** is a non-paid internship program for High School Seniors and Post-secondary Technology Center students with disabilities that provides training and education intended to lead to competitive employment.

This program provides hands-on work experiences within a corporation, combined with training in employability and independent living skills.

Each interested student is required to make a formal application to the program and to interview with a selection committee.



# NCDT'S ROLE

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Provide liaison with Project SEARCH originators

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Identify, connect, and coordinate partners

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Conduct and document partner team meetings

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Bring partners to agreement on roles & responsibilities

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Bring partners to agreement on funding for all components

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Assist the team to develop a project plan with timeframes

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Finalize and route agreement (Memo of Understanding) for signatures among partners

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Assist partners with initial steps of implementation

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Provide ongoing training and technical assistance

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Evaluate the success of Project SEARCH

---

Protect the integrity of the Project SEARCH

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# 2023 EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES



Project | SEARCH



**4,284**  
Interns

Number of interns enrolled in  
Project SEARCH internationally



**632**  
Program Sites

Number of active Project SEARCH  
program sites in 2022-23 internationally



**92%**  
Graduation Rate

Rate of program completion in US



**72%**  
Employment

Percent of US program graduates  
achieving competitive employment



**\$13.83**  
Wage

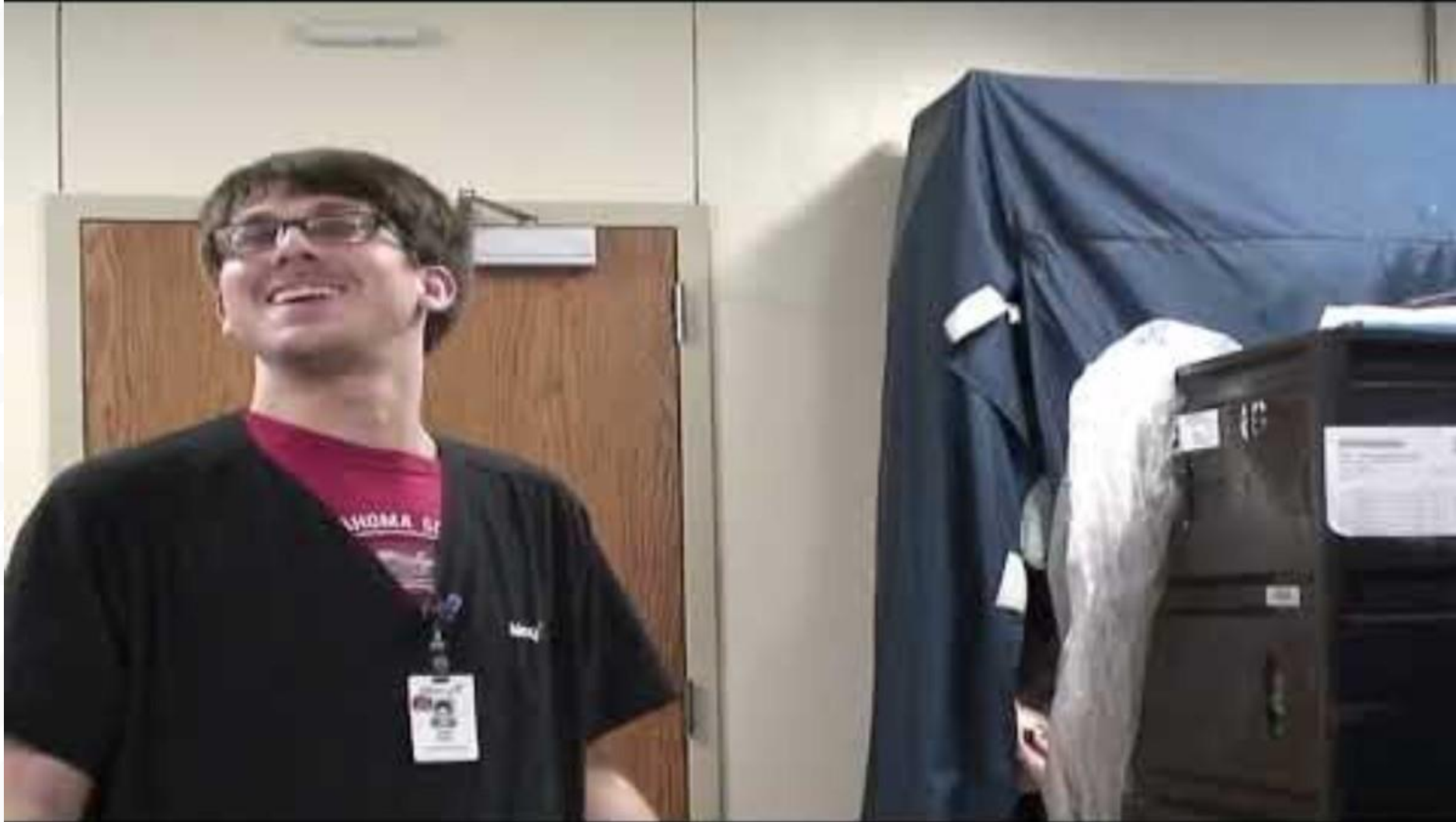
US graduates average hourly pay



**24**  
Hours

US graduates average hours worked  
per week

# PROJECT SEARCH OKLAHOMA



# **CERTIFIED EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SPECIALIST (DRS)**

In collaboration with DRS, NCDET provides competency-based continuing education for professionals to improve employment services and independent living for individuals with significant disabilities.

Specialized courses meet the APSE and ACRE Supported Employment competencies/standards.

NCDET provides more than 80 clock hours of training to educate Community Rehabilitation Employment Support Professionals to assist individuals with disabilities to gain and maintain employment and independent living.

# WHAT IS APSE?

The Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) is the only national membership organization focused exclusively on Employment First to facilitate the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace and community.

[APSE - Association of People Supporting Employment First](#)



# WHAT IS ACRE?

## Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) is...

A national membership organization and community of practice (CoP) for trainers in the field of employment services for people with disabilities.

- **ACRE does the following:**
  - Promotes competency-based training for employment service professionals. This facilitates the provision of high-quality employment services to individuals with disabilities.
  - Provides a curriculum certification review process for community employment provider organizations.
  - Maintains sets of competencies for employment staff and evaluates curricula against those competencies.



# WHAT IS ACRE?

## Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) is...

- Identifies emerging needs in the field of employment services, which informs the need to update competency lists.
