

Employment Discussion Guide

Realizing the Potential of Employment First



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The expected and optimal outcome of all waiver-funded employment services is individual, integrated employment.

~ CMS 2011 Informational Bulletin

Everyone has the right to integrated employment in the community.

~ [Employment Position Statement](#), Oregon Self Advocacy Coalition

Introduction to the Conversation & the Employment Discussion Guide

Employment First, grounded in the principles of informed choice, strives to address the disparity in employment rates among people with intellectual disabilities and the general population. In 2012-2013, “data from the National Core Indicators suggest that only 14.7% of working-age adults supported by state developmental disabilities agencies were employed.”¹

Conversations do not substitute for experiences.

This statistic and similar ones fuel the urgency to improve our skills and talents in making people aware of their employment options and, even more importantly of some of the benefits of working such as money, structure to their day, the opportunity to contribute and to be a “part of” and not “apart from” the community.

A national employment rate of 14.7% suggests that we need to develop another approach to employment

There are numerous ways that people communicate that they want to work – we just have to learn how to listen and observe in a different manner. Remember, people do not have to state, “I want to work,” to explore, pursue or obtain employment. Many people may never state those words or words like them, yet they may communicate that desire in other ways.

The belief that someone we support may not understand concepts of work or money does not end the employment conversation. In fact, it doubles our obligation to make sure we do our utmost to help the person understand as much as possible. A starting point for helping people to understand is relating the benefits of employment to their goals. Does the person want to own a home? Learn a skill? Does the person understand the differences between volunteering and employment?

This guide is structured to facilitate conversations about individual, integrated employment and to help people make an informed decision before the date of the ISP meeting. A person’s opportunities for employment success

¹ [StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2014 Edition, p. 9](#)

are exponentially strengthened when their Services Coordinator (SC) or Personal Agent (PA) is an employment champion. As this is a guide as opposed to a form, please remember to document the outcome of discussions and experiences in the Individual Support Plan (ISP).

Conversations do not substitute for experiences – especially for people who are perceived to have the most significant barriers – including communication, behavioral or medical challenges. Employment First means employment for all – there are no “tests” to pass or benchmarks to meet. Employment-related experiences are particularly vital for people who choose not to work – people must have the opportunity to understand and experience what they are saying “no” to.

Finally, it is crucial that each of us recognize if or when we have difficulty imagining a particular person being successfully employed. The best way to support someone in this situation is to ensure we do not become the barrier. It is a sign of dedication to the person when we realize we may be the barrier and, with the person’s permission, enlist the help and the expertise of others to help the person move forward – even when that means moving forward with a different PA or SC.

High Expectations – The Standard for Planning is Twenty Hours a Week

At least annually, the SC/PA must have a discussion with each person who is either is working in individual, integrated employment or who wants to work in individual, integrated employment about the number of hours they want to work per week.

While the standard for planning is 20 hours a week, the 20 hours is only a starting point. Of course, the person determines how many hours a week they want to work. See [IM-16-044](#) for more information.

We believe all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities must have access to supports in the most integrated setting and access to a real community life with dignity, respect and our civil rights.

~Oregon Self-Advocacy Coalition, [Letter to Patricia Baxter](#), Interim ODDS Director, regarding Oregon's HCBS Transition Plan, June 5, 2014

The Purpose of ODDS Employment Services is:

To support people to explore, pursue, secure and advance in individual, integrated employment. Although these services are available through the Comprehensive Waiver and Support Services Waiver, none of these services is a pre-requisite for pursuing or securing individual, integrated employment. Rather, these services are resources that a person may choose to access. Each chosen employment service must have, at minimum, one outcome that is related to exploring, pursuing, obtaining and/or advancing in integrated employment.

- **Employment Path:** Learning and work experiences to develop general, non-job-task-specific strengths and skills that contribute to employability in integrated employment.
- **Small Group Employment:** Works with a group of 2-8 people with disabilities at a community business. Earns at least minimum² wage. Does not include vocational services provided in facility based work settings. While Small Group is integrated employment, remember that its ultimate goal is individual, integrated employment.
- **Discovery/Career Exploration:** A person-centered, comprehensive employment planning and support service that provides assistance to obtain, maintain or advance in a competitive employment setting. The outcome is a completed Discovery Profile and a referral to Vocational Rehabilitation.
- **Initial Job Coaching:** May include short-term supports as a person learns their new job. This is time-limited. To receive either initial or ongoing job coaching, a person must earn at least minimum wage.³
- **Ongoing Job Coaching:** Provides support needed to assist the individual in maintaining the job long-term. Ironically, the mantra of a successful job coach is: “the less I am needed the more I have succeeded.”

