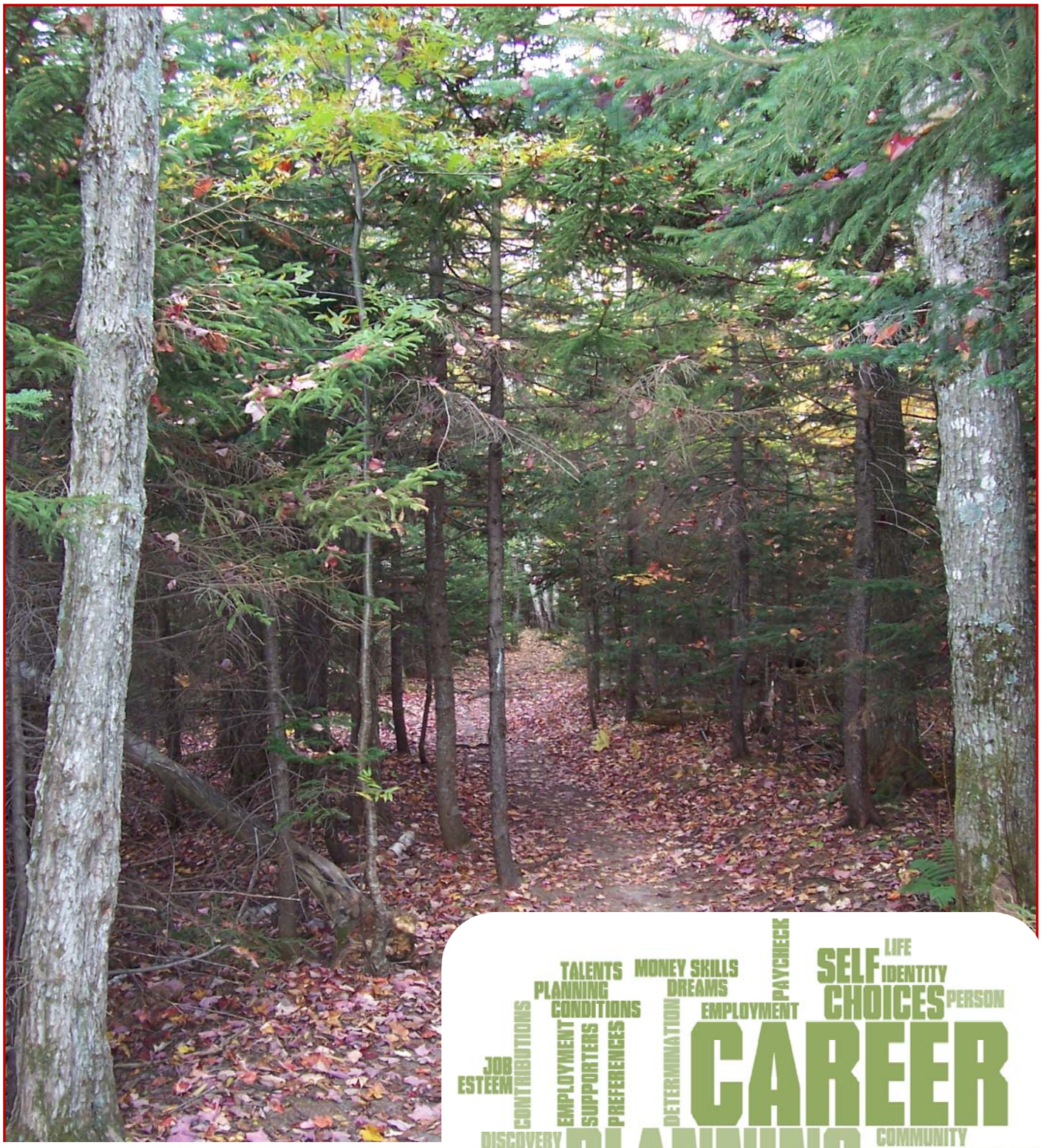

A Guide for Career Discovery

Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities

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About this guide

The *Career Planning Guide: A Guide for Career Discovery* was made possible by Missouri's Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities' continued commitment towards full community participation for persons with disabilities. It is designed to support job seekers to plan for, and achieve, integrated community-based employment earning competitive wages and benefits like other members of the community.

This guide will take the job seeker and his or her support team through the career planning process by providing information he or she can use during the career planning sessions. It should be noted that since everyone is unique, the individual planning process will be unique to each person as well. The guide is simply a framework to allow the job seeker and his or her team to create a vision and a plan to achieve a career that makes sense to the job seeker. It is less about the forms and more about generating ideas, clear action steps, and moving the person closer towards his or her ultimate career goals.

Acknowledgements & References

Project Director

Rob Hoffman, University of Missouri - Disability Policy & Studies

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Darla Wilkerson – Missouri's Department of MH/DD (Kansas City, MO)
Susan Rocker – MU-Disability Policy & Studies (Lincoln, NE)
Tom McVeigh – UMKC-Institute for Human Development (Kansas City, MO)
Mike McCarthy - UMKC-Institute for Human Development (Kansas City, MO)
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Photography by Susan Rocker

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For information on how to obtain copies of this guide and/or additional training and support contact MOPCDD at 573-751-8611.

Career Discovery: *My Guide to My Career*

Congratulations! By picking up this guide, you are on your way to finding that job and career you have wanted. This guide contains a lot of information and resources to help you and all the people who will support you to *plan and land* a job and career that fits best with your skills and talents. But first, it is always good to get a better understanding of this work and career "stuff". Here are some common areas and questions a lot of people want to know about.

What is employment?

Well, the easy answer is doing any task or job where you get paid for your efforts. There are many types of employment out there. To break it down a little, there are full time jobs, part time jobs and temporary jobs. Then, there is self employment, where you work for yourself rather than working for someone else. Whatever the definition is, the most important thing is to make sure you find employment that matches your interests and abilities. That's what you will be doing as you go through this guide!

Why should I work?

There are a number of reasons. First, it is every citizen's responsibility to work, earn a living and contribute to our overall society. Anyone of working age, regardless of having a disability or not, should do what they can to be as self-reliant as possible. You may have heard the phrase "there are no free rides"? This goes for employment too. Our country was built on the notion that everyone will work and contribute to the greater society; it is what makes our country run day after day. Think about it, if everyone chose not to work, who would serve you your favorite meal at the restaurant? Where would you go if there were no doctors and you were sick? So, it is really not about a choice to work or not, it is about a choice of where you want to work and making sure it fits your interests.

What are some of the reasons you want to work and/or to change what you are doing now?

Is a Paycheck all I get for Working?

Absolutely not! Working to earn income to pay your bills is a big part of it but not the only reason people work. There are many benefits to working, let's look at a few in addition to earning money:

- Meeting new people and making new friendships
- Having a sense of pride in doing work that helps yourself and your community
- Creating a sense of identity - what is the second question people ask when they first meet you right after asking your name? It is "What do you do?" Whether it is right or wrong, our culture attaches a person's identity to what they do for a living.
- And maybe most importantly, money opens many doors. Have you ever heard the phrase "money is power"? Well it's true, not in a Donald Trump kind of way, but think about it, as you earn more money you have the power to make more decisions about how to live your life. You can move into that apartment, buy your own home, have more choices in what you do in your free time (more activities, vacations, etc.) No matter what it is, you will have more opportunities as you develop your career.

What else besides money do you want to get out of working?

Aren't there just too many barriers for someone like me to work?

This is an excellent question and one that actually prevents many people from moving forward with their career plans. However, many of these barriers are myths rather than truths. Let's look at some of the more popular ones.

- I will lose my Social Security benefits. For the most part, this is not true if you make sure and visit a Benefits Planner early on in the career planning process. Benefits Planners can show you exactly how work will affect your benefits, including your health insurance. The overall idea is that as you work and earn more money, the less reliant you need to be on these benefits. The key is to figure out the right

formula to make sure your essential needs are met. You can find information on Benefits Planners in the Resource Section of this guide.

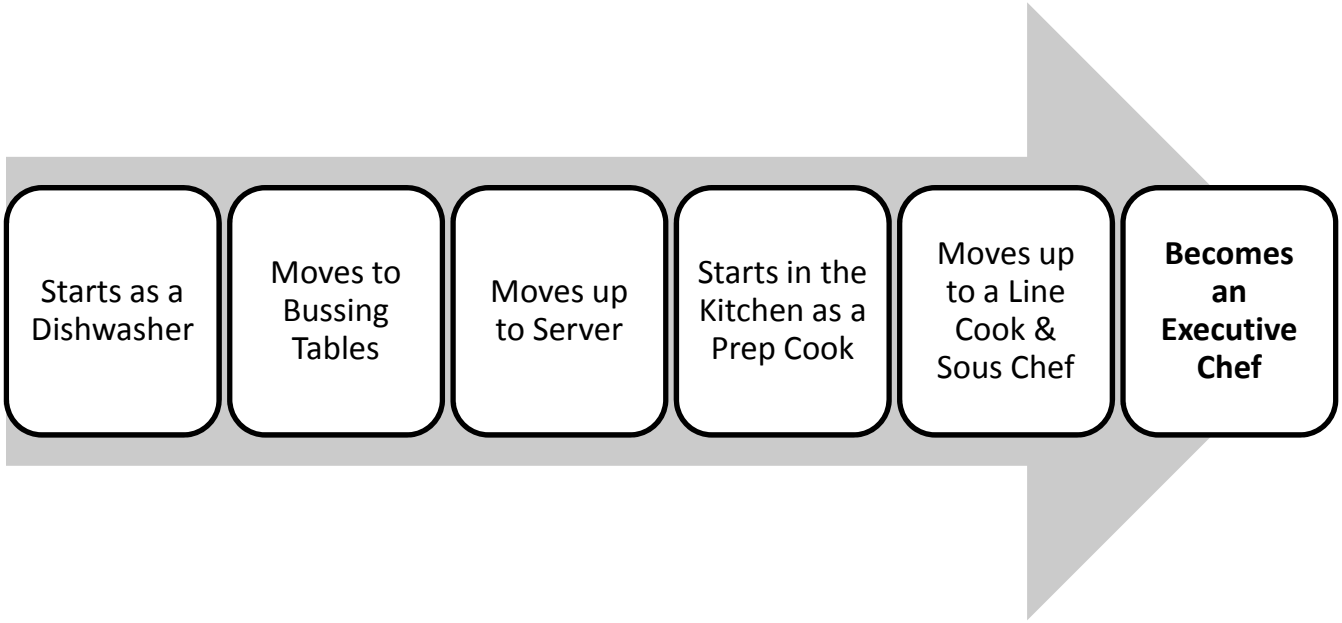
- Transportation. Yes, this is a barrier for many people, with all types of abilities, but it should not be a reason to not work. Through the career planning process, you and your team of supporters will look at all sorts of ways to get you to and from work. Some examples include riding the bus, walking, bugging your parents for a ride, paying a co-worker for rides, and, who knows, maybe you will start a home based business and won't need a ride.
- Employers won't hire people with disabilities. This is a myth. Sure there might be some employers out there that haven't hired certain people but this is usually because they just can't see how it will work. It is really you and your support team's responsibility to show them what you will bring to their business. Through this planning process, you and your team will outline all the skills and abilities you will contribute to the business.