- Maintains a registry of names of professionals who complete any ACRE-approved competency-based training.
- Helps individuals and organizations with training needs to find competency-based training.

[About Us - Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators](#)

# TRAINING TOPICS



- Employment Consultant Teaching
- Job Club: Train the Trainer
- Instructional Supports
- Social Security Work Incentive
- Positive Behavior Support
- Marketing: Job Development
- Supporting Individuals with Vision Loss
- Supporting Individuals with Deafness
- Supporting Individuals with Autism

# OKLAHOMA WORK INCENTIVES AND PLANNING ASSISTANCE PROJECT

- Funded by the Office of Retirement and Disability Policy; Office of Beneficiary and Outreach and Employment Support
- The Oklahoma Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Project (OWIPA) resumed services to Social Security beneficiaries on October 1, 2013
- OWIPA is a project operated by the NCDET

# OWIPA

- **Provides direct work incentives, planning, and assistance services to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries across the state of Oklahoma:**
  - to assist them with assessing their current benefit situation,
  - to resolve Work Incentive issues, and
  - to explore employment options.

# INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

- NCDET promotes inclusive employment in the state of Oklahoma.
- The project's objectives and purpose are to provide policy makers and employers evidence-based options for inclusive employment and workforce development.
  - Increase awareness of employing people with disabilities
  - Increase knowledge on evidence-based ways to recruit and hire individuals with disabilities
  - Implement workplace accommodations to remove barriers
  - List the benefits of inclusive workplace such as retention, accessing talent, identifying abilities, and others
  - Create an enabling work environment for disability inclusion

# BEHAVIOR ANALYTICAL SERVICES

To support professionals in the field of special education by providing high quality professional development, mentorship, and instructional coaching to increase teacher effectiveness thus enhancing the quality care and education of children with disabilities

To conduct Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) for students whose behaviors interfere with the learning environment

To supervise professionals working toward their Board Certified Behavior Analysis (BCBA) Field Experience requirements

To create a diverse community by including individuals with disabilities



# EMPLOYMENT MODELS

Effective Employment Service Models



# COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT



Competitive employment is full- or part-time work in a business that pays at or above minimum wage and provides the same benefits that your co-workers enjoy. You are independent in your job and do not require or want employment supports.



# SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

- Helps job seekers gain competitive employment in integrated work settings
- Provides ongoing support services to help maintain employment
- Utilizes job coaches, co-workers, business supervisors, and mentors as employment supports



# SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

- Choose service provider, employment specialist, and the specific support services needed to obtain and maintain employment
- State VR programs can assist with this process of identifying and selecting a service provider



# INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENT AND SUPPORT (IPS)

- IPS is an evidence-based supported employment model for people with mental health conditions and co-occurring substance use disorders.
- IPS supported employment helps people find competitive, integrated, and meaningful employment. Mainstream education and technical training are also included to advance career paths. IPS is based on 8 principles.



# CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT



When job skills and interests don't exactly match a job that is available, but the job seeker can perform many parts of the job requirements, they can consider talking to a potential employer about customizing the job

- **Customized employment**

- Flexible process to personalize the relationship between employee and employer
- Matches job seeker's strengths, interests, and needs to the business needs of the employer
- Both are served well
- Uses an individualized approach to employment planning and joy development – one person at a time and one employer at a time



# CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT



## Different forms

- **Task reassignment:** Some of the job tasks of current workers are reassigned to a new employee (maybe you!). This allows the other worker to focus on the critical functions of his/her job and complete more of what they need to get done. This can mean that a new job is created for someone like you – it can then be negotiated based on current, unmet workplace needs.
- **Job carving:** An existing job description is adjusted so that it contains some—but not all—of the tasks from the original job description.
- **Job sharing:** Two or more people share the tasks and responsibilities of a job based on pairing strengths



# WHAT IS SUPPORTED AND CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT?

Side-by-Side Referral Decision Guide

<https://tacqe.com/supported-and-customized-employment-referral-decision-guide/>



# WHAT IS SUPPORTED AND CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT?

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

### WIOA Definition

- Competitive integrated employment, including customized employment; or employment in an integrated work setting in which an individual with a most significant disability is working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment; and employment that is individualized and customized, consistent with the individual's unique strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice, of the individuals involved.

## CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT

### WIOA Definition

- Customized employment means competitive integrated employment, for and individual with a significant disability, that is based on an individualized determination of the unique strengths, needs, and interests of the individual with a significant disability. It is designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual with a significant disability and the business needs of the employer and carried out through flexible strategies, such as job exploration by the individual and working with an employer to facilitate placement.

# WHAT IS SUPPORTED AND CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT?

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

### Designed for Individuals

- For whom competitive integrated employment has not historically occurred; **or**
- For whom competitive integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability; **and**
- Who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need intensive supported employment services and extended services after the transition to extended services to perform the work involved.

## CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT

### Designed for Individuals

- For whom competitive integrated employment has not historically occurred or is unable to sustain CIE without long-term supports; **or**
- Whose experiences have primarily been in segregated facility-based programs, sheltered workshops or subminimum wage positions; **or**
- Who have not had the opportunity to work due to low expectations of abilities.



# WHAT IS SUPPORTED AND CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT?

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

### Defining Features

- Empowers choice
- Delivers collaborative services
- Results in similar wages and benefits to coworkers
- Ensures integration with mental health services
- Facilitates and maximizes social inclusion
- Stems from developing person-centered career plans
- Augments natural worksite supports

## CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT

### Defining Features

- Empowers choice
- Discovery and Customized Job Development
- Customized, negotiated job that:
  - Meets the employer's needs
  - Meets the preferences and needs of the job seeker
  - Results in an individualized job description  
Optimizes job retention of the individual with a disability
- Results in at least minimum wage or similar wages and benefits as coworkers

# HOW IS IPS FUNDED?



Most states use braided funding from two or three sources to fund IPS. These sources may include state vocational rehabilitation funds, Medicaid, or state set-aside funds. Supports through American Job Centers also are available to job seekers with mental health conditions.

# HOW IS CE FUNDED?



Customized employment and Discovery, which is the first step in the CE process, are most often funded through vocational rehabilitation funds and/or a variety of services under Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services Waivers. Service definitions and rates vary by state.

# HOW IS CE FUNDED?



- Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) and Customized Employment are authorized under Title IV of WIOA, which applies to Vocational Rehabilitation. Successful CIE outcomes for people with disabilities are enhanced by effective VR engagement with a wide range of businesses and workforce development partners.
- WIOA promotes the use of CE, especially for individuals with the most significant disabilities. In addition, sometimes the state has special initiatives or settlement agreements that can fund CE for eligible individuals.

# WHO MAY BENEFIT FROM SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OR CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

## Step 1

- Consider SE or CE when individuals have a most significant disability (e.g., significant impairments in at least two or more major life activities)

# WHO MAY BENEFIT FROM SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OR CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

## Step 2

- Does the individual meet at least one of the following criteria:
  - The employment seeker has not been able to achieve a competitive integrated employment outcome OR is unable to sustain CIE without long-term supports.
  - The employment seeker's experiences have primarily been in segregated facility-based programs for people with disabilities such as sheltered workshops or subminimum wage work.
  - Employment seeker has not had the opportunity to work due to low expectations/perceptions of abilities due to the type/nature of the disability(ies).
  - The employment seeker is a student with a disability who is transitioning from secondary education and has had limited opportunities to explore career opportunities.