² OAR 411-345-0025(9)(b)(F)

³ OAR 411-345-0025(9)(b)(F)

Many employment-related activities are done without ODDS Employment Services. For example, there are other ways to experience employment such as: touring businesses; job shadowing a family member who is in a job/profession that interests the person; and visiting their local American Job Center to learn about in-demand occupations.

Employment Services are for people on Paths A, B, or C. More information about Employment Services is at <https://www.dhs.state.or.us/policy/spd/transmit/pt/2014/pt14023.pdf>

Getting Started

We encourage you to consider this guide as a resource to supplement experiences that have been tailored to the person. To have an impact, conversations and experiences must be tailored to the needs, interests and circumstances of each person. We hope you will supplement this guide with other tools that fit each person. For example, someone who has communication challenges may benefit from a wide variety of tools and experiences to help them to make an informed choice.

The Paths outlined in this guide are:

- **Path A:** You are currently working in integrated employment.
- **Path B:** You are not working in integrated employment but are interested in exploring it.
- **Path C:** You are not working in integrated employment and are unsure about exploring it.
- **Path D:** You do not want to explore integrated employment now.

Even though employment has been first in Oregon since 2008, it is more important than ever that people understand what employment is, what it can be and the future of developmental disability services.

Understanding Oregon's Employment First Policy Statement:

Employment opportunities in fully integrated work settings shall be the **first and priority option** explored in the service planning for working age adults with developmental disabilities. . .

For people who successfully achieve integrated employment, service planning must focus on maintaining employment as well as career advancement.

For people who are not employed in integrated employment, annual service planning must include and reflect employment opportunities as the first and priority service option explored.

All waiver-funded employment services have the expected and optimal outcome of individual, integrated employment at or above minimum wage – including Path to Employment Services and Small Group Employment.

~Source: [CMS Informational Bulletin, September 16, 2011](#) See also Oregon Administrative Rule 411-345-0025(4) regulating ODDS-funded Employment Services.

Perhaps, this is most apparent in employment path facility services. Employment path is a time-limited service. For people who use these services, collaborate to create a plan that will help them to make a steady transition out of these services into other settings - preferably individual, integrated employment. We need to be vigilant about these services not being merely time spent - but time invested to build a bridge to a different way of life.

Documenting Employment Experiences & Conversations

Paths A, B & C: If you are working with someone who is described in Path A, presently working in integrated employment, use the questions in Path A as a guide for discussion. When a person is not employed in integrated employment, draw from Paths B & C.

Path D: When a person selects Path D, it must only be after an individual has had an opportunity to make a truly informed choice about individual integrated employment. This requires experiences that have been tailored to the person and ideally the opportunity to experience individual integrated employment. To access employment services an individual must have, at a minimum, a goal of exploring integrated employment. Each discussion should begin with the belief that everyone can work in integrated employment. Path B & C provide discussion points around this concept. This is how the conversation must start for each person, including people who initially might be inclined to choose Path D. If the person is not interested in integrated employment, the questions in Path D must be documented in the Person Centered Information Section of the ISP.

Path A: You are working in integrated employment⁴

What do you want to achieve this ISP year: (more than one choice may apply)

A. Retain current job. Discussion points:

1. Approximately how much money did you earn from wages last year? _____
2. What is working/not working for you in your current job? _____
3. What are your ideas/strategies for keeping your job? _____
4. Are the current employment supports working? If not, what are possible solutions? _____
5. If you have a job coach, do the supports they provide meet your needs and the needs of your employer? _____
6. Do people who provide either natural or paid supports act in such a way that contributes to your success in integrated employment? If so, how? If not, what are the plans and the timelines for addressing this? _____
7. How have you been supported to ensure that your earnings are appropriately reported, etc. to comply with the requirements of various systems such as Social Security, Medicaid, etc.? _____
8. Are there transportation issues that need to be addressed? If so, what are they? _____

B. Advance in current job.(more hours, raise, new skills, promotion, etc.) Discussion points:

1. What will advancement look like? _____
2. What will you need in order to advance? (supports, skills, on the job training) _____
3. What will you do to achieve your career advancement goals? _____
4. How have you communicated with your employer about your goal to advance? _____

C. Get an additional job. Discussion points:

1. Do you want to try something new at your current job? _____
2. Do you want to learn about different jobs? _____
3. Do you want to see how other people make money? _____
4. Do you want to stay where you are working or would you like to work somewhere else? _____

⁴ To be considered integrated employment, the person must earn at least minimum wage. See OAR 411-345-0025(9)(b)(F).

