

Where Should I Begin?

Resources for Finding Support to Obtain Employment

All people can work! People deserve to work in a job that interests them and one in which they earn a minimum wage or more. Work in environments where people with and without disabilities work side by side creates opportunities and benefits for all employees. Finding employment is a personal journey to match your skills and interests with a career of your choice. When you have disability, you may need to find additional support in order to maximize your employment potential.

First Steps:

Goal Setting

- Set a goal for employment and begin to plan steps to achieve this. Below are resources that may help you/your family member achieve this goal.

Educate yourself

- There are a lot of terms in the disability service system. You may want to have a working knowledge of the following terms: supported employment, customized employment, job development, job coaching, and Virginia's Employment First Initiative. Brief definitions may be found at the end of this document.

Professional Resources:

Public Schools- ages 14 and up

- If you are still in school, make sure you let your IEP team know that you want a competitive job **before** leaving high school. Research shows that high school students who have had paid work before leaving high school are more likely to have a job 1 year after leaving high school.¹ Plan with your IEP team on how you can achieve this.
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/transition_svcs/

Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)

- All people with disabilities who are seeking assistance in finding employment should visit their local DARS office to see if they are eligible for services. To find a local office, please visit <http://vadrs.org/offices.aspx> or call [1-800-552-5019](tel:1-800-552-5019) (TTY [1-800-464-9950](tel:1-800-464-9950)).
- If you are eligible for services, a vocational rehabilitation counselor will develop an Individual Plan for Employment. You can visit this site for more information:
<http://www.vadrs.org/howvrworks.htm>.
- DARS can provide you with a list of providers who do job development and supported employment and may be able to help pay for these services.

Community Services Boards (CSBs)

- In Virginia there are 40 local CSBs that provide support and services to people with intellectual/developmental disabilities, mental illness and substance use disorders. To find the one that serves your city/county, go to: <http://www.vacsb.org/directory.html>.
- Ask to speak to someone about the **Intellectual Disability (ID) Waiver, the Day Support (DS) Waiver, or the Individual & Family Developmental Disability Waiver (DD Waiver)**. Find out if your family member would be eligible for these Home and Community Based Services Waivers, each of which provides a method of payment for employment support and services. To find out more information about these waivers, go to: <https://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/ODS-MRWaiver.htm>.

¹ http://transitiontoemployment.org/files/Publications/IssueBriefs/CTE_IB_1103.pdf

- Some CSBs provide job development and job coaching services. Ask if your CSB provides these services and how you can make use of them. If they do not offer employment services, ask for advice on where you should go in your area for employment services.

211 website (a service of the Virginia Department of Social Services)

- This site has a list of organizations that provide supported employment services and access to services in your community and statewide. Some organizations that provide supported employment services may accept self-pay.
- www.211virginia.org Enter where you live, and drop down to these terms: employment, supported employment to find a list of organizations that provide these services.

Some people are not eligible for services or are waiting for services. People may want to find employment on their own or take additional steps to increase the likelihood of employment.

Using Your Own Resources:

Friends, family, teachers, acquaintances

- Networks are a powerful way to find job openings and this is how many people obtain employment. Spread the word that you/your family member are looking for work and tell them about your interest and skills.

Build a Resume

- Write a resume. There are two basic types of resumes, one that is chronological in which a work and volunteer history is highlighted, and one that is a functional resume that focuses on a person's skills, interests and knowledge. Research each of these to find out which would serve you/your family member better.

Volunteer

- Look for opportunities for you/your family member to volunteer especially in areas that are of interest to you/them. Include these activities on the resume.

Keep Your Eyes on the Possibilities

- This site collects stories of people working real jobs for real pay:
<http://www.realworkstories.org/>

Work Related and Informational Resources: These are not places that offer job development, job coaching or supported/customized employment, but do offer valuable employment-related information and resources.

vaACCSES

- Serves the entire state
- SSI/SSDI Work Incentives training http://www.vaaccses.org/training_conferences/
- WIPA Services <http://www.vaaccses.org/wipa/>

Virginia Workforce Development Network

- Local One-Stop offices www.careeronestop.org
- Virginia Employment Commission <http://www.vec.virginia.gov/>
- Workforce Development Centers <https://www.vawc.virginia.gov>
- VCCS Workforce Development Services <http://www.vccs.edu/workforce/>

Job Accommodations Network (JAN) <http://askjan.org>

Social Security Administration (SSA) / Medicaid Works www.ssa.gov

Definitions:

Supported Employment is paid competitive employment in an integrated setting with ongoing support for people with disabilities for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, and who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need on-going support services in order to obtain, perform, and retain their job. Supported Employment provides assistance such as job coaching and job placement, assistance in interacting with employers, on-site assistive technology training, specialized job training, and individually tailored supervision.

Customized employment is a flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job candidate and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both.

Job Coach - Person hired by the placement agency or provided through the employer to furnish specialized one-on-one on-site training to assist an employee with a disability in learning or performing a job and adjusting to the work environment. As the worker becomes proficient, the job coach begins "fading," spending less and less time training the worker. After "fading" is complete, the job coach continues to monitor the worker occasionally and is available when needed to assist with retraining and other support that the worker might need.

Job Development - The process of finding the "right" job that matches a person's interests and talents. Jobs may be working for an employer or working for oneself.

Employment First is a policy in Virginia that states that people with disabilities will be offered work in an integrated setting in the community as the first and preferred option for day service.