

Integrating Customized Employment Strategies into the Vocational Rehabilitation System



Presentation Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions from Panel
- Customized Employment and WIOA Overview
- Customized Employment Process
- Implementation/ Integration Process
- Vocational Rehabilitation Perspective
- Community- Based Provider Prospective
- Challenges and Lessons Learned
- Practice Guidelines

Presentation Panel



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The Philosophy

- Employment First
- We are helpers by nature
- Promote independence & self-determination
- Promote quality of life through meaningful activity and community integration

Why Customized Employment?

- Promotes the identification of interests, talents, and conditions for employment
- Facilitates people with complex disabilities in attaining their employment goals when traditional strategies are not successful
- Assists in the implementation of job accommodations that promote employment retention

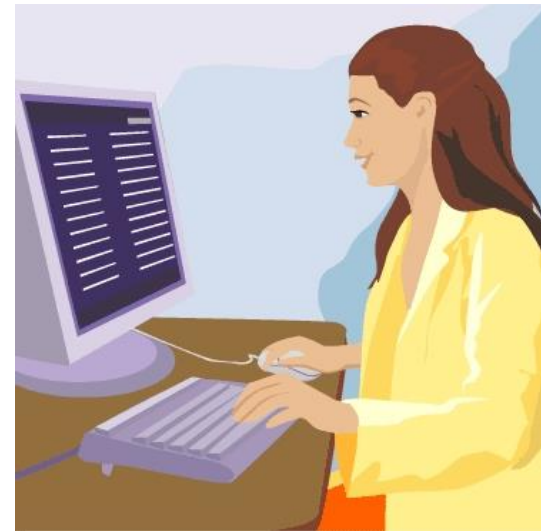
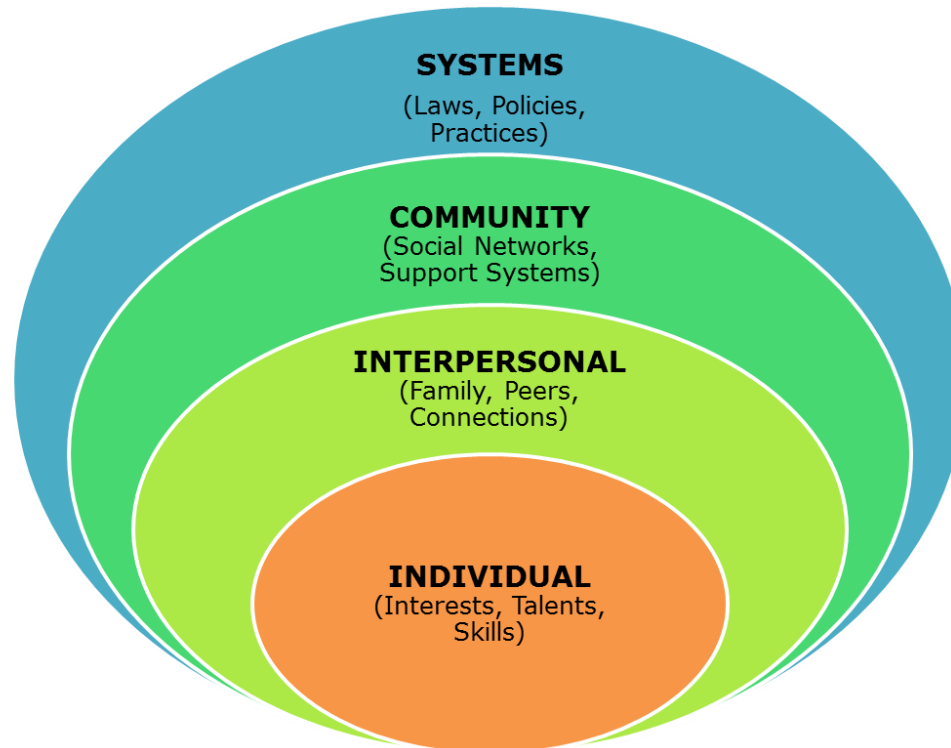


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Socio-Ecological Approach

Acknowledges the complex interplay between a person and his/her environment



WIOA

Section 361.5(c)(15) of the ***Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act*** (WIOA) specifically identifies customized employment as an employment outcome under the public Vocational Rehabilitation program.