D. Get a new job (one that would replace your current job). Discussion points:

1. What works and doesn't work in your current job? _____
2. Do you want to learn about different jobs? _____
3. Do you want to see how other people make money? _____
4. Do you want to stay where you currently work or would you like to work somewhere else? _____

E. Retire. To be classified as retired, for purposes the CDP you are at least 60 or will be this ISP year. If you are not in this age range and choose not to work or explore work, you must select Path D. Discussion points:

1. Why do you want to retire? _____
2. Do you understand that you are not required to retire at 60? _____
3. How have you been supported to make an informed decision about retiring? _____

Notes:

Path B: You are not working in integrated employment but are interested in exploring it.

1. What is your preferred/ideal/dream job? _____
2. Have you worked in individual, integrated employment or other settings? _____
 - a. If so where? _____
 - b. What did you do? _____
 - c. What worked/didn't work about current/past jobs? _____
3. What kinds of activities and/or hobbies do you like? _____
 - a. Have you ever volunteered? _____ If so where? _____
 - b. What did you do? _____
 - c. What worked/didn't work about current/past volunteer jobs? _____
- d. What skills do you have? What are you really good at? _____
- e. What kinds of jobs would you NOT want? _____
- f. How would you get to and from work (select all that apply): Bus Walk/Roll Drive
 Transportation through the K-Plan Ride from friends/family Other
- g. If you are already looking for work or have looked, have you had a hard time finding a job? If so, what do you think are the reasons? How could these reasons be addressed? _____
- h. Is there anything that worries you about getting a job? _____

- i. Do you get jobs but don't stay very long? If so, how often has this happened? _____
- j. Is your family and/or support system motivated to help you get and keep a job? _____
- k. Who do you know who might have a contact who could be helpful in finding a job? _____

If you decide to pursue individual integrated employment, you do not have to go through Path C questions. However, if you are unsure about pursuing individual, integrated employment or express that you do not want individual, integrated employment, continue to Path C.

Path C: You are not working in integrated employment & are unsure about pursuing or exploring it.

1. How were the advantages of integrated employment discussed?

Some examples are:

- Contributing to your community	- Structure to your day
- Making friends and interacting with people	- Income (vacations, housing, transportation)
- Better quality of life: self-esteem, sense of belonging, improved health	

2. How were the disadvantages of not working in integrated employment discussed?

Some examples are:

- Isolation	- Lack of structure to your day
- Fewer opportunities to meet new people	- Not pushing your boundaries/learning
- Lack of steady paycheck reduces choice and control about things such as where to live, eat and vacation	

3. Why are you unsure about pursuing and/or exploring integrated employment?

- a. If it is due to limited or no exposure to integrated employment, what is the plan to address this?
- b. Concern about loss of benefits? If yes, what is the plan to get work incentive information/benefits counseling? (one example is assistance from Disability Rights Oregon or VR)
- c. Reluctant to change routine or it is difficult to re-structure supports? (For example, the following supports would need to be altered or added, transportation, residential support, etc.)
- d. No supports for work? If yes, what is the plan to explore the supports the person needs? _____

- e. Discouraged by family? If so, is there a plan to overcome this issue? ____
- f. Discouraged with VR process or found ineligible by VR? If so, is there a plan to overcome this issue? ____
- g. Discouraged by health issue or disability? If so, is there a plan to overcome this issue? ____

Notes:

If you will pursue or explore integrated employment, you do not have to consider Path D questions.

Path D: You do not want to explore individual, integrated employment now.

Please note, if during this conversation an individual expresses that they would like to, at a minimum explore integrated employment, the person may want to consider the various employment services that are described in this Employment Discussion Guide. The questions for this section are the same as the Questions for Path C.

If a person chooses not to work, the reasons, discussion and/ or experiences must be documented in the ISP's "Decision not to Explore Employment" and Person Centered Information sections.⁵ **If a person chooses an underlined selection in the grid below, "Potential Strategies for People Considering Path D," they have selected an employment service. To receive an employment service, a person must have goals related to individual, integrated employment and a CDP not a DNE.**

⁵ The "DNE" Section in the ISP Addendum contains these questions. So, if using the Addendum, the SC/PA does not need to document these three answers in the PCI.

