

## Consumer Services – Job Coaching

Job Coaching is a “work-first” strategy which has proven successful for many individuals with disabilities. This is an emphasis on prompt and effective job matching, with the majority of support directed after job placement. The process typically includes: the development of a written plan of service; individual-specific pre-employment activities; job matching and placement; on-site training; and follow-along support for a defined period. The service mix requires a collaborative approach among - at minimum - the service agency, job-seeker (consumer), and sponsoring organization.

Frequently individuals with disabilities who receive prior vocational training have difficulty transferring their skills to the workplace. In addition, some individuals may continue to be unsuccessful in the job search and in securing a job. This may be attributable to any number of factors, not the least of which is the disabling condition, including transportation, poor resume, interpersonal and communication skills. In addition, many individuals who receive government subsidies may pursue employment with reluctance, either unsure or unwilling to have existing benefits reduced or eliminated in exchange for gainful employment. An effective written plan will identify key individual barriers and will attempt to establish corresponding strategies.

A good job match will account for the key needs and interests of the job-seeker. Understandably, there are frequently areas of negotiation in which the match may not hit all the target points. It is AHEDD’s contention that there is no perfect job match, and that careers are built upon progressive work experience. This is not to suggest that “any job will do” but rather that at times all individuals – including persons with disabilities – accept jobs which are transitional. Another area in the job match involves the agency’s prior knowledge, such as impact of disability, unsuccessful work attempts, drug & alcohol abuse, and criminal background. Ironically, industry personnel will sometimes contribute to stereotyping about how individuals with certain disabilities would or would not be successful in specific jobs. It is highly recommended that Job Coaching staff conduct employment checks with each consumer’s written permission. This information should be properly documented and shared with potential employers, again with permission from the consumer. Agency knowledge of documented background represents a significant point of job targeting, as to how prior performance might impact on a potential job.

Job coaching includes but is not limited to on-site training and intervention. There is no one size fits all approach, as job coaching will involve the expectations of the consumer and the employer, as well as job and workplace dynamics. The Job Coach is expected to complement not replace existing orientation, training, and supervision from the employer. The Job Coach should operate with clear objectives, regarding skills, behaviors, or other accommodations needed. Job Coaching should have an exit plan, as the job coach is not intended to become a regular resource to the workplace. Ideally, the job coach is unobtrusive, as his/her presence is not a natural support. Frequently job coaching includes off-site intervention, coordinating activities which contribute to job retention.