Are there any worries you have about working? *(You will look back at these and address them as you develop your plan)*

Someone once asked me about my dream job but they never found It. Why?

First off, finding a job needs to be your responsibility. Sure you will have your team of supporters to assist you, but at the end of the day, it's your job not theirs. Now, about that dream job…boy, wouldn't we all like to just start in our dream job! The truth is, most people are still working towards theirs and very few, if anyone, have ever just started in their dream job. However, those people who are in their dream job, or close to it, have done a couple of things. First, they have worked many different jobs to figure out what their true passions are. Second, they understood they wouldn't start at the top but had a plan and knew where they were going. And third, they have used many different people to support them throughout their journey. Now don't get discouraged, this journey is all part of the process and it is the main way we find out what we like and don't like about certain

jobs. This also helps us narrow down our career path and gives us the required skills and experience to keep moving towards that dream job. For example, did you know that many of today's top chefs started out as dishwashers? Many did, and below is an example of the path they took to reach their dream job.



As you can see, the person may have had the dream to be a chef but had to start at the beginning to get there. This may look like a long road to get there but it gave the chef an incredible amount of experience and knowledge about the entire restaurant business which is a key to their advancement and success. So, as you begin to plan, keep in mind that the idea will be to work with your supporters to identify your dream and map out all the steps you need to get there.

Now that you have heard about how people work towards their dream job, if you could have your dream job(s), what would it be?

(Remember, your plan will spell out the steps to work towards this)

What is Career Planning?

Whether it's starting a job for the first time, or changing careers, we all go through a similar process when looking for work. It's a lifelong process that includes choosing a career path, accepting a job, growing in that job, possibly changing jobs several times and eventually retiring. Several phases to consider when planning for your career include: getting to know yourself (discovering who); getting to know the job (discovering what); contacting businesses that have those types of jobs I'm interested in and negotiating a good fit (discovering how); Planning for a job/career continues throughout our life. As we progress, our preferences, support needs and skills change and grow with our experiences. So, when you are developing your career plan, you will look at the three areas.

Discovering Who

Before you can make a career choice, you have to learn about yourself and your interests. What do you have a passion to spend your day involved in? What is it about work that is appealing to you? What's going to ignite a fire in you that will make you want to get up and contribute each day?

There are a ton of interest assessments on-line nowadays but no one knows you and your interests better than you and those closest to you. Ask others to help you create a picture or profile of your interests, passions, conditions, support needs and attributes so you can begin to shape a direction for job searching.

Discovering What

Sometimes if you have not worked before it's very difficult to make a decision on what type of work you may be interested in. That's when some exploring comes in handy. What is job exploration? Think of it as investigating and experiencing different work situations, talking with others who do the type of work you are interested in, asking them how they got their position they are in, watching someone else do the job for a period of time, and, even trying it out if you have a chance. Identifying all the different aspects of different jobs allows you to identify what the job entails and how it matches your interests.

Discovering How

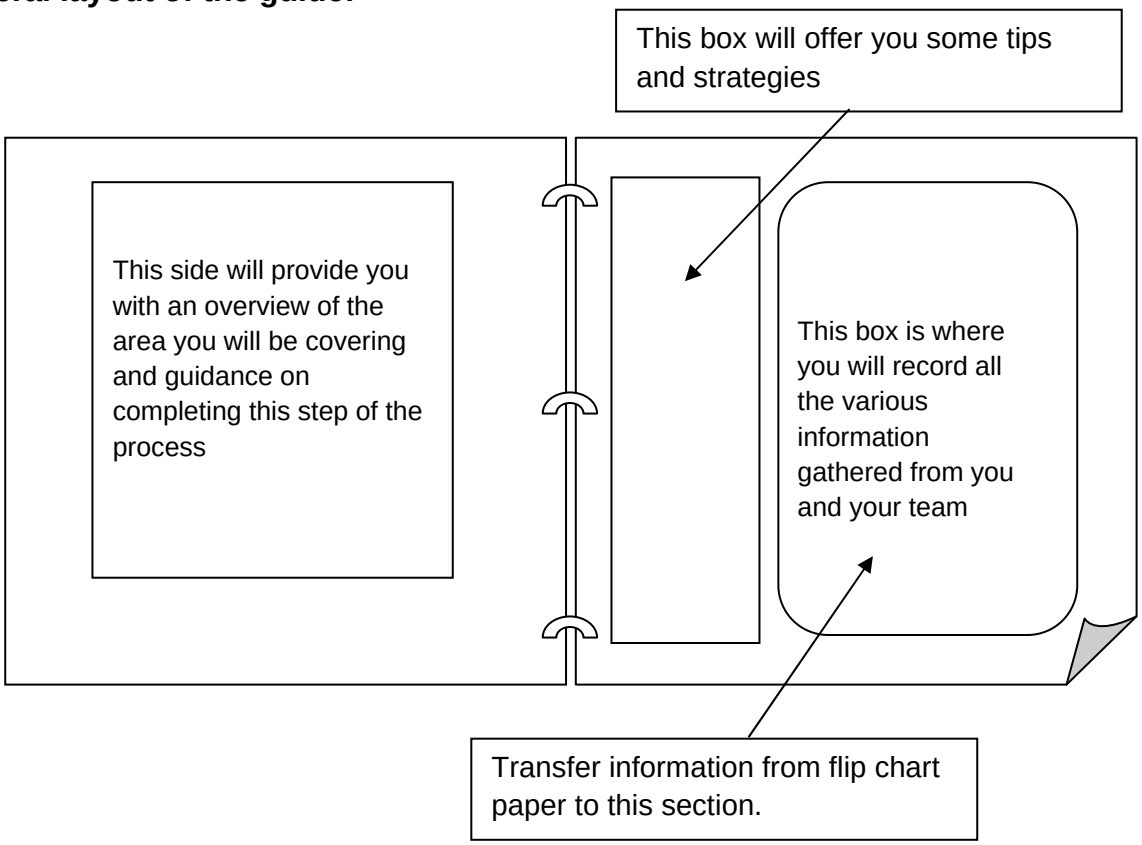
Once you and your team have figured out what type of job and career will best fit your interests, it is time to figure out how to go about getting it. During this time you will be exploring the job and work culture to ensure it's a good fit for you or, what some refer to as a good job match. This is your action plan that outlines the steps from not only getting that first job, but how you will continue to advance in your career. This part of the process can have many different steps. For example, if you know exactly what you want to do, your plan will have activities related to using your network to contact potential employers.

But, let's say you feel you need some additional training to make you more marketable to an employer. Then, your action plan might be taking a few courses at the local community college, and then using your network to make contacts with businesses. Keep in mind that everyone is different. Your team will need to address the areas of *Discovering Who, Discovering What and Discovering How* as you develop your career plan.

Tips for using this guide:

- The guide is designed to support you and your team through the process of career planning. Remember, your planning is less about this guide and more about the ideas and activities you generate. This is simply a tool to guide you and a place to record your ideas.
- It is very beneficial when planning to use flip chart paper put up on the walls so that everyone can see all of the information and ideas being generated. Then you can transfer the information from the flip chart paper to this guide.
- On pages 40–42 there are action plan forms for you to write down any activities as you progress through your planning. These will be your "To Do" lists, so remember to record all the tasks and refer back to them often.
- Remember, this will take time to work through. Think of it as going through phases: Phase 1- Getting to know you (Discovering Who), Phase 2- Getting to know the job (Discovering What) and Phase 3- Making a good job match (Discovering How).

General layout of the guide:



Identifying Who Will Help Me with My Career Plan

Identifying people who will support you to develop your plan and assist you in making contact with potential employers is a critical step in this process. Your supporters are those people who know you best and will help you identify all your interests, skills and abilities, which are used to find the best possible match for a job.

Here are some examples of supporters:

- Family (Parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.)
- Best friends
- Current and former teachers
- Current and former co-workers
- Supervisors
- People that know you from places you visit frequently
- People from church (Pastors and church members)
- Service coordinators
- Other professionals that you have worked with and trust

Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success.

Henry Ford

Supporters are those people who:

- Are my allies
- Have helped me achieve other things
  - Other goals
  - Learning something new
  - Get something I need
- I can count on to support my wishes
- Know me best
- I can trust
- Will honor my choices
- Will be positive and talk about the possibilities, not why I can't do something
- Are connected to the community (people who know a lot of other people)
- I go to when I have a problem and they help me work it out
  I could trust with a

My Supporters

List who they are and how you know them:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

Tip: If your list is too large, narrow it down by prioritizing. You want people who know you best. Six to eight people is ideal for planning.

Inviting Your Supporters and Planning for Your First Career Plan Meeting

Now that you have your list of supporters, it's time to make a plan for your first career planning meeting. It might seem easy to just call them up and invite them, but there are a number of things you need to work out before you get to this step. This will ensure everyone knows when it is, why they are coming and what they will be doing.