Customized Employment

Defined by WIOA as:

- “***competitive integrated employment***, for an individual with a significant disability
- based on an ***individualized determination*** of the strengths, needs, and interests of the individual with a significant disability
- designed to meet the ***specific abilities of the individual*** with a significant disability and the ***business needs of the employer***
- carried out through ***flexible strategies***.”

(Civic Impulse, 2015, p. 573)

CE Process

- Considers *unique aspects of each person* (age, type of disability, functional capacities, disposition, interaction style)
- Recognizes *contextual factors* (resources, living arrangements, geographical location, supports)

Facilitates an employment outcome that aligns with the individual's *interests and talents* while considering *conditions* that may impact successful, long-term employment

Customized Employment Process



Step 1 - Discovery

- Discovery uses **qualitative** methods (interviews, conversations, observations) in **natural settings** to gather information about the job seeker's interests, talents, and conditions for employment
- Alternative to traditional evaluations that use prescribed testing and comparisons to norms and general standards

Step 2 – Vocational Profile

Vocational Profile:

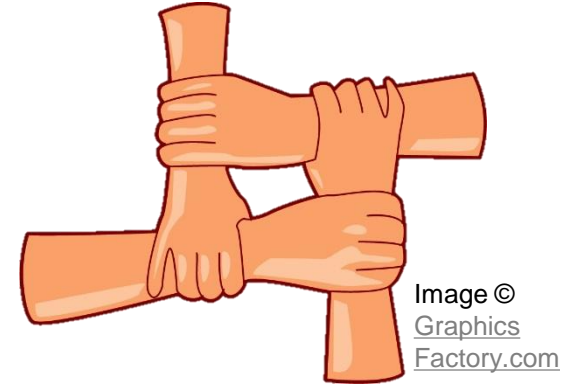


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- product of Discovery
- a robust, narrative snapshot of a job seeker to identify ideal working conditions
- Non-evaluative; presents information from a strengths-based perspective

Step 3 – CE Planning Meeting

- CE planning meeting includes the job seeker, family, friends, advocates, service providers, VR counselors, and other stakeholders
- Ideally, it occurs within **two weeks** of the completion of the Vocational Profile
- Purpose is to develop a CE **blueprint** that bridges the gap between Discovery and job placement



Step 4 – Visual Resume

- **Visual Resume** - a sales tool to introduce the job seeker to potential employers
- Differs from a typical resume in that it utilizes **photos** or **video clips** to present the job seeker to the employer



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Step 5 – Job Development & Negotiation

- Identification of unmet business needs that may be fulfilled by the talents of a job seeker
- Negotiate the job description using customizing strategies
- Include needed accommodations and supports in the negotiation process.

Step 6 – Accommodations & Post Employment Supports

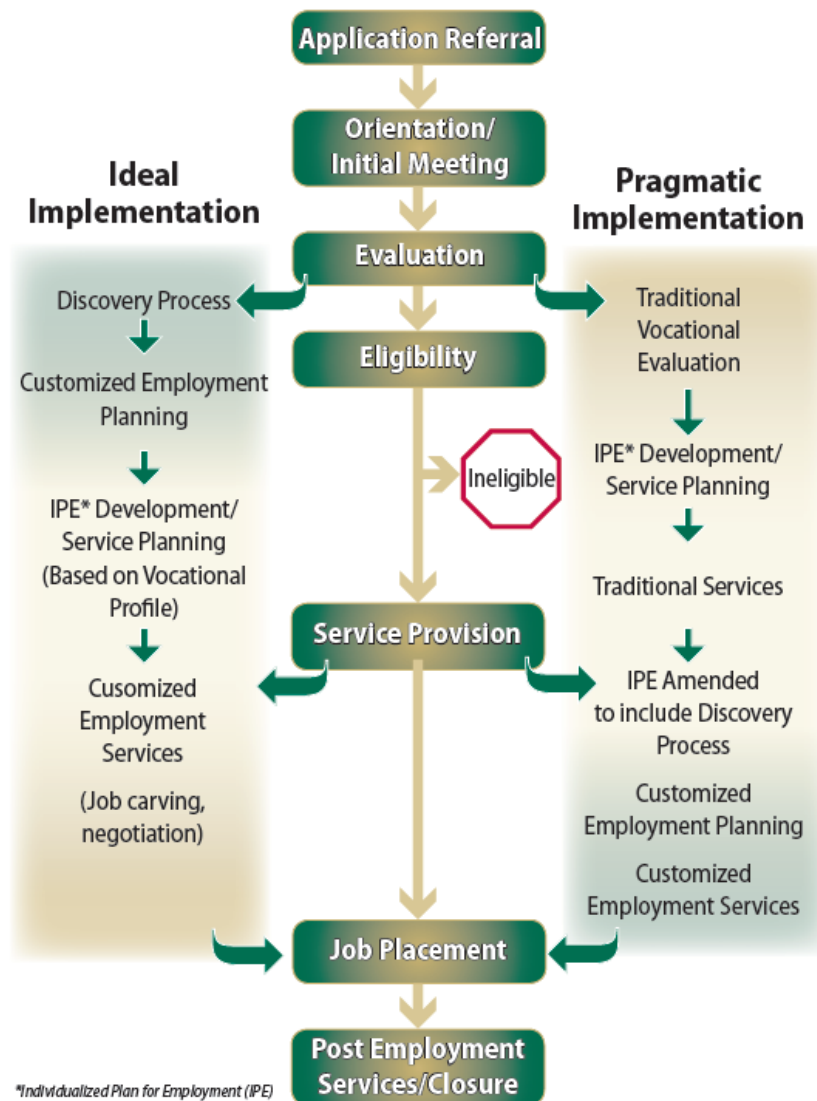
- **Job Accommodation Network** (askjan.org) aid in the identification/implementation of accommodations as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Prior to vocational rehabilitation case closure, assistance should be provided in the development of **natural supports** and **resources** for targeting solutions to challenges prior to the loss of employment.

