

Supported Employment for Individuals with Disabilities in New Jersey Bulletin



What is Supported Employment?

Having secure employment makes a person more financially independent and less reliant upon government-funded assistance. With supported employment, a person with a disability can assess their interests and abilities, match their skills to paying jobs, receive training/assistance and become employed. Pre-vocational training prepares a person for the world of work. With job sampling, the person explores different types of work experiences. A job coach provides a wide range of supports including job development, career exploration and on-the-job assistance. Supported employment services, provided by community-based agencies, enhance one's success in the workforce. Additionally,

Supported employment services provide support, training, and advocacy to people with disabilities leading to employment with competitive wages.

laws protect people with disabilities from discrimination and require that reasonable accommodations be made by an employer to remove barriers to employment. The vocational outcomes for someone with a significant disability may include competitive employment, self-employment,

day program activities, self-determined day activities or a combination of these. Being employed, volunteering and/or engaging in meaningful activities increases one's self-esteem and enhances quality of life.



How Are Vocational Services and Supported Employment Funded?

The **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)**, **NJ Division of Developmental Disability (DDD)** and the **Public Educational System** provide vocational preparation and supported employment services to people with disabilities.

The **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)** provides a wide array of employment services to individuals who have a "substantial impediment to employment." A DVR counselor assists an individual with a disability to develop a plan leading to employment. Funded services may include career exploration, pre-vocational assessment, vocational training, small business development, job development, job coaching, and follow along services to assist someone to secure and maintain employment. Successful outcomes for employment include working in competitive employment as well as operating a small business. For more information, go to: http://careerconnections.nj.gov/careerconnections/plan/foryou/disable/vocational_rehabilitation_services.shtml

Any individual with a physical, mental, cognitive, or other form of disability that has a substantial impediment to employment may qualify for **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)** services.

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Job Coaching Success

Dan is energetic and likes being outdoors. Because of a speech impediment, Dan is quiet when interacting with people. His first job was drying cars at a car wash. After trying out this type of work, Dan was not quick enough to meet the high volume of cars on busy days. His job coach helped him locate another job that better suited his abilities. Now he works at the local supermarket collecting shopping carts and cleaning the store. A job coach assisted Dan for several weeks until he was able to complete the job duties independently. He was not good at bagging the groceries quickly and was shy around customers. The employer agreed to modify Dan's job description so that he does not perform this task. After a period of adjustment, the job coach comes briefly once a month to make sure that Dan is doing well and his employer is satisfied with his work.

Individuals eligible for **NJ Division of Developmental Disability (DDD)** services may receive funding for a combination of working, volunteering, day habilitation, or other services to meet her or his individual goals. Community agencies offer day habilitation services through activity centers, small group employment and individual supports. Some are center-based services while others may be mobile in various community settings. Some people prefer to self-direct their own vocational, recreational or volunteer activities using individual support staff to assist, as needed. For more information, go to: <http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/services/day/>

Self-Director Day Habilitation Success Story

Andrew with the help of his family and Support Coordinator designed several activities that he loves to do. Andrew volunteers at the animal shelter three days per week. He walks the dogs and gives them much needed attention. Andrew plans the other weekdays with various activities that he enjoys. He works out at the gym, bowls with a league, has lunch with friends and attends community recreational events. Funds from the DDD Supports Program pay for staff to assist Andrew during these daytime activities.

A **reasonable accommodation** is assistance or changes to a position or workplace that will enable an employee to do his or her job despite having a disability. Under the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**, employers are required to provide **reasonable accommodations** to qualified employees with disabilities, unless doing so would pose an undue hardship.

Day Habilitation is a service funded by the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) through the Supports Program or the Community Care Program (formerly known as Community Care Waiver or CCW). Up to a maximum of thirty (30) hours per week, Day Habilitation includes activities to support participants with building problem-solving skills, self-help, social skills, adaptive skills, daily living skills, and leisure skills. Activities and community environments foster the acquisition of skills, building positive social behavior and interpersonal competence, greater independence and personal choice.



Transitioning is the formal process of long-range planning for students with disabilities to move from school into the adult world.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates planning for the **transitioning of students** from high school into adulthood as part of their public education from 14 to 21 years of age. Pre-vocational training, job sampling and

job coaching may be incorporated into the Individual Education Plan (IEP). These services prepare the student to transition into work or other vocational activities upon graduation.