Here is some information that will help you:

- **Set a date and time:** Remember, you want to choose a date and time where you will get the most people to attend. For example, if a lot of your supporters work, there is a good chance that an evening or weekend would be better for them. Sometimes you need to have a few dates in mind and see what works best for the most people.
- **Location:** The first rule about where to hold your meeting is to make sure it is where **YOU** feel most comfortable. Here are a few examples of places where these meetings have taken place:
    - At your house (living room, kitchen, patio/deck)
    - Community Centers
    - Libraries
    - Churches
    - Restaurants

*Remember, your career planning meeting is much different than meetings you might have had at school or with an organization where you receive services. In those meetings, you meet at the school or in a meeting room at the organization and they were more about system services and funding. This meeting is all about you and what you want to do. You are bringing together the people closest to you and those who know you best to talk about and plan for all the possibilities you have. We'll talk about how all this information will fit into those other meetings and plans later.

- **Roles and Responsibilities:** It is very important to make sure all your supporters know what they will be doing. First, all the planning and discussion should be about you and your goals. Also, it is critical that the focus of your planning is positive and people talk about all the possibilities. Sure there will be some barriers, everyone has a few, but the idea is to work around those to develop a plan that makes sense for you. It has been very helpful in other meetings like this to share some ground rules with the planning team such as: it's about you and your job/career, being positive and offering solutions, and agreeing to follow through with activities.

Tips for Planning Your First Meeting:

- Set Date & Time
- Pick a location that is most comfortable for you
- Who is going to do the inviting?
- What will you say when you talk with them?
- How will the invitations be made? Cards, emails, calls, etc.?
- Be clear on why they are invited and what they will be doing
  - Helping you generate ideas for employment that makes sense for YOU
  - Explain the importance of using personal connections; it's the number one way people get jobs!
  - They will be asked to use their connections to open doors with businesses
- Give them a timeline

Planning Meeting Details

Date:_____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Purpose: _____

_____

_____

Sample Invitation

You're Invited to

John's Career Planning Meeting!

Date: *March 15th*

Time: *From 5:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m.*

Location: *My House- 149 Main St.*

Purpose: *I am bringing together people to support me to develop a career plan. My goal is to get a job that matches all my skills and talents and having people like you to help me out will increase my chances.*

Food will be provided!

Please RSVP to: 555-555-5555 by March 5th

Suggested items to have at the meeting: Flip charts (or something to take notes on), tape, dry erase markers, pens/pencils

The First Career Planning Meeting

Discovering Who (You)

The first meeting in your career planning process is to learn more about you. You may be thinking that you already know yourself pretty well, that's true but, you will soon find out that all the people that you have brought together have different views of you, your skills, abilities and all that you will eventually be able to offer to an employer. Before you jump right into the planning, it's important to have an agenda. This will keep you and your team on track, focused and explain the reasons why everyone is getting together.

Some items to consider when outlining your agenda:

- Thank everyone for coming
- Have everyone introduce themselves and how they know you
- Purpose of the meeting
- Time frames (start, finish and that you will need to get together again)
- Why you are bringing all of your supporters together
- Ground rules: (focused on you and your goals for employment, being positive, focusing on the possibilities and creating action steps to move you towards your job and career goals, etc.)

You might even consider using the *Discovering Who, Discovering What and Discovering How* topics to explain the purpose. For example: **Discovering Who** - Learning more about me and my interests and abilities; **Discovering What** - Learning more about what types of jobs and careers make sense for me; and **Discovering How** - Developing an action plan on how I will go about getting the job, more experiences, moving up the career ladder, etc.

The next page is for you to put together your agenda. You can use the list above, add other items and, write out some talking points if you want to.

The nice thing about teamwork is that you always have others on your side.

Margaret Carty

Career Planning Meeting

Agenda

Note: If you want, it is sometimes good to provide your supporters with an agenda. You can make a list of the main topics and hand those out or write them on a sheet of flip chart paper - they don't necessarily need all the talking points you have written down.

Sample Agenda

- Welcome & introductions
- Why we are here
- Why you were invited
- Ground-rules: How to conduct the meeting, roles of your supporters, etc.
- Discussion about the career planning process
- Begin Discovering (planning)
- Next steps-Next meeting

Discovering Who (You)

This part of the planning process is to develop a good picture of you. You and your supporters will discuss a lot of different things and discover more about you, what you like, what you don't like, what works, what doesn't, etc. This part is very important since you will need to use all of this information to make sure all of the potential jobs and careers match all these different areas.

The next three pages are for you and your team to look at a number of different areas to develop a good picture of you. The more you know about yourself and others know about you, the easier it will be to narrow down the best possibilities. Basically, taking the time to discover all of the information will help focus your efforts and take a lot of the guess work out of it.

Areas you will cover include:

- What your day looks like now
- What you like and don't like about your day – what would you change
- Your skills and interests
- Places you spend time
- Likes/dislikes
- Hobbies and other interests
- Your fears and worries
- Your hopes and dreams

The journey is the reward.

Chinese Proverb

Discovering Who (You)

Describe Your Typical Day:	Describe what you like about your day, what you don't like, and what would you change? Why? Likes: Dislikes Changes you would make:
Based on your hopes and dreams, what would your future look like? (Where you are working, living, what activities are you doing, what would be an ideal day for you?)	

Discovering Who (You)

What are those things you are really good at? (Skills, interests, gifts, talents, etc.)

What is your past work history? (Paid employment, volunteer work, etc.)

Which did you like best and why?

Which did you like least and why?

Would you want to do one of these again? Why?

(See page 59 for a Work History form that will need to be completed)

Discovering Who (You)

What are your hobbies? If you could get paid for something you really enjoy doing, what would that be?
What are some things that would really motivate you to work hard at your job? (you can refer back to page 2)

Checking In

It is important during certain points of the planning process to check in and see how things are going. With career planning, there isn't a certain number of meetings or specific start and stop points. It is all based on how well the planning is going and if you feel you are getting all the information you need to develop a good picture of that job and career that makes sense for you. Depending on where you are in the planning process, you should refer back to this page and make sure you and your planning team is on the right track. Here are a few questions for you address if needed:

- How did your first meeting go?
- What did you like about the meeting?
- What didn't you like about the meeting?
- What would you change at future meetings?
- Do you have the right people on your planning team?
    - Are they excited and offering a lot of information?
    - Do they understand what your goals are?
- Are there people on your team who are not positive and supportive?
    - Can you get them to support you or will you have to think about not inviting them to future meetings?
- Is your agenda moving forward? Can you tell from the information you have gathered that the planning will lead to employment?
- What is the agenda for the next meeting?
- Also, this is a good time to learn about how work will affect your benefits (see next page)

Benefits Planning & Information

As mentioned earlier, there are many myths surrounding work and benefits. At this time, it is critical that you make arrangements to meet with a Benefits Planner (sometimes called Community Work Incentive Coordinators). Benefits Planners support workers, job seekers and various agencies to understand the impact of employment on your benefits. Just as you are unique, so are the various benefit programs. It is only through planning that you can take control of finding the right programs and the right job to meet your needs.

What you can expect from a Benefits Planner:

- Assistance with reducing uncertainties and fears in regard to losing benefits
- On your behalf they will gather necessary information from all sources from which you receive benefits.
- Analyze relevant information identifying potential issues, current issues, and possible solutions or recommendations
- Information on how your unique situation and benefits will be impacted by work or by advancement in your current position.
- If needed, a comprehensive benefit summary and analysis (BSA) of your current situation and future access to work incentives or supports offered by agencies such as HUD or SSA.
- If needed, a Work Incentive Plan (WIP) is completed. A WIP is an action plan. It puts the issues and recommendations into operation by identifying the activity to be completed, who is responsible to complete it and when it is to be completed. The Benefit Specialist will then be able to help you monitor your progress toward your employment goal.

Be Prepared:

- The Benefits Planner is going to need a variety of information from you in order to do a good analysis of how work will impact your benefits. A few things you will need to have available are:
  - Social Security Number
  - Proof of Income (from Social Security, a bank statement, etc.)
  - Medical Cards (Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, etc.)
  - Any paperwork related to other income you receive
  - They will also ask questions around your current housing arrangements
- Know your concerns about work….Ask the Benefit Specialist to answer your specific concerns. Be truthful. The Benefit Specialist's reports are only as accurate as the information you provide and they gather from the sources with whom you approve them to discuss your situation.
- Don't "what if" the Specialist to death….if you have an example of a situation that is likely to happen in the near future then discuss it with the Benefit Specialist. But if it is information not relevant to your current situation, or in the near future, table it until the situation is closer to being a potential issue. This keeps both you and the specialist working on likely scenarios saving precious time and efforts focusing on the here and now.

(You will want to refer to pages 71 & 72 for more information and contact information for the Benefits Planner nearest you)

Discovering Who (You)

By now, you and your planning team should have developed a pretty good picture of your interests, gifts, talents, things you enjoy and the changes you want to make in your life. Now you need to take all of this information and begin to put it all together to create a picture of what an ideal job and career will be. Remember, we'll get a good picture of the ideal job and career but, you will have to take the necessary steps to get there. Our goal is to find the closest possible match to your ideal job and have a clear plan for you to progress in your career. To do this, you and your team need to discuss and learn about the ***four most critical aspects*** everyone has when they are looking for employment. These are **conditions, preferences, contributions and support needs**. When we spend time identifying these on the front end, it increases the likelihood for a good job match. Remember, everyone is unique so the information in each of these areas is specific to you and will change over time. Here is more information on each of these areas:

Conditions: These are those things you *HAVE* to have in a job in order to accept it. For the most part, these are non-negotiable. For example, if you take medications that will make you very sick if you are exposed to too much sunlight, you *have* to work indoors. Now, we have ruled out all those outdoor jobs and narrowed down what types of jobs we will be looking for. As you continue to identify your conditions, you will continue to narrow down the job search efforts. It is important to keep in mind, the more conditions you have, the more you narrow down the possibilities so be careful and make sure it is a "must have" rather than a "like to have", which are your preferences.