Implementing with Fidelity

- Learning to apply the CE process with fidelity to the model requires **time** and **practice** combined with **training** and **technical assistance** from a person with expertise in the process.
- States/systems should take this into consideration when incorporating CE strategies into their service options

Ideal vs Pragmatic Implementation

Vocational Rehabilitation Process



Why Not Ideal Approach?

- Public VR systems typically do not have the capacity to serve every person who has a disability that impacts the ability to work
- VR systems must adapt their policies and process, train staff, identify additional resources, and moderate resistance that may add to the issues of turnover and burnout.

Pragmatic Approach

- Discovery is added to Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) as an amendment when traditional strategies have not resulted in competitive, integrated employment



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Implementation of CE Strategies

Successful implementation involves educating all stakeholders, training service providers, and monitoring and evaluation of activities to promote ongoing quality in service provision.

It is recommended that public VR systems:

1. utilize a **phased approach**;
2. develop **success measures** for project activities;
3. develop a **work plan with timelines**;
4. employ **strong project management**; and
5. conduct a **comprehensive evaluation**

Tools to Facilitate Integration

Three tools can be utilized to facilitate planning, project management, and evaluation:

1. Roadmap
2. Integration Scale
3. Community of Practice

For more information on the integration tools and process, please read the linked article:

<http://dps.sagepub.com/content/early/2016/04/18/1044207316644412.abstract>

VR Counselor Role



Refer

- Identify consumers who have not been successful through traditional strategies
- Refer to a certified vendor for Discovery service



Review

- Review the vocational profile for quality
- Utilize the translated information to amend IPE (when needed)



Place

- Refer the consumer for CE placement services
- Whenever possible, use the same vendor that provided Discovery

Vocational Rehabilitation Perspective

VR Discovery Guidelines & Considerations



Vocational Rehabilitation Perspective

DISCOVERY

What it IS:

- Based on the belief that everyone can work.
- An in-depth study of one job seeker.
- An alternative to comparative, standardized assessment and evaluations.
- A foundation for customized employment planning.
- A process compatible with the principals of person-centered planning, self-determination, and informed choice.

What it is NOT:

- An evaluation or a comparison with standards
- A prediction of success based on performance
- A tool to identify areas that a job seeker needs to change
- A fast process – it takes at least 16-20 hours to complete the Discovery process
- The end of the customized employment process – planning and job development follow Discovery

Consumer Considerations

- Employment must be the goal.
- Consumer must be eligible for Supported Employment.
- Must be available and committed



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Vendor Considerations

- Provider must be registered as a Supported Employment Vendor.
- The Specialist must be Discovery Certified.



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VR Counselor Considerations

Two authorizations:

1. A10770 (Profile)
 - \$1750
2. A10790 (Hours of Observation)
 - \$39 per hr. up to 15 hours

- Supporting documents
- Timelines



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VR Counselor Considerations

There are questions a VRC should ask themselves to determine the appropriateness of a Discovery referral:

- Due to the nature and intensity of the process.
- To maximize the benefit of the process for the consumer.
- To receive quality information that will be a tool for employment planning.



