

Customized Employment Process/Services Description

Definition:

Customized Employment (CE) means –

(i) individualized, integrated, paid, community employment based on a negotiated relationship between job seekers and employers in ways that meet the needs of both based on an individualized determination of job seekers' conditions for success, their interests toward an aspect of the job market and their specific contributions, determined by a discovery process and is also designed to meet specific needs of the employer –

(A) For whom competitive employment, including competitive supported employment, has not occurred or for whom competitive employment, including competitive supported employment (SE), has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of significant disability and other life complexities; and

(B) Who have either performed poorly or would be expected to perform poorly on Supported Employment Assessment or Vocational Evaluation and who would benefit from a sequential pre-employment process that results in a negotiated employment relationship ; and

(C) Who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, are not likely to be able to meet the competitive demands set by employers in existing job descriptions even with the provision of supported employment services; or

ii. Individualized, entrepreneurial outcomes such customized self-employment or contract relationships that are individually negotiated to fit the needs of individuals with a disability as well meeting a market or employer need.

The Customized Process:

1. Discovery

Discovery provides an alternative to the Supported Employment Assessment (SEA) in that a qualitative approach is used to determine already-existing information rather than using a comparative, quantitative analysis of performance necessary in approaches such as the Supported Employment Assessment. The information developed through discovery allows for activities of typical life to be *translated* into possibilities for employment. Discovery seeks to answer a fundamental question, "Who is this person?" in a descriptive, non-evaluative manner. Even though many of the suggested contexts of the Supported Employment Assessment are used in Discovery, the focus of the observations and interactions differs significantly. In short Discovery seeks to understand and translate, the SEA seeks to compare and predict. Additionally, in CE, the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is completed *following* Discovery and the Customized Planning Meeting rather than prior to assessment as in SE. ***See attached "Discovery Steps" table for outline of all the steps to discover and estimated time that should be spent on each step.***

Discovery must include the following:

- *Facilitation of a meeting held prior to discovery* with the individual and family/friends as appropriate that describes CE and the process as well as the projected outcomes. This meeting also provides the information necessary for Part I of the Profile document and sets the time and date for the initial visit to the individual's home.
- *Make two to three visits to the individual's home* for purposes of gaining information of routines, hobbies, family supports, activities and other perspectives related to one's residence. If individuals are unwilling to allow visits to their homes, alternative locations in the neighborhood may be negotiated such as libraries, community centers, churches, etc. These visits must be approved by the individual, and family as appropriate and timing of visits should reflect input by the individual.
- *Observation of the neighborhood/area* near to the individual's home to determine nearby employment, services, transportation and mobility corridors, safety concerns etc. This observation, performed once, can be performed in conjunction with a visit to the individual's home.
- *Interviews* with persons, both paid and not paid to deliver services, who know the individual well. These interviews should focus on persons perceived to be optimistic about the effort of the individual to become employed and specific names should be primarily based on suggestions by the individual and family, as appropriate. Between two to three interviews should be conducted with persons both paid and not paid to deliver services to the individual.
- Observations of the individuals of concern as they participate in typical life activities outside of their home. These activities may include observations made in schools, service programs, community settings etc. A minimum of two of these observations is required.
- *Participation* with the individuals of concern as they participate in typical life activities outside of their home. These activities should include participation with the individual in either activities that comprise their typical life such as shopping, recreation/leisure, banking, etc., or in activities of this sort that comprise what adults might typically do together in the local community such as having a cup of coffee, attending a local festival, eating lunch, etc. A minimum of two of these activities is required.
- *Participation in a familiar activity* in which the individual is at his/her best and most competent. This activity should be carefully planned and discussed so that conditions, interests and competencies can be identified. The specific activity must be negotiated and approved by the individual and family, as appropriate. A minimum of one of these activities is required.