Preferences: These are all the things you would like to have in a job but if all of them aren't there, it won't keep you from accepting the job. For example, you would prefer to work Monday through Friday but, an occasional weekend would be okay. If this were a condition, you would be adamant that you wouldn't work any weekends. Some other preferences may include those types of job tasks you would like to see in a job. You will want to look back at the information on your interests, skills, talents, etc. and use those to help identify certain things you would prefer a job to have.

Contributions: These are all the skills, abilities and talents you will bring to your new job. Everyone brings something to contribute to the workforce, so it is important to develop a good list that will show all the reasons an employer would want to hire you. These are not only your skills and abilities but they also include your attributes, which are things like a positive attitude, team player, sense of humor, etc. Businesses don't hire on skills alone, they want to make sure you can get along with the other employees as well. Finally, it isn't enough to just list your skills and attributes, you will need to back it up with a story. For example, if you say you are dependable, tell a story that demonstrates how you were dependable in a work type situation.

Support Needs: These are those things you will need to be as successful as you can in your new job. Everyone needs some type of support regardless of his or her situation, so it is important for you to identify what types of support you will need early on. These can include things like; transportation, assistance learning the job, reminders to get up and out the door for work on time, etc.

Discovering Who (You)
My Conditions

Factors to consider when identifying your Conditions and Preferences:

- ***Schedule***
  - ***Days/hours***
- ***Salary requirements***
- ***Benefits (employer benefits and considerations with your social security benefits)***
- ***Promotions***
- ***Physical characteristics***
- ***Learning style preferences***
- ***Environmental concerns***
- ***Dress/appearance***

What else do you need to have?

Things I know I have to have in order to accept a job:

Discovering Who (You)

My Preferences

Factors to consider when identifying your Conditions and Preferences:

- ***Schedule***
  - ***Days/hours***
- ***Salary***
- ***Benefits***
- ***Promotions***
- ***Physical characteristics***
- ***Environmental***
- ***Supervisor interactions***
- ***Dress/appearance***
- ***Others?***

Also, what job tasks would you prefer?

(Look back at your skills, interests, hobbies, etc. and find tasks that you would also find in jobs)

Things I would like to have in order to accept a job:

Discovering Who (You)

My Contributions

Factors to consider when identifying your Contributions:

Specific skills for that job
Past work experiences
Things you are good at
Talents
Attributes: Things like-

- Good attitude
- Sense of humor
- Team player
- Hard worker
- Quick learner
- Gets along with coworkers
- Will show up on time
- Takes initiative
- What else?

Remember, this is how you and/or your supporters will represent you to that potential employer! These are your "Selling Points" those things you will

All the things I will bring to my new job:

Discovering Who (You)

Support Needs

Factors to consider when identifying potential support needs:

- Doing more career exploration
- Making contact with employers
- Interviewing skills
- Getting to and from work
- What is the best way to learn a new task?
  - Checklists
  - Pictures
  - Showing you how
  - Other?
  - Job Accommodations
- What else?

Remember, you are trying to do your best to identify supports on the front end so you will be more successful getting and keeping a job.

Things I will need support with to be successful getting and keeping my job:

Discovering Who (You)

Are You Missing Anything?

Are there any areas that you need to look into further to get a better picture of who you are so you can move towards a more desirable future?

Here are some additional areas you might consider addressing with your team:

- **What things have you been very successful doing?**
- **What jobs/tasks/places do you want to avoid at all costs?**
- **Are there health & safety considerations?**
- **If you could choose one place to be everyday, where would that be?**
- **What else?**

Note: You will want to take the information in this page and see if it fits with your conditions, preferences, contributions and

Discovering What

Now that you have gathered all the information on all the different areas, it is time to begin to figure out *What* type of job and career will match these areas. In the next few pages, you are going to use all the information to identify some of the ideal jobs for you. Many times, teams want to jump right to places that you could work. You'll get to that, but first you need to identify the tasks you are interested in, then identify jobs that have those tasks and then, you will list out places that have those types of jobs. Here's an example that might make this easier to understand:

Shelley's Preferences for Job Tasks:

Work in a small to medium office
Do filing
Answer phones
Do data entry
Greet customers
Pick up/Deliver Mail
Run errands

Types of jobs that have those tasks:

Office Assistant
Administrative Support
Office worker
Clerical Aid
Data Entry specialist

Places That Have These Positions

Dr. and Dentist Offices
Departments at Colleges/Universities
Hospitals
Veterinarians
Clinics

Discovering What

Creating a Picture of My Ideal Job and/or Career Goals

My Preferred Job Tasks:

(From page 21 and others that might have been missed)

Types of Jobs That Have These Tasks:

Places That Have These Types of Jobs:

Note: ***if you are having trouble coming up with clear job matches, see the next section on Career Exploration.***

Discovering What

Now that you have completed the previous exercise where you and your team identified your preferred job tasks, job types and places, there are a couple of scenarios you are probably facing. The best scenario would be that you have zeroed in on a few places that are a great match. If this is the case, you can move on to the “Discover How” section. However, if you and your team came up with a few ideas but there are still some questions on what type of job will be a good match, there are a few steps you and your team will need to explore further. Here are a few options that you should consider:

A few jobs are identified but you need more information:

You should consider learning more about these jobs by doing some more information gathering and career exploration. This allows you to delve deeper into a particular type of occupation (job) and take time to explore how people get into that line of work, what you need to do and find out if you would be happy doing it. Your supporters who have careers of their own can be a good place to start. Here are some additional strategies:

- Visiting places that have those jobs and observe people doing them
- Do an interview with the employee and/or their supervisor (informational interview)
    - Some questions to consider
        - What skills are needed
        - Describe a typical day on the job
        - What do you like best about your job
        - What do you like least
        - How did you go about getting your job
        - Would you be willing to help me get a job in this line of work
        - Are there other people you would recommend I talk to
        - There are lots of questions you will have so develop a list before you go

Some preferred tasks are identified but no clear picture of specific jobs or interest areas area identified:

In some cases, especially for people who haven’t had a lot of exposure to the world of work, it is difficult to narrow down types of tasks and jobs until you take the time to understand exactly what they are. If this is the case, you and your team will need to look at doing some more in-depth Career Exploration. Career Exploration is basically taking what you know about all your skills, interests and talents and doing more research on various occupations that will match these. Here are a few ways to go about exploring jobs and careers that will match what you are looking for:

- Doing informational interviews (see above for your questions)
- Thinking about all the places you like to visit and take a closer look at what people are doing there for jobs, i.e. going to the movies (people taking tickets, people working at the concessions, etc.) Do any of these look interesting? Fun?
- Visiting the Career Center
- Taking a class (college, community centers, etc.)

The next page is for you and your team to brainstorm some ideas for more Career Exploration

Discovering What

Career Exploration Ideas

Brainstorm some ideas to assist you getting more information about potential jobs and careers that you will be interested in:

Types of Jobs/Careers I would like to learn more about:
Questions I might ask during an informational interview
Places to contact for informational interviews: (remember to use your supporters and other connections)

Once you are done creating ideas, you can put them on your Action Plan pages located on pages 40-42. You will also need to add other activities for career exploration in your action plan, i.e. registering at the career center, taking a class, etc. Then, as you learn more and narrow down the potential jobs, go back and complete the Creating a Picture of My Ideal Job worksheet again.

Discovering How

In this section, you and your team will be taking all the information gathered so far and creating the action steps that will outline “How” you are going to land a job that matches your skills, interests and talents. Here are some things to consider as you begin to move towards making contact with potential employers:

According to the U.S. Department of Labor:

- Over 80% of current job openings are in the “Hidden” job market. This means, they are not advertised and are filled through referrals and the business’s close connections, i.e., current employees and people they know and trust.
- 70% of people who are currently working got their job using their personal and professional connections.

Therefore, it is going to be very important that you work with all your supporters to use everyone’s personal and professional connections to make contact with potential employers. Our goal will be to focus on where 80% of the jobs are rather than running around filling out applications and dropping off resumes because there is so much competition for only 20% of the jobs. Keep in mind, all these connections will certainly help open doors for you but, it will be very important that you and anyone supporting you are able to talk about all the contributions you will bring to that business. At this time, it will be good to go back and review all your contributions you and your team outlined on page 22.

On the next page you and your team will work on outlining an introduction and talking points to use with potential businesses. There are also a couple of examples that might help you out.

Your problem is to bridge the gap which exists between where you are now and the goal you intend to reach.

Earl Nightingale

Discovering How

Making Contact with Potential Employers

Wrong Way:

Hi, my disabled nephew is looking for work. You have any openings?

Better Way:

Hi, my nephew is looking for a job and is **really interested** in this type of work. He's a great guy and **has some experience** doing this and some other work through school and various jobs. He's one of those people who's a **hard worker** and **eager to learn** new things all the time. He's **a lot of fun** to be around and has a **great sense of humor** and I know you would enjoy meeting him. I was wondering when would be a good time that he could come down and talk with you.

(Note the highlighted areas, these are attributes/contributions that you need to emphasize. Also, notice it ends with a call to action…asking for a time to meet)

Your Way: *(remember to refer to all your attributes and contributions!)*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Discovering How

Making Connections

On the next two pages you will find your Connections Worksheets. This is a great way to list out the types of jobs (pages 26 and 28), what businesses in your community have these types of jobs and, who in your network has a connection. Here are a few tips and examples to help you complete your Connections Worksheet:

My Connections Worksheet

Types of Jobs and Careers (from pages 26 &28)	Businesses Who Have These Types of Jobs	Who Has Personal Connections to This Business?	When Will You Make Contact?	Results of Contact
Use those jobs you identified on pages (26 & 28). Make sure they match your interests, skills and talents and fit with moving towards your dream job	List out businesses in your community that have these jobs.	The connection can be you, one of your supporters or even someone your supporters know. Once you get the list developed on flip chart paper, it is best to prioritize them on this form with the strongest connections first.	It always helps to set a timeline. This way, they know when they are supposed to do it and you can follow up and track these contacts	You can make notes of how the contacts went, i.e. make an appointment, follow-up in 30 days, etc.
Office Assistant	Dr. Baskins Top Office Products	My Family and Me (our family doctor) Aunt Amy (friend is mgr.)	Next Monday, Mom will call for an appointment She'll call on Friday	
Data Entry	Community College	John the Employment Specialist (goes there part time)	Friday after class	
Clerical Support	Dr. Evans, DDS County Building	Grace (her friend works there) Dad (knows the engineer)	Next Tuesday Next Wednesday	

Don't forget to compare potential jobs and businesses with your conditions, preferences, contributions and support needs!