Potential Strategies for People Considering Path D

Reasons/Strategies to Consider	
<p>Transportation Concerns:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Working within walking/rolling distance of home 2. Using public transportation 3. Asking friends, family or co-workers for a ride 4. Getting a job on the bus line 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Moving to a home that is on or near a bus line 6. Asking your employment or residential provider to get you to work 7. Requesting Transportation Through The K-Plan
<p>Discouraged by my employment experiences:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussing what did and did not work 2. Keeping the answers to #1 in mind when exploring /pursuing employment opportunities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Talking with friends/family who work to find out if they've overcome negative work experiences. 4. <u>Requesting Path to Employment Services and/or Career Exploration/Discovery</u>
<p>Discouraged from working by others:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussing why others are discouraging you 2. Finding out if their fears and concerns are based on good information 3. Talking with others who have faced similar concerns and who have gone to work 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Asking the concerned person or people if they enjoy working 5. Using resources such as benefits counseling through Disability Rights Oregon
<p>Unable to find a job that matches my skills, interests and abilities :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Visiting your career center to learn about jobs in your community. 2. <u>Requesting ODDS Discovery/Career Exploration</u> 3 <u>Requesting ODDS Employment Path Services</u> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Job shadowing a friend or family member 5. Talking with your friends/ family about their jobs 6. Analyzing what contributed to having a bad job experience 7. Talking to people who have disabilities who work to find out about their employment experience
<p>Reluctant to change routine:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussing Employment First and its key beliefs including that everyone is ready and able to work. 2. To schedule activities with friends when you don't work 3. To think about how you have made friends 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Job Shadowing with family or friends or talking with them about their jobs 6. Visiting the career center to learn about jobs in your community 7. To begin working only a few hours a week 8. <u>Requesting ODDS Discovery/Career Exploration</u> 9. <u>Requesting ODDS Employment Path Services</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Concern that you will lose my Social Security Disability and/or Medicaid benefits: Meeting with a benefits specialist who works for VR or Disability Rights Oregon. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Talking with others who had the same concerns and went to work.

Reasons/Strategies to Consider	
<p>Behavior Challenges</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussing Employment First and its key beliefs, including that everyone (including people who may be labeled as having behavioral issues) is ready and able to work. 2. Requesting behavior support services 3. <u>Requesting ODDS Discovery/Career Exploration</u> 	<p><u>4. Requesting ODDS Employment Path Services</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Discussing work with your behavior support professional 7. Asking your behavior support professional about their understanding and belief in employment for the people they provide behavior services to. 8. Talking with your friends and/ or family about their jobs
<p>Does not want to work:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exploring why you do not want to work 2. Exploring if this decision has been made based on conversations or experiences. 3. Job shadowing family or friends. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Talking with others who were in this same situation and changed their mind. 5. Exploring if there are specific parts of your life or people in your life who are encouraging them not to work and understanding why they are discouraging you from working.
<p>Significant health problems/ needs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Your health problems are temporary and you are undergoing treatment to get better – examples are chemotherapy, recovering from surgery, etc. 2. A job would need to meet certain criteria for your health, examples are: need to work inside, you have allergies, etc. 3. A job with a schedule that won't interfere with medical appointments like dialysis, etc. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Due to health problems, you tire easily. Examples of solutions are working part-time, etc. 5. Because you have health-related needs through the day (examples are: help with using the restroom, eating, etc.) if you worked, you would need help with these activities. 6. <u>Requesting ODDS Discovery/Career Exploration</u> 7. <u>Requesting ODDS Employment Path Services</u>
<p>You do not believe you can work:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exploring why you do not want to work 2. Exploring if this decision has been made based on conversations or experiences. 3. Job Shadowing family or friends. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Talking with others who were in this same situation and changed their mind. 5. Exploring if there are specific people in your life who are discouraging you from working and understanding why they are doing this.
<p>Other:</p>	

Selecting ODDS Employment Providers

The questions in this section are based on the manual “Working Together to Reach Employment Goals for Persons with Developmental Disabilities.”⁶ Choosing an employment provider is a big step – especially when you consider that many ODDS-employment services are time-limited. ***The expectation of every employment service is individual, integrated employment.***

As the expectation in Oregon is that every individual can work in individual, integrated employment, it is important to find a provider or providers that can help you to reach your goals. A great way to start is by researching your employment service provider options.

*Employment is everyone’s job
– from the job coach to the
nurse to the residential
provider.*

Additionally, ask the prospective provider if they can show you some samples of implementation strategies or Action Plans that detail how a person’s time was to be invested to help them achieve their desired employment outcomes. Think of this as asking to see the “game plan” for helping someone achieve their outcomes. We can have well-written desired outcomes – however, a solid game plan greatly increases chances for success. For example, if a person wanted to work and chose an employment path service, how was their time structured to help them reach their goals? What type of support and supervision do Direct Staff receive to develop and implement plans to help people become employed?

Employment is first – this means that employment is everyone’s job – from the job coach to the nurse to the residential provider. Having a PA/SC who is an employment champion is crucial.