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VR Perspective

1. Is employment a priority for the consumer and those who support him or her (when applicable)?
2. Does the consumer understand that Discovery will create a blueprint for success in employment?
3. If actively seeking employment, is the consumer willing to suspend a job search to participate in the Discovery process?
4. Will this person be available to participate (i.e. not going on vacation, available during business hours)
5. Will this person be undergoing major life changes soon that would impact the picture of who they are? (i.e. a move, a graduation, a divorce, etc.)

VR Perspective

6. Are there any pending considerations that will impact the candidate's ability to be reliable or dependable throughout the process? (medical, legal, vacation, etc.)
7. Will the individual allow access to supports (when available)?
8. Will the individual (and supports, where applicable) allow access to the home?
9. Does the person have a legal guardian that needs to be consulted as part of the process?
10. Does the person have the necessary accommodations to participate in the process?

Components of Discovery:

- Meet & Greet Appointment
- Hours of Observation
- Conversations
- Profile Writing (or
Discovery Staging Record)
- The Planning Meeting



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Meet & Greet Appointment

Purpose:

- Review the **components, products and goals** of the process
- Reinforce the participation **expectations** of and secure commitment from the consumers and their supports (where applicable) throughout the process
- Establish **timelines** and next steps
- Identify any **barriers** to a successful Discovery process
- Begin conversations and **rapport building** with the individual
- Discuss **preliminary information** used in the vocational profile or staging record
- Orient the VRC to the projected completion timelines and include them as **partners** in a successful process

Hours of Observation

Activities

Logged in an activity log

Types

Familiar

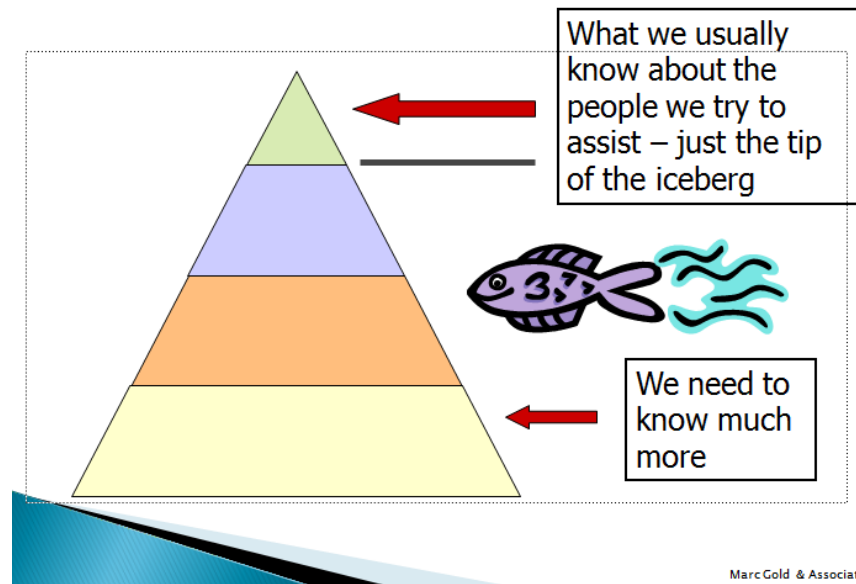
Novel (Unfamiliar)

Setting

Home

Community*

The Iceberg Analogy of Discovery



Conversations

Some discovery information is gathered through conversations with the individual and people who know them best.

- Family
- Friends
- Service providers
- Teachers
- Employers
- Community Members who know the person well and can contribute to the Discovery process



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Vocational Profile

A vocational profile is:

- A positive and descriptive picture in narrative form of who the consumer is based on observations and conversations in the Discovery journey
- The blueprint for successful employment planning
- Distinct from an IPE

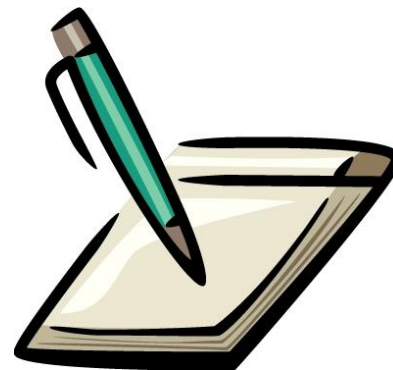


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Quality Vocational Profiles

- Focused on abilities and skills (optimistic and person-centered)
- Rich, Robust and Comprehensive
- Objective (free of judgment)
- Non-evaluative (free of comparisons to others)
- Respectful
- Identify 3 vocational themes (at minimum)
- Identify barriers, strategies and potential solutions
- Include employer lists