My Connections Worksheet

Types of Jobs and Careers (from pages 26 &28)	Businesses Who Have These Types of Jobs	Who Has Personal Connections to This Business?	When Will You Make Contact?	Results of Contact

My Connections Worksheet

Types of Jobs and Careers (from pages 26 &28)	Businesses Who Have These Types of Jobs	Who Has Personal Connections to This Business?	When Will You Make Contact?	Results of Contact

Checking In

This is another good time to check in and see how things are going. By now, there probably has been either more career exploration going on or, some initial contacts with employers. Either way, it is good to take a look at how your plan is progressing. Here are some things to consider:

- Do you feel your plan is moving you towards your goals for employment?
    - If not, what changes do you need to make?
- If you have done some more career exploration, have you learned some new things about what you might want in a job or career? If so, what?
    - Do you need to go back and add these to your plan?
- If you and your supporters have made contacts with potential employers, how did it go? Do you need to make changes? Do you need to look for more connections? Did the potential jobs seem to match what you are looking for?
- Have you taken a look at your Action Plan? Are the action items being worked on? Do you need to develop other steps to keep moving you forward?
- If you haven't met with a potential employer but will soon, are you getting ready for it? (practice interviews, having the right clothes, a list of questions to ask, etc.)
- If you have, or are, getting close to accepting a job have you reviewed and added to the Supports section? You will want to go back and review those as it is critical to do your best to address these very early on.
- Remember, when you start your job that is just the beginning of your career. Once you are there for a while it is good to revisit your plan as everyone's conditions, preferences, contributions and support needs are constantly changing.

Interviewing for the job

Interviewing is all about first impressions, gathering more information, and making decisions. Both you and the employer get a chance to “check” each other out, so to speak. Remember you are interviewing the employer as well. Be prepared to answer questions but also be prepared to ask questions.

Some common questions employers ask….

- Tell me about yourself? (which is seeking to find out if you fit into the existing culture)
- What are your strengths (which really means, how can you add to my business?)
- Why do you want to work here (which is really asking, what do you really know about this company and why should we hire you?)
- What are your weaknesses? (here they are looking to see if you can recognize areas you don’t do well in and how you overcome them)
- Do you think you work better by yourself or with a team of others? (which is asking can you do the job with minimal supervision)
- (which is really looking at why should they hire you over the next applicant)

Some common questions job seekers ask…

Some tips for interviewing….successful job offers hinge on successful interviews and successful interviews are a direct result of careful planning & preparation.

- You’ve heard the saying “don’t judge a book by its cover” well unfortunately people do judge others by what they see in that very first moment, so make sure you’re dressed well, groomed nicely (hair clean and combed, smelling clean, etc.).That first impression can make or break the interview.
- Use your connections, talk about how you heard about the job. If you have a personal connection talk a little about that person and why they suggested you work there.
- Do your homework. Research the company so you know what they do and a little about their needs so you can show interest and a passion for wanting to work there. Read the job description in advance if you can get a copy. You can highlight how you can meet the job duties as described based on your talents/skills, etc.
- Be prepared to answer questions, know what the employer is looking for and tailor your answers to address those needs. Highlight your strength, attributes (contributions listed in page 22) based on what the employer is looking for.
- Be prepared to ask questions, know what you want/need and ask question to gather information so you can make a good decision as to whether this job is the right fit for you or not.

List questions you want to ask during the interview:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

- Close the interview by summarizing how you can meet their needs for the open position. Again highlight your abilities based on what they are looking for, it's not enough to say you want to work there. Also express how they will benefit by selecting you over the next person. Thank the interviewer for his or her time and consideration, express your interest in the position and ask when you can expect to hear from him or her. Also, you will want to send a written thank you note within a week of your interview so remember the name(s) of the people you interviewed with.
- Now take time to compare the information you gathered in the interview with what you've listed as your conditions, preferences, contributions and support needs for employment. How are they matching up? Does the job match most of your conditions? Are needed supports available at the company? What will you need to negotiate?

A few notes on disclosing your disability to an employer: According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, you do not have to disclose a disability to an employer. If you will need certain job accommodations, the Act states you can disclose after the job offer is made. There are two main things you should consider regarding disclosure. First and foremost, it is up to YOU if you want to disclose anything about your disability. Second, there can be advantages to discussing this with a prospective employer as long as you are prepared. You need to *refer to page 65* in the resource section and visit that website for an excellent article on disclosure.

What to do when a job is offered

Think for a moment about the things you said were critical for you to have in order to accept a job, your conditions for employment. Does the job offered match those critical aspects? Will your basic needs be met if you accept the job? Have you met your new supervisor and does he or she seem like you can have a good working relationship with? What are other co-workers like and do they seem to be people you would like working with? Will you be comfortable in that working environment? Do you value what the company does? Does it still match what you said you wanted to do?

If the answer is yes….then great. Accept the offer and ask when the start date is. Make sure you negotiate any final things that may not be clear. These include things such as a work station, person you report to (your supervisor), starting salary, hours, any accommodations, etc.

If the answer is no….then you may have to decline the offer. Do so with respect, thank them and let them know you appreciate their consideration but that you don't feel it's the right job for you at this time. You always want to leave the door open for future contacts.

Starting your new job

Starting a new job is exciting and at the same time can be stressful. You will be meeting new people, working in a place that is unfamiliar at first and learning new tasks that will take you sometime to master. Usually after your first day jitters you're well on your way to the exciting part, building friendships, enjoying your job duties, and earning a pay check. As you've learned, planning is key to success so here are a few things you might want to plan for your first day on your new job….

- Where to report on your first day & and who to report to?
- Do you need assistance filling out any paperwork?
- What documents do you need to bring? (I.D. Social Security Card, etc.)
- What you need to wear to work?
- Where are the restrooms and break room, when are your lunches and break times?
- Do you need to take your lunch to work with you? Where do most employees eat?
- Where do you time/sign in and out?
- If you needed any accommodations, have they been arranged for? If not, who do you need to speak with?
- Others?_____

_____

Career Advancement

How to ask for a raise: One of the first things to consider when asking for a raise is to make sure you are receiving regular performance evaluations. If you have met the performance requirements most employers do offer a pay increase. If you have not received a pay increase and you feel you have met and exceeded the requirements of your job, you must prepare your case and then schedule a meeting with your supervisor. You will need to outline all the areas you feel you have at least met, or more preferably, exceeded in terms of what is expected of you. It also doesn't hurt to bring in an idea of how much the raise should be.

How to ask for a promotion: This is very similar to asking for a raise but the main difference is that you are also asking for more responsibilities. Again, you will have to make a strong case as to why you deserve this. You must show how you have exceeded your performance requirements, demonstrated initiative and can handle the new responsibilities. Be prepared to offer specific examples of each of these!

Note: It will be helpful for you to review the *Succeeding on the Job* section on pages 57 - 60.

How to quit a job: Just like starting a job, quitting one will change your life dramatically too. Sometimes for the better sometimes for the worse but the important thing is to first decide why you want/need to quit and then how to go about quitting so that you don't burn your bridges (so to speak), so you don't harm the business relationships you've built because you may want to use your employer as a reference for your next career move.

People quit jobs for many reasons. Sometime people outgrow their job, they increase their skills and want to move to a job that is more challenging, some get a better job offer, more pay, better hours, and closer to home. Others find that they dislike the job after doing it for a period of time. Whatever the reason you need to decide what makes sense for you. ***Why are you wanting/needing to quit and do you have a plan for another one?***

Why I want/need to quit my job? What is my plan for another one?

Resources

Resource/Topic	Page(s)
Your Action Plans	**40 - 42**
Forms You Might Find Helpful	
• **Career Exploration Experiences**	**43**
• **Informational Interview Questions**	**44 - 45**
• **Job Matching** (comparing your conditions, preferences and support needs with identified jobs)	**46**
• **Interview Summary Sheet**	**47 - 51**
• **List of supports you will need**	**52 - 53**
• **Funding & Services you will/might need**	**54**
Using Your Plan with Local & State Agencies	**55 – 56**
• **Checklists for Meeting with Other Agencies**	**57**
• **Your Career Profile**	**58**
• **My Work History**	**59**
Succeeding on the Job (Personal Qualities, Workplace Culture & Social Skills)	**60 - 63**
Community Resources	**64 - 66**
Key Government Agencies	**67 - 70**
Social Security Work Incentives	**71 - 72**
Employer Resources	**73 - 74**

Action Plan

Action Step	Who's Responsible?	When Will it Be Done?	Done √	Follow-up Needed

Action Plan

Action Step	Who's Responsible?	When Will it Be Done?	Done √	Follow-up Needed

Action Plan

Action Step	Who's Responsible?	When Will it Be Done?	Done √	Follow-up Needed

Career Exploration Worksheet

Jobs/Careers of Interest	**How Will You Learn More About It?** Informational Interviews, Internship, On the Job Training, etc.	**What Did You Learn?** Take what you learned and add this information to your likes, dislikes, conditions, preferences, contributions and supports you might need

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Interviewing Date: _____

Person(s) Interviewed:_____

Company _____

Information interviewing is information gathering, NOT asking for job openings. It's an opportunity to learn more about a particular line of work, how to enter that field and know what steps to take to increase your chances for a good job match.