- *Participation in a novel activity* in which the individual is interested in participating but has not yet had the chance to do so. This activity should be carefully planned and discussed so that conditions, interests and competencies can be identified. Care must be taken to assure that the activity is consistent with as many of the individual's strengths, needs and interest as possible and it must be approved by the individual and family, as appropriate. A minimum of one of these activities is required.
- *Conduct a review of existing records*, memorabilia and other documents that are available. This should be one of the last activities of discovery and is conducted after a relationship has been developed and knowledge gained about the individual. Written permission must be obtained from the individual or family, as appropriate, to review records.
- *Develop* Discovery notes and photos and *collect* other materials such as personal memorabilia, hobby exemplars, letters of recommendation and citations/awards that are used to assist in the development of the profile documents.

2. Discovery Profile Document

The profile document provides for customized employment the equivalent of the assessment report for supported employment. The profile consists of three sections that offer the individual, family, DVR and employment providers the information source from which a customized plan can be developed. Part I of the profile, the Intake Interview Summary, is developed during the meeting held prior to the initiation of discovery. This form summarizes the individual's life with factual information necessary to accomplish the discovery interactions. Part II, the Profile of Discovery, provides the descriptive basis of the profile. A broad range of life domains are described starting with the family and home and proceeding through education, employment, life activities and skill performance. Part III, the Plan Preparation Summary, allows the facilitator to begin to summarize and to translate the information from Parts I and II into a documents that provides the preparation necessary for a quality customized plan. These documents utilize a narrative format that may be augmented by digital photos. Alternative formats that involve using an outline typed either in a word processing style (using Word, Word Perfect, etc.) or entered in a presentation style (using PowerPoint, WP Presentations, etc.) are allowed. The outline format to be used has been developed by Marc Gold & Associates (MG&A), or an alternative format may be used if approved by DVR central office. ***See attached "Discovery Steps" table for outline of all the steps to discover and estimated time that should be spent on each step, including the writing of the Discovery Profile.***

Profiles must include the following:

- *Parts I, II and III submitted in typed form* with all pertinent information filled out. Recommended forms, along with samples and guidelines for development, have been provided by M&A to participating agencies in Wisconsin.
- *Use of a narrative format* to address the categories contained in the outline forms – no one word descriptions, short phrases or numerical rankings.

- *Use of descriptive language* in Part II that is non-evaluative and non-comparative relating to the individual of concern.
- *Fully completed forms* that address all pertinent aspects of the individual regarding the information contained in the profile outlines. While it is possible that some information is not applicable for certain individuals, efforts should be made to address the information requested or to detail why the information is not applicable.
- *Robust, respectful and optimistic narrative* used to detail Parts II and III. Certain areas of the profile should be much deeper than others regarding aspects of importance to the individual. Information of a sensitive, possibly embarrassing nature should either be left out or included in the “Sensitive Information” section of Part III. The tone of the narrative should address the most positive and hopeful aspects of the individual, even when addressing challenges and areas needing support and negotiation.
- *Translation and summarization* of the descriptive information contained in Part II of the profile into employment possibilities in Part III, the Plan Preparation Summary.
- *Submission of the documents* for review and editing by DVR counselors and/or technical assistance provider. Suggested changes must be made and edited documents re-submitted.

3. Customized Planning Meeting

The customized planning meeting provides the linkage between the discovery process and customized job development. This plan develops a blueprint to guide the efforts to develop a customized job. The planning meeting is a person-centered, person-directed session facilitated, ideally, by the person(s) who facilitated discovery and developed the profile. This four part event seeks to integrate the individual’s story and choices with the creative forces available from a group of optimistic and knowledgeable persons who know the job seeker. Participants are invited primarily on the list of those who the individual wishes to attend. All aspects of the plan must be approved by the individual before any item is officially included. The customized plan for employment is an adjunct to the IPE and does not substitute for the IPE in any way. The format of this plan is provided by Marc Gold & Associates. Alternate formats must be approved by DVR central office.

The Customized Planning Meeting must include the following:

- The plan should be *facilitated by the person(s) who facilitated discovery* and developed the profile documents.
- *No more persons paid to provide service should be invited* than those not paid to provide service to the individual.
- The *date and timing* for the plan should be set by the individual.
- The *plan should occur between one to three weeks* following approval of the profile documents.