The Planning Meeting

The planning meeting is where employment planning occurs with:

- The Consumer
- Family
- Friends
- Advocates
- The Provider
- The VRC
- Others chosen by the job seeker

The CE Planning Meeting

- Transition point from Discovery into Supported Employment



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Challenges

- VR Staff and Provider acceptance of Discovery perspective and process
- Timeframe expectations for process completion
- Inadequate compensation for Provider
- VRC's comfort level with the process and final product
- Lack of consistency per Provider
- The Pilot's consumers were some of the consumers with the most complex disabilities
- Many of our counties do not have Discovery Certified Individuals

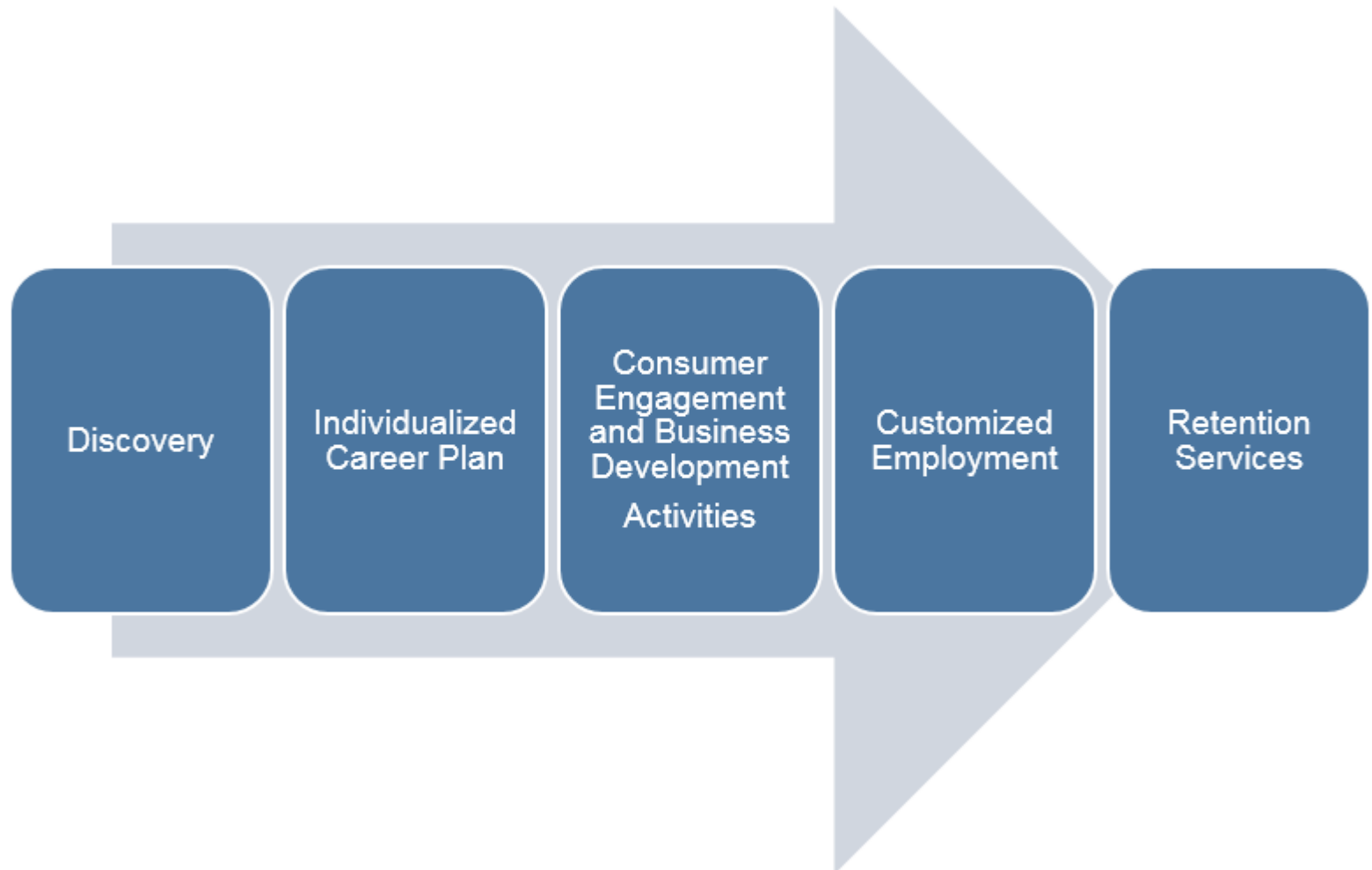
Lessons Learned

- Need for subject matter experts in each region
- Need for in-depth VRC Training in the process
- Need for re-certification process for Providers
- Need for an agency certification to go along with it
- Need for a dedicated Discovery Certified Individual
- Need for a Fidelity Scale
- Need to be patient

Provider/ Vendor Perspective



Customized Employment: Provider Perspective



Customized Employment: Provider Perspective

Customized Employment is:

- A flexible process
- Distinct from traditional employment
- Individualized
- Personalized
- Value-driven

Customized Employment: Provider Perspective

Examples of Customized Employment Arrangements

Traditional Employment Relationships:

- Task reassignment (Job Creation)
- Job carving (Job modification)
- Job sharing

Other Customized Employment Opportunities:

- Business within a business
- Resource ownership

Customized Employment: Provider Perspective

The Universal Hiring Rule

Any employer will hire anyone, as long as the hiring will bring more value than cost.



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Consumer Engagement

– Engagement Activities

- » Shifts focus away from “job readiness” to universal employer needs (i.e. motivation, dependability, work ethic, etc.)
- » Provides greater information for an in-depth understanding of the Job Seeker

– Exploration of Vocational Themes

- » Will assist the Employment Specialist with identifying additional contributions (value) an individual can make to a business and condition.

Business Development Activities

Informational Interviewing

- Less formal process
- Exploratory
- Preparation required
- Insightful questions and observation
- More than one visit

Consultative Matching

- More formal process
- Intentional
- Preparation required
- Insightful questions and observation
- More than one appointment

Customized Employment: Placement

Traditional Placement Process

- Focus on job readiness
- Resumes
- Applications