1. Tell me about how you got involved in this type of work?

2. What are some of the skills/education or experience needed to enter into this line of work?

3. How long have you been working in this field of work?

4. Could you tell me a little about your job? What parts do you like and what about it do you dislike?

5. What is the best way for a person to get into this kind of work? Where should I start?

6. Would it be possible for me to arrange to look at one of the jobs you have told me about?

7. What is the job market like for this type of work? Where is the growth expected to be in the next few years?

8. Who is hiring these days? Where would you suggest I look?

9. What makes people successful in your company?

10. Is there anyone else you can suggest that I talk with? Could I use your name when I contact them?

Job Matching Worksheet

This worksheet will assist you in taking what you have learned about a certain job and determine if it matches your conditions and preferences. What you are looking for is not necessarily a perfect match but the best match. Have your list of conditions & preferences handy. (You might want to use a flip chart then transfer the information to this page)

Identified Job	**Does it Match Your Conditions?** List the areas that match	**Does it Match Your Preferences?** List the areas that match	**Specific Areas That Do Not Match and Why.** List the areas and determine if they are negotiable or not.	**Notes/Strategies to Get More Information or to Negotiate for a Better Job Match** (put these on your action plan)

Interview Summary Sheet

After you interview with a potential employer, it is good to go back and write down what you learned about the job. This will allow you document the information while it is still fresh in your mind and help with further identifying if the job will be a good match.

Name of Business: _____
Position Interviewed For: _____Date of Interview:_____

Name/Title of Person(s) You Interviewed With:
Name:_____
Title: _____

What did you learn about the job? (Key tasks, hours, pay, location, supervision, skills needed, etc. Compare to your conditions and preferences)

How do you feel you did in the interview? (Did you talk about your contributions, make eye contact, ask good questions, give answers that talked about what you will bring to the company, etc.?)

What areas do you need to practice and/or improve on? (Expressing your contributions, asking good questions, being prepared, making eye contact, etc.)

Tips:

- Did you send a Thank You note to the person you interviewed with? (send within one week)
- Make sure and transfer the areas you need to practice to your action plan
- Make a list of any questions you need more information on so you can follow up on them

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Tips:

- Did you send a Thank You note to the person you interviewed with? (send within one week)
- Make sure and transfer the areas you need to practice to your action plan
- Make a list of any questions you need more information on so you can follow up on them

Supports You Will Need

The best way to increase your chances of success on the job will be to do your best to identify the supports you will need before you start. This worksheet lists some of the more common supports and has areas for you to add others that you and your team have identified

Identified Support	Ideas & Strategies	Who Will Assist
Getting to and from work		
Training on the job		
Getting to know my co-workers		
Learning the routines of the job and work environment		
Talking over things after each day of work for the first few weeks (what went well, what didn't, what to do about it)		
Keeping track of earnings for my Social Security		

Supports *(continued)*

Identified Support	Ideas & Strategies	Who Will Assist

Services & Funding

There is a very good chance that you are going to need certain services and funding to increase the chances of success as you pursue your career goals. Both services and funding are very individual and will be based on what you qualify for, have the need for, and what you want. You can use the following worksheet to help identify some of these services and supports you will need. There are a few areas/examples listed and these are only ideas to get you started and you may or may not need them. If you don't need one of these just cross it out.

Service Needed	Who will Provide the Service?	Who will Fund the Service?	Who will make the contact and when?
Benefits Planning		No Cost	
Career Exploration			
Making Contact with Employers (this can be by your network or an agency can support you)			
Using Social Security Work Incentives			
Job Accommodations			
Assistive Technology			
Transportation			
Assistance with additional training on the job			

Using My Career Plan with Local & State Agencies

Now that you have your plan developed, there is a good chance that you have identified some areas that you will need additional support in (outlined on pages 23 and 52). There are two primary agencies that can offer assistance and support in many of these areas. First, Vocational Rehabilitation is a state agency that can offer services and pay for additional supports as you need them. Second, there are Community Rehabilitation Programs who provide employment services such as career planning, support making contacts with businesses, assisting with accommodations on the job and, they will provide follow-along services as you progress in your career. Typically, vocational rehabilitation is where you will start and, depending on the services you request and need, they will refer you to the community rehabilitation program of your choice. It is a good idea to research and interview any program before you make your decision. (See the next page for questions/tips on interviewing potential community rehabilitation programs).

It will be very important that you take this Career Plan with you to both of these agencies. You and your team have worked very hard to develop a plan that makes sense for you and these agencies can use this information to fill in the blanks of their plans (they have to develop plans with you which allows for the funding to provide you the services you are requesting).

Here are some things to remember when working with these agencies:

- Keep in mind, this is your life and you know what is best for you. The professionals are here to assist and ultimately, you have the right to make all decisions
- You have the right to choose where you receive services and what services you need and want
- If something does not make sense, do not be hesitant to ask questions
- One size does not fit all. This means, your services and supports need to be tailored to what it is you are needing and requesting rather than simply what they offer
- Make sure and pick the organization that is the best fit for you, has a proven track record and has competent staff providing services

Note: On Page 58 there is a Career Profile Form for you to complete. Bring this along with your Career Planning Guide to both Vocational Rehabilitation and any employment service provider. With this form, along with all the information in this guide, it will save you time and show them the services you need and want.

Questions & Tips to Selecting the Right Service Provider

- **Tell me about your organization, what services do you provide and how they are provided.**
  - You want to know about all their services and to see how individualized they are
- **Tell me about your employment program. How many staff, what is the typical process you use to go about supporting someone to find employment?**
  - You will want to see if they provide the service or services that you have identified in your career plan
- **What are the qualifications of your employment staff? How are they trained? Where did they get their training? How will I know that I am receiving services from the best possible staff person? Can I choose the staff person that will support me?**
  - It will be critical to ensure you are being supported by highly competent staff. You will want to look for agencies that have staff who have experience, receive training on the most effective employment practices and how that organization values continual training for their employees
- **What is your success rate in supporting people to find employment?**
  - You might want to ask how many people they worked with in the last year and of those, how many became employed
- **How do you define success?**
  - You will want to hear things like: people found the job they were looking for; and, people found jobs that matched their skills and interests
- **What's the average time your organization takes to support someone to find employment?**
  - You will want to know the timeframe from when a person is referred to when they start a job. Obviously this varies for everyone but they should be able to give you an average. Now, what if they say that average is 6 months? You will need to follow up and ask what they will do to decrease this time significantly.
- **Do I have to go through all of your services or can I just pick the ones I need?**
  - Since you and your supporters have developed your plan, you have a good idea of what you will need to be successful. You want to ensure that you don't have to go through all of this work again; it only keeps you unemployed longer. You want to choose an organization that will honor what you have in your plan and develop specific activities and supports based on those.
- **Develop other questions you might have**. (Transportation, benefits planning, using social security work incentives, how they communicate with you, your supporters and other agencies, etc.)
- **How will you represent me when contacting businesses**?
  - You will want to make sure that they first, talk about all the positive things you will bring to that business, second, it is not about disability it is about making a good match between your skills and talents and the job and third, it is your choice if and when you want to disclose anything about your disability.

Checklists for Meeting with Other Agencies

In addition to bringing your completed Career Profile Form (page 58) and your Career Planning Guide to agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation and the employment service provider you choose, here are a couple of checklists so you are ready.

For meeting with Vocational Rehabilitation:

- List of your medical, educational and vocational history and interests (If this is your first visit, bring in any records or documents that might be useful.);
- Existing medical or psychological records;
- Any relevant existing information about your disability;
- School records, relevant medical records, or on-the-job records;
- List of your income, assets, and expenses;
- Social Security Administration (SSA) Award Letter and any correspondence from SSA;
- Work History (wages, dates and time period); (page 59 in this guide)
- Health care provider information;
- List of all items needed for work;
- Work goals/résumé (Your Career Profile and Career Guide)
- Means to achieve work goals;
- Information about your spouse's and/or your Parents income and resources;
- Information about assistance you receive with living expenses;
- Amount of any financial resources (savings, CDs etc.);
- All Unearned Income Information;
- Monthly expenses; and
- Bring any advocates or family who can help you (your key supporters).

For meeting with the employment service provider you choose:

- School records or relevant education records;
- Work History (wages/salary, dates and time period) — this can include volunteer work, internships, and part-time jobs;
- Résumé (if you have one);
- Reference letters (both professional and personal);
- List of work goals or ideas about the kind of work you are interested in — include the jobs or places of work that interest you;
- Benefits history (include types of benefits you are receiving); and
- If working, your current employer's contact information.

Checklists adapted from http://www.socialsecurity.gov/work/formsandpubs.html

These are general checklists and some information may already be in your Career Planning Guide. These are to help prepare you and ensure you start receiving the services you need and want as quickly as possible.

MY CAREER PROFILE

Name: _____ Date: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____

My Employment/Career Goal:

_____

_____

Items checked are steps I have taken to identify this goal:

- ☐ Met with my support team and identified my conditions, preferences, contributions and support needs for employment.
- ☐ Job exploration with businesses that have the type of work I am interested in
- ☐ Met with a Benefits Specialist to learn the impact of work on my benefits
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Assistance requested from Vocational Rehabilitation/Employment Service Provider:

I would like assistance with_____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Job Seekers Signature: _____

Supporter Signature: _____

My Past Work History

List current/previous jobs starting with the most recent (include volunteering)

1. Name of Company: _____
   Address:_____
   Date Employed: From_____to_____
   Job Title:_____
   Job Duties:_____
   Reason for Leaving:_____
   _____

2. Name of Company: _____
   Address:_____
   Date Employed: From_____to_____
   Job Title:_____
   Job Duties:_____
   Reason for Leaving:_____
   _____

3. Name of Company: _____
   Address:_____
   Date Employed: From_____to_____
   Job Title:_____
   Job Duties:_____
   Reason for Leaving:_____
   _____

4. Name of Company: _____
   Address:_____
   Date Employed: From_____to_____
   Job Title:_____
   Job Duties:_____
   Reason for Leaving:_____
   _____

5. Name of Company: _____
   Address:_____
   Date Employed: From_____to_____
   Job Title:_____
   Job Duties:_____
   Reason for Leaving:_____
   _____

Succeeding on the Job

Now that you have landed the job, or are close to it, you have made it through one of the hardest steps. Your employer has recognized your skills and qualifications and sees the value you will bring to their business. But, long term success on the job is going to be less about your "hard" skills and more about your personal qualities and social skills which are commonly called "soft" skills. For most employers, they look for potential employees who have the necessary skills, however, it is more important to them that they find someone who is going to be a good fit within their business. This means they will gladly provide more training and support given the new employee demonstrates excellent soft skills and contributes to a positive culture in the workplace. It is common knowledge that a very high percentage of people who lose their jobs do so because they lack the soft skills, not because of their skills to do the job. Here are a few tips and strategies you might find helpful:

Starting Off on the Right Foot: Every new employee has the jitters. Some handle them better than others but, in one way or another, we all are a little uptight, nervous and somewhat unsure of ourselves. Don't worry, you are not alone and in some sense, your employer and coworkers will expect this. The best part is with every passing day, you will begin to feel more comfortable and your sense of belonging will increase.