- The plan should *focus on developing the blueprint for customized employment* and other issues should be dealt with at another time.
- The *individual* (or designated supporter, as appropriate) *must approve* each and all aspects of the plan as they are developed.
- *All aspects of the plan must be developed* including Part II, Characteristics of an Ideal Job, Part III, and Potential Task Lists related to Interest Areas and Part IV, Specific Employers List.
- *The Specific Employers list must be sequentially prioritized* by the individual, with assistance as necessary, either during or following the Plan.
- *Connections and possible referrals* among those attending to specific employers must be solicited during the planning meetings.
- *The Customized Planning meeting forms* that provides a synopsis of the meeting must be typed and submitted to DVR.

4. Need Analysis and Customized Job Development

Job development representation is a critical aspect of quality customized employment. Efforts are initiated based on the “blueprint” developed during the Customized Planning Meeting. Prior to making employer contacts it is essential to identify any relationships that might exist between the job seeker, family and others in the person’s support circle with targeted employers. This helps to ease the way when making initial contacts with prospective employers. In customized employment, traditional job openings will not be appropriate. Therefore, the provider must look beyond job openings, to identify the unmet needs of an employer. Armed with the knowledge about the job seeker, the provider can then look for job tasks and work cultures that fulfill the criteria for a successful job match. Tours and in-depth needs analyses of specific employment sites are used to identify the unmet needs of an employer by looking at job tasks, employee routines, and worksite cultures.

Good customized job development is a process of presentation followed by observation, discussion, and listening to employers. It is the provider’s responsibility to establish whether the employer has a need relating to the job seeker’s proposed contributions. This process seeks to determine whether employer needs truly match the applicant's contributions, conditions, and preferences for employment. If a need and/or match do not exist, discussion about employing the applicant is redirected to another site. If a need and match are identified, then discussions begin with the employer. It may take numerous contacts to secure the right match between the applicant and the employer. Successful job matches occur when a job seeker's contributions, conditions, and interests are carefully matched with an employer's unmet needs.

Customized job development and employer needs analysis must include:

- *Making employer contacts* in the order identified in the customized plan.
- *Performing and detailing one hour of research* per initial employer contact.
- *Always separating the act of getting an appointment* from making a presentation.

- *Avoiding targeting job openings and existing job descriptions.*
- *Developing and using an agency portfolio for purposes of making employer presentations.*
- *Developing and following a plan for making employer contacts that involves at least three employer contacts per week.*
- *Attempting to negotiate a needs analysis during each presentation which would serve to identify unmet workplace needs.*
- *Filling out sequential employer contact sheets for each individual represented as well as the contact strategy that organizes overall employer contacts.*
- *Using the suggested initial employer contact strategies to secure time for a presentation, as suggested in training.*
- *Identifying all potential connections, relationships and possibilities for referrals and recommendations for each contact made.*

5. Visual Resume (Representational Portfolio) as part of Customized Job Development

The use of a visual resume format in lieu of a traditional job seeker resume is an innovation used in Customized Employment. Following the customized plan, a visual resume is developed that uses a presentation format such as PowerPoint to gather information pertinent for consideration by potential employers. Used by job developers in tandem with the an agency portfolio (which presents the general concept of customized employment to the employer), the visual resume provides employers with a look beyond the hype and rhetoric so often included in traditional resumes into the competencies evident in the life experience of the job seeker. This tool can be developed using easy to learn desktop publishing techniques and affordable materials available in local office supply outlets.

The Visual Resume must include:

- *An introductory photo or image that represents the job seeker in a respectful and competent manner.*
- *Images of competent performance that detail positive aspects of the job seeker's life experiences in relation to potential employer benefits.*
- *Succinct narrative that focuses on contributions to potential employers stated in a manner designed to enhance the job seeker from an employer's perspective.*
- *A concluding task list of 8 – 12 tasks to be offered, defined by the job seeker's interests (from the customized plan), that are matched to the type of business of the employer.*
- *Development and layout of the preceding information in a presentation binder that allows for a free-standing presentation of the job seeker's information.*

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