- Interviews

Customized Employment Process

- Focus on engagement
- Candidate Profiles
- Needs Analysis Meetings or Informational Interviews
- Meet and Greet Appointments

External Challenges

Primary:

- Rate Structure payment reimbursement is insufficient for the service
- Discovery is integrated into the Supported Employment process

Secondary:

- Lag times and lack of continuity in receiving referrals
- Lack of understanding of Provider processes, services and timelines
- Limitations regarding IPE goals vs. vocational themes
- Cumbersome OJT processes that limit effective use
- Underutilization of Self-Employment services

Internal Challenges

Primary:

- Lack of confidence in engaging the business community
- Insufficient training opportunities
- Lack of quality, comprehensive information

Secondary:

- Challenges with effective case management
- Lack of continuity of service
- Length of time and resources required
- Staff perceptions about execution

Lessons Learned

- Providers specializing in CE would increase outcomes
- Increased training opportunities are needed
- Increasing availability of technical assistance and benefits planning supports would be helpful
- Need for greater partnerships and understanding between providers and VR staff
- Payment reimbursements need to be revisited

Practice Guidelines

1. Do you believe that practice **guidelines/written guides** will be a helpful tool for VR practitioners to implement customized employment practices? If so, what are the **benefits** of having practice guidelines?
2. What **type of information** should such guide include?
3. **Who should be involved** in developing such guide?

Action Planning

1. What is your state/community currently doing to integrate CE strategies?
2. What still needs to be done?
3. Who is involved or needs to be involved (stakeholders)?
4. What are the next action steps?
5. Who will complete them?
6. What are the time frames/ deadlines for completing action steps?
7. Who is assigned to coordination and follow up?

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- Smith, T.J., Dillahun-Aspillaga, C.J., & Kenney, C. (2015). Integrating Customized Employment Practices within the Vocational Rehabilitation System. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* (special edition), 42(3). DOI:10.3233/JVR-150740

Thank you for participating!

Wrapping Up

- We invite you to:
 - Provide your input on today's webcast
 - Share your thoughts on future webcasts topics
 - Participate in the Community of Practice to continue the dialogue
- PLEASE CONTACT US:

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Please fill out the brief evaluation form:

<http://bit.ly/2gBTWYy0>

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