- *Don't think you have to know everything right away*. Even if you have done a certain job before, every business is different and so are the ways they do things. It is more important that you demonstrate that you are eager to learn. You can do this by paying close attention to how others do the job, asking questions, following instructions and not being afraid to ask for help if you don't know something. You will find that most of your coworkers actually take pride in sharing their knowledge. Keep this in mind as well, as you learn and grow in your job, there is a high likelihood you will have the opportunity to teach new employees down the road.
- *Take it one day at a time*. You won't be expected to learn everything about your new job in one day. What you need to do is focus on making a little more progress each day and then measure it at the end of each day. Some things you can measure could be learning a new task, meeting a new co-worker, getting a compliment from your boss or a co-worker. We all have to celebrate the little successes then start each new day working towards new ones.

Adapting to the Workplace Culture: Every work environment has its own culture. Workplace culture is sort of like the unwritten rules and behaviors that go on in that business. The hard part is that these are all things that you learn primarily by using your observation skills. This means, you have to be looking around the workplace to pick up on the little rules and behaviors that weren't explained to you during your orientation. Here are a few you might want to be on the lookout for:

- *Dress code*: sometimes this is stated upfront, sometimes not. Look around and see what people are wearing. Is it blue jeans, business casual or does everyone seem to have their own taste? The best way to start is to fit in as much as possible. Again, if you aren't sure, ask!
- *Using things for personal use and/or personal use during work hours*: You need to ask about these right away. A few examples of using things for personal use would be, making personal calls, using the computer for personal e-mails/web surfing, using the break room refrigerator, etc. For personal use, these would be things like using your cell phone, texting during work hours, etc. Some companies have strict rules, others don't but either way, it is better to ask upfront then risk being reprimanded.
- *How flexible is the workplace*: A good example of this is let's say you have a doctor's appointment. You need to find out what the rules are on these types of appointments. Some employers allow you to flex your time (come in early or leave late) so you can make your appointment. Others may be stricter and require you make your appointments over your lunch break or day off.
- *Other unwritten rules to look for*: Are there set breaks or are they flexible? Can you eat and drink while working? Can you listen to your radio or iPod while working? What do people do for lunch - go together or by themselves? Arriving to work - if you start at 8:00 a.m. is everyone there 15 minutes early or just in time? There are many others but as you get better at observing and asking questions, it will all become second nature.

Do Your Job and Then Some: Some people think that doing their job well enough to keep the job is satisfactory. But simply doing just what is expected isn't enough to make you stand out to your supervisor. Here are some things you can do to exceed the expectations:

- *If you don't have something to do, FIND SOMETHING*: If you have completed your tasks you need to either look around for something else to do or ask your supervisor. The most successful employees are the ones that not only get their work done but go the extra mile.
- *Volunteer to help a co-worker*: If you are done with your work, a good way to develop relationships and contribute to the company is to offer assistance to your co-workers and/or take the initiative if you see something that needs to be done, i.e. take the trash out, clean up the break room, etc.
- *Offer to learn something new*: Chances are that if you seem to have extra time each day, you have mastered your regular duties. This is a perfect time to approach your supervisor and offer to learn something new and take on additional work.

Provide Outstanding Customer Service: If you don't already know, the customer is the real reason behind your job. They are the ones that purchase the products or services of your company and ultimately, that is where your paycheck comes from. When you provide outstanding customer service, both the customer and your supervisor will take notice. Customers who have a good experience are the ones that keep coming back. Here are a few ideas that might help you go above and beyond basic customer service:

- *Go beyond basic customer service:* All customers have certain expectations when they enter a business. Some of these include, being welcomed, having friendly employees and getting assistance when they need it. What you need to do is figure out ways to exceed these expectations. For example, if you notice a regular customer and know his or her name, go out of your way to greet them by using his or her name. Don't wait for customers to ask you for assistance, you can ask them right up front and if they don't need assistance then, simply tell them your name and that you would be willing to help them if they do.
- *Remain calm when you have an upset customer*: As much as companies try to avoid it, there will always be times when we encounter an upset customer. It is very important to avoid becoming defensive and making excuses. You need to listen to what the customer needs and express to him or her that you will do your best to figure it out. If you can't meet his or her need, find a co-worker or supervisor to help you out. Both the customer and your supervisor will appreciate your attention to this.

Be a Team Player: It is a known fact that employers will value those employees who are team players more than those who might have better skills for the job. You can increase your value as an employee by being a team player. This doesn't mean you have to be "best friends" with every employee. It is more about getting along with others. Here are a few tips to becoming a great team player:

- Jump in and do a task that everyone really doesn't want to do. This doesn't mean you have to do it all the time but it does show you are willing to help out.
- Give compliments to other employees. Everyone likes to be recognized for doing a good job and a good team player praises others. Be careful with how much you do this, for example if you told someone every hour that they are doing a good job, it loses its effect. You will learn as you progress in your job when someone else is really going that extra mile or putting in extra effort, then that is the perfect time to recognize his or her efforts.
- One thing that goes on in most every work place is gossip. Team players do not get caught up in gossip and for the most part, gossip is rarely the truth and can be very hurtful to not only the person but to the overall work environment. Additionally, if you are caught gossiping, other coworkers will lose their trust in you and it can be very hard to build that trust back with them.

- Be positive, even in the tough times. A positive attitude can be contagious and most everyone enjoys being around people who have a great attitude. Obviously, you are going to have some days that are better than others but you need to do your best to keep a good attitude. Also, this isn't just about you. You will find some of your co-workers who are going to have a bad day and you need to offer encouragement and support. They will appreciate this more than you realize.
- Figure out what is important to your supervisors and co-workers. Taking an interest in others is a great way to develop relationships and add to the team atmosphere in your work place. For example, if one of your co-workers just returned from having a baby, learn the baby's name and ask how they are doing. You can also learn about someone's hobbies and interests and talk with him or her about it. You never know, you may find you have a lot in common with some of your co-workers!

Community Resources

In order for you to be successful in employment, it is important for you to know what supports may be available to you in your everyday life. There are many ways in which a community and the resources available within your community can help you achieve your goals. Some examples of areas in which your community may be able to assist you are: transportation, clothing, and money management. Listed below are some resources you should keep in mind that may help you with achieving your goals.

Transportation Options: Within each community, there are a variety of transportation options that can be looked at to assist you with getting to and from work. Below are some examples of resources for transportation.

- *Cab Companies*
- *Para-transit*
- *Public Bus Routes*
- *Independent Living Centers (in certain areas)*
- *Neighbors*
- *Friends*
- *Family*
- *Co-workers*

Money management/benefits planning: Benefits planning and money management are very important aspects of employment. Listed below are just some resources that can be useful in this area.

- *Refer to the benefits planning section (pages 71-72)*
- *Banking institutions*

Clothing: Again, within each community, there are a variety of agencies and resources that can assist you with obtaining clothing for interviews and work. Below are some examples of places you can look to obtain clothing:

- *Thrift Stores*
- *Faith Based Organizations*
- *Consignment Shops*

Education: If you are interested in furthering your education or receiving additional training for a particular trade, your local community may have resources to assist with this area. Below are some examples of places you may be able to go to receive additional training:

- *Community Colleges*
- *Trade, technical, and career schools*
- *Colleges & Universities*
- *Workforce Development Offices (refer to key government agencies)*

Other community resources: Communities across Missouri have a variety of resources that are available to assist with any number of things. The lists are not all inclusive, but are just some examples of additional resources that may be available to you.

- ***Public libraries*** Public libraries in Missouri offer an array of services and each varies by location. For more information about a public library near you, visit **http://www.publiclibraries.com/missouri.htm** and click on the link to your local library.
- ***Missouri Associations for Community Action*** Community Action organizations exist to fight poverty. This is done through training, advocacy, awareness, technical assistance, etc. For more information, visit **http://www.communityaction.org/** where you can find links to the Community Action organization in your area.
- ***Faith based organizations*** Faith based organizations often offer a wide variety of services, including job search services, clothing closets, mentors, volunteer opportunities, etc.
- ***Local Public Health Agencies*** These agencies offer a variety of services, which may include: vital records, TB testing, immunizations, WIC, etc. If you visit **http://www.dhss.mo.gov/LPHA/LPHAs.html** you can pick your county to find out more about your local public health agency.

Additional Job Search Resources

- **jan.wvu.edu**
  Job Accommodation Network—this website provides useful information on job accommodations
- **gettinghired.com**
  There are opportunities on this job site for networking and mentoring. In addition, there are job listings and interview preparation resources.
- **disability.gov**
  This website provides information on education, employment, housing, transportation, civil rights, etc.
- **EARNWorks.com**
  The Employer Assistance and Resource Network—this website is useful to employers and job seekers alike. There's information on resume writing, cover letters, interviews, etc.
- **www.dol.gov/odep/**
  Office of Disability Employment Policy website. There are many useful resources on this site. If you click on the publications link on the left side of the page, it will take you to information about disclosure, resume writing, accommodations, etc.
- **worksupport.com/resources**
  Virginia Commonwealth University's website about work support. Provides many useful tools, including information about disclosure, assistive technology, job retention, etc.
- www.ysletadelsurpueblo.org/shared_document.sstg?id=114
  A helpful interview checklist form the Upper Rio Grande's Workforce Solutions
- **afb.org/CareerConnect/**
  This website is maintained by the American Foundation for the Blind and has many career resources, including career exploration tools, job search strategies, technological information, etc. You are also able to search for a volunteer mentor to assist you as you go through your job search.