First Things First

- Your PA or SC will have a list of ODDS employment providers that serve your community. After discussing your employment goals, ask your PA or SC to help you arrange interviews with prospective providers of ODDS employment services.

⁶ Guide #2, *Supported Employment Guidelines & Toolkit for Support Services Brokerage and OVR Staff*, Fall 2004

- In the spirit of Employment First, there are no “tests” to pass or services a person must have before pursuing and obtaining individual, integrated employment.
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funds a service called “job development” – which is finding a person an individual, integrated job. If a provider is not a VR vendor and/or is not in the process of becoming a vendor, it is important for you to stop and consider if this provider is a skilled employment provider.
- Remember, all of the employment services have an optimal and expected outcome of individual, integrated employment. So, it is important that you select employment providers that will help you invest your time in employment services to realize your employment goals.
- A person can have different providers for different employment services – the key is that the services are coordinated and complimentary so you can reach your employment goals. It is also crucial that other services you may have – such as behavior, nursing, residential, physical/occupational therapy – are coordinated with and supportive of your employment goals.

Review the Employment Data

ODDS has collected employment data from some ODDS employment providers. That employment data is at: <https://spdweb.hr.state.or.us/EOS/Data>

For various reasons, some employment providers do not have data listed at this site. In either case, we encourage you to ask providers for data that will demonstrate their track record in helping people to secure maintain and advance in individual, integrated employment.

Let’s start by looking at some hypothetical data on the following pages.

ABC EMPLOYMENT PROVIDER: Data only reflect ODDS-funded employment services.

Box A: This number is an unduplicated count of people in IE, SGE, EPC and EPF. Because a person can get multiple services, you can't look at the chart and tell how many total people are in employment services. So, look at this # to see the total # of people in employment services.

Box B: 15 people are in integrated employment - IE (6) + SGE (9) = 15. In some situations, a person may be in both IE & SGE, when this happens, they are counted as employed in both the IE and SGE numbers, but only once in the served numbers. A person must earn at least minimum wage in IE or SGE. $15/50 = 30\%$

35 total individuals served with employment
50 total individuals served

30% of individuals are in integrated employment
100.00% completion rate

Box C: ABC serves a total of 50 people in the 6 services in the chart. Because a person can get multiple services, it is not possible to look at the chart and know how many people a provider supports – so look at this #.

Box D: Percentage of requested information that the provider completed. This provider supplied the all of the requested information.

Box E: In this example, people supported by this provider spend most of their time in non-work activities.

Employment and Day Programs at a Glance	Integrated Employment		Path to Employment		Total Paid Job Setting		Non-Work Day Activities	
	Individual Supported Employment (IE)	Group Supported Employment (SGE)	Emp Path Community (EPC)	Emp Path Facility (EPF)	Total Supported Integrated Emp	Total Employed	Facility	Community
# of Individuals Served by Type	6	9	20	12	15	35	36	25
Average Hours Worked per Week	8	20	6	10			35	25
Average Wage per Hour	\$12.00	\$10.50	NA	NA			NA	NA

See **Box B** for explanation

See **Box A** for explanation

PROVIDER ABC

Number of People Served: 50

Percentage of People in Integrated Employment: 30%

Employment Programs at a glance	Integrated Employment	
	Individual Supported (IE)	Small Group Supported (SGE)
Number of Individuals Served:	6	9
Average Hours per Week	8	20
Average Wage per Hour	\$12.00	\$10.50

PROVIDER DEF

Number of People Served: 50

Percentage of People in Integrated Employment: 30%

Employment Programs at a glance	Integrated Employment	
	Individual Supported (IE)	Group Supported (SGE)
Number of Individuals Served:	15	0
Average Hours per Week	20	0
Average Wage per Hour	\$12.00	0

Discussion Points

This example uses ABC Provider (their complete data set is on the previous page) and DEF Provider. For this example, DEF does not support people in ODDS-funded Sheltered Work or Non-Work Facility or Non-Work Community. Let's analyze the numbers. . .

While Small Group Employment is a form of integrated employment – it is not the end goal. The end goal of Small Group Employment is Individual Supported Employment (often called Individual, Integrated Employment.) Group Employment is when a group of 2-8 people with disabilities works at a community organization. Individual, Integrated Employment and Group Employment require that the person earns minimum wage or better, but also no less than the same wage paid to people who do not have disabilities and are doing the same or similar work.

Other data elements to consider include the number of hours worked per week as well as average hourly wage.

While data is crucial to the decision making process, as noted earlier, some providers are new to ODDS employment data collection and will not have data on the ODDS website until the next employment report. Regardless if a provider has data on the website or not, interviewing employment providers is also crucial.