Transitioning from School to Work Success Story

Being socially outgoing is a natural ability for Leah. During high school transitioning, she sampled several jobs in food services, janitorial and retail stores. Leah liked working with customers. With a job coach, she learned how to operate basic business equipment in the school's administrative office. Nearing graduation, she obtained a receptionist position at a fitness center. A job coach helped her to learn the job duties including use of the gym's phone, copier and paging system. Her job entails greeting guests, checking ID cards, handing out locks and direct members to their fitness classes. She also makes reminder calls to people regarding their appointments for personal training. Her last few years of work experience during high school prepared her well for this competitive employment.



Microboard

A microboard is a structured, non-profit organization consisting of a small group of people who volunteer their knowledge to help a person with a disability to plan, develop and maintain his or her ongoing services. These boards are particularly helpful when an individual is developing a self-employment venture. Members of the microboard serve as advisors, mentors and may help to administer the funding. The individual's dreams, desires and needs are central to person-centered planning and decision-making process. The person controls his or her own life with supports from those within this organizational structure who know and care. The microboard exists for the sole support of one individual.

Microboard Success

John loves music and has an extensive collection of CD's. As a hobby, John would play his electronic music at small parties. His family and friends helped him to form a microboard to develop a business plan that transformed his hobby into self-employment. DVR assisted him to purchase the essential equipment to start up this business. John worked with an events planner who secured a number of parties that employed his services as a "Disc Jockey." His self-employment opportunities to provide DJ services are growing along with his income.

Self-Employment involves a person operating his or her own small business or service.

Self-Employment Success

Despite having limited use of her limbs, Mary is able to paint beautiful abstract art. Her paintings are on display and offered for sale at a community center.

As demand for her artwork grew, DVR helped Mary to attend art classes and establish her business venture. A retired business executive advised Mary on how to reproduce and market her artwork. She prints her designs on note cards and sells them at a gift shop. In addition, her original artwork is now being sold on line and is available to a wider clientele.

What Impact Does Employment Earnings Have on Social Security Benefits?

Many people with disabilities receive Social Security benefits with income eligibility requirements. When earnings and assets exceed certain threshold amounts, eligibility to Social Security benefits including Medicaid health coverage is terminated.

Several federal initiatives provide for incentives to encourage people to become employed while gradually decreasing their benefits. Consult a counselor with expertise on Social Security regarding how earnings and assets will affect social security benefits.

Ticket to Work

Ticket to Work is a federal program that provides an opportunity to increase earning capacity while gradually decreasing Social Security benefits while working towards financial independence. Incentives are offered to encourage individuals to become employed including the following:

NJWINS

The NJWINS (New Jersey's Work Incentives Network Support) is a counseling service that provides a safety net to protect SSI and SSDI as well as Medicaid healthcare benefits while beneficiaries are becoming established in gainful employment. A planning consultant can provide one-on-one assistance to utilize work incentives. Individuals receiving Social Security benefits can start, continue or increase work efforts while maintaining Social Security benefits while they are needed. For more information about NJ WINS go to: <http://www.NJWINS.org>

NJ WorkAbility

The NJ WorkAbility Program provides New Jersey Medicaid health coverage to people with disabilities while they are employed and might otherwise be ineligible for such healthcare benefits. For more information about NJ WorkAbility go to: <http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dds/projects/discoverability/>



PASS

A "PASS" or Plan for Achieving Self Support is an SSI work incentive that lets you "set aside" assets for a specific purpose beyond the normal program maximum. A PASS can protect eligibility for SSI and allow you to "save" for something that you need to further your independence or employment goals. It may in fact be useful, depending on your circumstance, but does not protect assets from being counted towards eligibility for the Community Care Program (formerly known as CCW) or any other Medicaid program. For more information about PASS, go to: <http://www.ssa.gov/online/ssa-545.html>



What Impact Does Employment Have Upon Other Benefits Such as Waiver Funded Services?

Many people with disabilities receive Social Security benefits including Medicaid. The Supports Program and Community Care Program provided through the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) require that a person maintain eligibility for Medicaid in order to continue to receive these services. Earnings from employment may determine one as ineligible for Medicaid and Social Security benefits. Incentives are available to support a person until they are employed and financially independent. It is important to understand the regulations and consult with a benefits counselor about these incentives and their impact upon entitlement to Social Security benefits, Medicaid and other Medicaid funded services.



The Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey (SHA) is a statewide, nonprofit membership organization, founded in 1998, whose mission is to promote and maintain a strong supportive housing industry in New Jersey serving people with special needs. SHA engages in education, advocacy and networking for and on behalf of its over 100 members. www.shanj.org

The Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey expresses its deepest gratitude to the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities for the grant funding to develop a variety of housing resources. More information about supportive housing can be found on our website including in the housing guide entitled *The Journey to Community Housing with Supports - A Road Map for Individuals and Their Families in New Jersey*. <http://www.shanj.org/housing-hub>

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