Disclosure

Customized Employment Q & A: Disclosure

http://www.t-tap.org/strategies/factsheet/disclosure.htm

Key Government Agencies

Division of Workforce Development

The Division provides services for businesses and job seekers through the **Missouri Career Centers** and **MissouriCareerSource.com.** The Division works with a number of strategic partners to "skill-up" Missouri's workforce for today's business and industry needs. A wealth of information and resources about workforce services can be found on **WorkSmartMissouri.com**

- ***Job Searching*** **https://www.missouricareersource.com/mcs/mcs/default.seek** Internet site that enables the job seeker to search for jobs, locally or statewide. Career Center staff assists with registration of work history, desired positions, and skills.
- ***Job Matching***- Businesses registered on the Missouri CareerSource.com and Career Center staff will be able to view your online profile and may contact you about matching jobs.
- **Job Success Skills Training Classes**- Standardized competency-based classroom training with interactive Job Search, Career Readiness and Career Retention Modules.
- ***Educational Workshops***- Workshops include; resume writing and interviewing skills.
- ***WINWAY Resume***- A simple computer-based resume program that allows you to enter your personal information and the program automatically formats it in a resume style.
- ***KUDER Assessments-*** Internet based, these programs allow the user to answer questions about their likes and dislikes and matches the user with possible career choices.
- ***Experience Works-*** Employment and training for workers age 55 and over.
- ***FAX, COPIER, and Telephone –*** access available for job search activities.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (MDVR) operates under the Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE). The Division is made up of three core programs: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Disability Determination Services (DDS), and Independent Living (IL). All three programs are dedicated to providing quality services to our consumers and to increasing their independence.

Eligibility requirements apply. Depending on your income and resources some of the services may be at no cost or partial cost, or all cost to the person.

- ***Assessment***- to determine extent of disability and what services are required for employment.
- ***Evaluation****- to determine the best type of work.*
- ***Guidance –*** in choosing suitable employment***.***
- ***Individual Counseling***
- ***Medical, surgical, psychiatric or hospital care-*** to reduce or remove disabling conditions.
- ***Assistive devices-*** which increase ability to work
- ***Vocational Training-*** to prepare for employment, this may include tuition and fees a well as books and supplies for education in college,, university, trade school, community rehab program or on-the-job training.
- ***Basic Living Transportation Cost***- Necessary to participate in a training program.
- ***Job Related tools & licenses***
- ***Assistance in developing job-seeking skills***
- ***Assistance in finding a job***
- ***Independent Living Center- information & referral, independent living, skills training; advocacy and peer support.***
- ***Supported Employment***- up to 9 months of community-based job training if other funding sources are available to provide long-term follow-along and support services on the job that is needed to remain employed.

Department of Mental Health **http://www.dmh.mo.gov/mrdd/mrddindex.htm**

Department of Mental Health establishes philosophy, policies, standards, and quality outcomes for prevention, education, habilitation, rehabilitation, and treatment for Missourians challenged by mental illness, substance abuse/addiction, and developmental disabilities.

Eligibility requirements apply based on diagnosis and functional limitations see website for more details. ***Medicaid Waiver Programs***- the Missouri Department of Mental Health's Division of Developmental Disabilities (DD) administers four 1915(c) Home and Community Based Medicaid Waiver programs for individuals with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities. Each waiver has a variety of services available for people who are eligible.

- ***Targeted Case management***- assists individuals eligible for services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities in accessing comprehensive medical, social, educational, and other specialized services.
- ***Quality Assurance:*** Regional Office provides oversight and enhancement activities of all services funded by the Division of Developmental Disabilities.

SB 40 Counties

Some counties in Missouri have passed a local levy which collects funds to support individuals with developmental disabilities. You can go to this web site to see what services are offered in the various SB 40 counties.
http://macdds.org/county_info.html

Rehabilitation Services for the Blind **http://www.dss.mo.gov/fsd/rsb/**

Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) provides services to people with varying degrees of visual impairment, ranging from those who cannot read regular print to those who are totally blind.

These services are provided on the premise that with adequate preparation and reasonable accommodation, each blind or visually impaired person will be able to achieve his or her maximum potential in the home and community, in educational settings, and in employment.

- ***Counseling -***Provides casework and/or counseling services to assist the family in maximizing the child's potential and minimizing the impact of blindness***.***
- ***Employment/Job Training -***Children 14 and older are also served by RSB in vocational rehabilitation transition program.

- ***Information and Referral -*** RSB staff provide referral and resource information to schools and families about issues involving vision loss.
- ***Support for Parents-*** RSB staff provides parent education on how to stimulate blind or visually impaired children and on how to enhance independent living skills. RSB staff provides advocacy services for blind or visually impaired children and their families. RSB staff will, at the request of families or schools, attend IEP meetings to help identify children's needs and how to meet those needs

Independent Living Centers;
http://www.ilru.org/html/publications/directory/missouri.html

Centers for independent living (CILs) are private, nonprofit corporations that provide services to maximize the independence of individuals with disabilities and the accessibility of the communities they live in. Centers are funded in part by the Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, Independent Living Branch, to provide, among other things, several core services:

- Advocacy
- Independent living skills training
- Information and referral
- Peer counseling

Missouri Associations for Community Action **http://www.communityaction.org/**
Assist with childcare so parents can obtain education to improve their job opportunities. Find solutions to transportation obstacles so people can get to work. Weatherize homes to reduce energy costs. We help families save to buy homes of their own. These and other community action agencies help families work their way to self-sufficiency.

Social Security Work Incentives

National research has consistently demonstrated that many Social Security Administration (SSA) disability beneficiaries hesitate to participate in return to work efforts due to fear that paid employment will cause a loss of critical cash benefits and health insurance. Special rules make it possible for people with disabilities receiving Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to work and still receive monthly payments and Medicare or Medicaid. Social Security calls these rules "work incentives." Following are some helpful resource links through which you might access personal support as well as obtain more information about work incentives.

Social Security: For information helpful to people with disabilities their families, teachers, and others regarding work incentives, consult the SSA websites at
http://www.ssa.gov/work
http://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/workincentives.htm
http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/generalinfo.htm#work

The Ticket-to-Work Program: This program offers people with disabilities a “Ticket” to obtain the employment support services, vocational rehabilitation services, and other services they may need to get and keep a job. Find out more information about this program at **http://www.yourtickettowork.com**

Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS): This program offers beneficiaries information, consultation, and legal representation around work incentives, vocational rehabilitation, other employment services, and the Ticket-to-Work program. PABSS projects operate in every state. Missouri’s is provided through Missouri Protection and Advocacy and can be accessed via the following link,
http://www.moadvocacy.org/PABSS.htm

Work Incentives Counselors and Assistance (Benefits Planners): In Missouri individuals can receive direct personal assistance related to understanding and utilizing SSA work incentives. There are two organizations that provide these services based upon your county of residence. You can access additional information via the following links **http://www.moadvocacy.org/WIPA.htm** or
http://www.paraquad.org/Programs/ShowMeEmployment.html

TACE Center at the University of Missouri-Columbia: This organization maintains a SSA work incentives resource page which can be accessed through
http://www.rcep7.org/ssawork/default.html

Work Incentive Planning and Assistance National Training Center: Virginia Commonwealth University operates a national work incentive center that can be accessed via **http://www.vcu-ntc.org/**

PACER Center: PACER's Technical Assistance on Transition and the Rehabilitation Act (TATRA) Project focuses on helping families prepare youth with disabilities for employment and independent living. Resource information related to work incentives can be accessed via **http://www.pacer.org/tatra/resources/socialsec.asp**

Employer Resources

According to employers, the number one staffing issue they face is hiring and retaining qualified employees--a concern that becomes more pressing as we begin to feel the crunch of a shrinking and aging workforce. To remain competitive, employers are looking beyond the traditional labor sources to access skilled, qualified workers. This includes focusing recruitment efforts on under-represented job candidates including people with disabilities. The following resources are sampling of those available to assist employers to achieve this goal.

People With Disabilities: An Untapped Business Resource: The successful employment of people with disabilities starts with an understanding of how hiring people with disabilities can increase diversity and further an organization's mission or a business's financial bottom line. The Missouri Planning Council and the University of Missouri Kansas City Institute for Human Development offer an online curriculum with two modules: Diversity in Employment & Disability Awareness as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) & Reasonable Accommodations. These modules can be accessed via **http://www.empowermotraining.org/**

ForEmployers.com: This web site uses technology and flexible design strategies (or universal design) to bridge the needs of the business community and the employment needs of people with disabilities. The site provides straightforward solutions and information that address everyday human resource issues, especially as they relate to current or future employees with disabilities. **http://www.foremployers.com/index.php**

The office of Disability Employment Policy with the U.S. Department of Labor: ODEP offers a number of employer resources that can be accessed via the following link. **http://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/employer/**

Diversity World: This site has a wide range of resources and information on accommodations, job development and other topics. Of particular interest might be a series of online videos for employers. The videos highlight successes and strategies for developing an inclusive workforce
http://www.diversityworld.com/Disability/index.html

The Job Accommodation Network: JAN is a comprehensive resource on job accommodations which targets several audiences, including employers. Information for employers includes information of the ADA about interviewing, developing policies and procedures, job re-structuring and a host of useful topics. **http://www.jan.wvu.edu/**

ADA Project: Each of the 10 federal regions has an ADA project. The Great Plains center serves Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas. There are many excellent resources including a fairly extensive on-line training course called ADA Basic Building Blocks. A number of helpful publications are available, including publications on accessibility

guidelines and technical assistance manuals offering guidance on implementation of the ADA with respect to employment, local governments and the private sector. http://www.adaproject.org/

Workforce Discovery: Diversity and Disability in the Workplace: This is an in-depth training on disability awareness with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) integrated throughout each training module.
http://www.transcen.org/DandD/intro.html