# WHO MAY BENEFIT FROM SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OR CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

## Step 3

- **Consider CE if the employment seeker requires Discovery to help the individual and the employment specialist to learn about their skills and interests when such knowledge is limited due to:**
  - Limited exposure to work due to perceptions of abilities due to disability.
  - Limited experiences or opportunities to explore the community or career interests as a result of disability or segregation.
  - Behaviors that affect workplace acceptance or integration.
  - Limited adaptive skills (e.g., social skills, functional life skills, and conceptual skills such as communication, reading, writing, etc.).
  - Poor/limited performance on traditional vocational assessments due to significant disabilities.



# WHO MAY BENEFIT FROM SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OR CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

## Step 4

- **Consider CE if the individual meets at least one or more of the following criteria:**
  - The employment seeker's experiences have primarily been in segregated settings designed for people with disabilities (e.g., sheltered workshops, day activity programs, clubhouse programs, day treatment centers, etc.).
  - The employment seeker would not be considered a qualified applicant in a position with existing job descriptions.
  - The employment seeker has received supported employment services but has not been successful.
  - The employment seeker does not have a clear idea of what they want to do for a job.

# SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

## Career Planning

- **Purpose/Outcome:**
- Gather information necessary to develop person-centered career plan that identifies vocational goal(s) and anticipated worksite supports.

## Methods for Gathering Information

- Conversations and interviews with employment seeker and team members.
- Some informal observations in daily activities.

## Community-based experiences, including:

- Job-shadowing
- Work experiences
- Work assessments
- Situational assessments

# CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT

## Discovery

- **Purpose/Outcome:**
- Gather information necessary to develop person-centered vocational plan that identifies the employment seeker's skills, capacities, ideal conditions for employment, potential support needs, and vocational themes.

## Methods for Gathering Information


- Utilization of a “no fail” process based on the presumption that all people can work (outcome cannot be “unable to benefit from employment”). Qualitative approach including interviews, observations, participation in familiar and new activities to learn about (not assess) the employment seeker and to naturally identify skills, interests, and potential support needs in real-life/integrated community settings.

# SELF-EMPLOYMENT

- Starting our own business can be exciting yet challenging. It's important to research other companies that were started by people with disabilities to see what has worked.
- The Small Business Administration (SBA) has targeted programs to assist individuals with disabilities in entrepreneurial initiatives. There are programs dedicated to assist people with disability in starting a business, financing a business (with access to targeted loans and grants), and understanding tax information.
- The SBA is also a great repository of resources and can direct you to related professional and trade associations. For more information about the SBA, visit their website. <https://www.sba.gov/>

# OTHER IMPORTANT MODELS AND RESOURCES:

1. **Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN)**: <https://askearn.org/>  
This free service helps employers understand and implement best practices for recruiting, hiring, retaining, and advancing individuals with disabilities.
2. **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**: <https://askjan.org/>  
JAN provides free, confidential guidance on workplace accommodations for individuals with disabilities.
3. **American Job Centers**: <https://www.careeronestop.org/localhelp/americanjobcenters/find-american-job-centers.aspx>  
These centers offer a range of assistance to job seekers, including services for people with disabilities.
4. **Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP)**: <https://www.wrp.gov/wrp>  
WRP helps employers connect with postsecondary students and recent graduates with disabilities.



**“WE, THE ONES WHO ARE CHALLENGED, NEED  
TO BE HEARD. TO BE SEEN NOT AS A  
DISABILITY, BUT AS A PERSON WHO HAS AND  
WILL CONTINUE TO BLOOM. TO BE SEEN NOT  
ONLY AS A HANDICAP, BUT AS A WELL INTACT  
HUMAN BEING.”**

*—Robert Hensel*

Born with spina bifida, Robert holds the Guinness World Record for the longest non-stop wheelchair wheelie.



Thank you!  
[abaghda1@ou.edu](mailto:abaghda1@ou.edu)

# CONTACT



- The National Center for Disability Education & Training
- Dr. Annie Baghdayan
- [abaghda1@ou.edu](mailto:abaghda1@ou.edu)
- 405-325-0158



# Headshot Station



## **RESERVE YOUR SPOT**

**No spots left? Stop by!**  
We'll fit you in for a walk-up.