

Employment Services Conditions of Participation

Employment services assist recipients to become gainfully employed (including self-employment) in a job that meets their career goals. Employment services include pre-employment and supported employment services that are provided over a specified period of time, are based on a defined outcome documented on the recipients person-centered support plan and are planned to decrease over time as recipient work-related goals and objectives are achieved. Consistent with the person-centered approach to these services, individuals accessing employment services should be encouraged, on an ongoing basis, to explore their interests, strengths, and abilities relating to employment or career advancement.

Employment services may be offered in a variety of settings, including distance delivery if authorized in the recipient's support plan, but, because independence and community integration are goals for these services, they may not be provided in sheltered workshops or other similar specialized vocational facilities, or any other setting that has the effect of isolating individuals who receive home and community-based waiver services, from the broader community of individuals not receiving waiver services. Employment services may be provided in a residential setting if self-employed (including subsistence) or if a recipient has an agreement with their employer to work from home.

Pre-employment services provide time limited learning and work experiences that allow recipients to develop general work readiness and non-job specific strengths and skills that are applicable to all work settings. Pre-employment services may also assist a recipient to determine individual strengths, interests, abilities, and support needs, or become gainfully employed. If an individual identifies self-employment as their desired outcome, pre-employment services may include supporting the recipient as they determine the concept of their business and develop a business plan, as well as referring the recipient to the appropriate community resources for additional guidance in identifying potential sources of financing and additional assistance in developing and launching a business. While the service can assist recipients working toward self-employment, the majority of the work that needs to be done, from research to writing a business plan, will be the responsibility of the recipient.

Supported employment services include the progressive phases of job-specific training, job coaching, ongoing intermittent support to assist with keeping a job or career advancement, and support to maintain self-employment.

The provider who chooses to offer supported employment services must be certified as a provider of supported employment under 7 AAC 130.220(a)(1)(F), meet the requirements of 7 AAC 130.270, and operate in compliance with the following standards.

I. Program Administration

A. Personnel.

1. Employment Services program administrator.
 - a. The provider agency must designate an employment services program administrator who is responsible for day-to-day management of the program.
 - b. The provider may use a term other than program administrator for this position (e.g., program director, program manager, or program supervisor).
 - c. The program administrator must be at least 25 years of age and qualified through experience and education in a human services field or setting.
 - i. Required experience: one year of full-time or equivalent part-time experience providing services to individuals in a human services setting in a position with responsibility for planning, development, and management or operation of programs involving service delivery, fiscal management, needs assessment, program evaluation, or similar tasks.
 - ii. Required education and additional experience or alternatives to formal education:
 - (A) Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree from an accredited college or university in social work, psychology, rehabilitation, nursing or a closely related human services field; or
 - (B) Associate of Arts degree from an accredited college or university in psychology, rehabilitation, nursing or a closely related human services field, and two years of full-time, or equivalent part-time experience working with human services recipients; or
 - (C) four years of full-time or equivalent part-time experience working with human services recipients in social work, psychology, rehabilitation, nursing, or a closely related human services field or setting; or
 - (D) certification as a rural community health aide or practitioner and one year of full-time, or equivalent part-time experience working with human services recipients.
 - d. In addition to possessing the skill set of an employment services specialist, and meeting education and experience requirements, the administrator must possess the knowledge base and skills necessary to carry out the employment services program:
 - i. The administrator knowledge base must include:
 - (A) the medical, behavioral, and habilitative conditions and requirements of the population to be served;
 - (B) supported employment philosophy, state regulations and emerging service delivery techniques; and
 - (C) the applicable laws, regulations and policies related to governing services for individuals with disabilities.
 - ii. The administrator skill set must include:
 - (A) the ability to develop and evaluate a support plan to meet the needs of each recipient to be served; and
 - (B) the ability to effectively supervise and support employment services specialists.
 - e. Prior to appointment as the employment services program administrator, the administrator must receive and maintain National Certification in Employment Services, or an equivalent certification in employment services.

2. Employment services specialist.
 - a. Employment services specialists must be at least 18 years of age, qualified through education or experience, and possess, or develop before providing services, the skills necessary to perform the tasks included in the employment services plan.
 - b. Required education:
 - i. high school or general education development (GED) diploma; and
 - ii. demonstration to the provider of the ability to communicate in English, including reading written instructions and making appropriate entries regarding services in the recipient's record or file.
 - c. Required skill set:
 - i. Job exploration and discovery for individuals with disabilities;
 - ii. benefits counseling, including the impact of wages on state and federal disability benefits;
 - iii. researching employment opportunities;
 - iv. job development and job matching;
 - v. identifying and teaching required employment-related skills; and
 - vi. job coaching and support.

B. Training.

1. The provider must provide orientation and ongoing training for employment services specialists to ensure they are qualified to perform, and to maintain a safe environment while providing, employment services.
2. In addition to training requirements outlined in the Provider Conditions of Participation, the employment services program administrator must provide and document in employee records, training on the following topics, at a minimum, for employment services specialists:
 - a. state policy and regulations governing the provision of employment services;
 - b. understanding the needs of the population to be served;
 - c. current best practices on the delivery of employment services;
 - d. universal precautions and basic infection control procedures;
 - e. personal care skills for those recipients who require assistance while receiving employment services; and
 - f. workplace safety including proper use of tools and equipment and fall prevention.
3. Within one year of employment, the employment services specialist must receive and maintain documentation in their employee record of the National Certification in Employment Services, or an equivalent certification in employment services.

II. Billing for Services

The provider agency may not claim reimbursement for

1. incentive payments made to an employer to encourage or subsidize the employer's participation in employment services;
2. payments that are passed through to users of employment services; or
3. payments for any training that is required of employment support specialists noted above.

III. Provision of Employment Services

A. Employment services in a support plan.

The program administrator must collaborate with the recipient and the recipient's planning team to

1. determine the recipient's need for employment services;
2. identify the outcome the recipient is expected to achieve through the services; and
3. ensure that the support plan includes all relevant information related to the request for services, to include:
 - a. how the service will assist the recipient to secure and retain employment or self-employment;
 - b. how the service meets the recipient's individualized goals as identified during a person-centered planning process;
 - c. if the recipient is employed in a competitive and integrated job;
 - d. how the recipient's job aligns with their individualized goals for employment;
 - e. the amount, frequency, and duration of the service;
 - f. the total hours per week the recipient is scheduled to work;
 - g. the team's plan to decrease services over time in order to increase workplace independence;
 - h. how the service does not duplicate or supplant services otherwise available to the recipient, and
 - i. the number of hours provided by distance delivery and how the distance delivery mode aligns with (a) – (h) above.

B. Allowable activities for employment services.

1. Allowable pre-employment activities for employment services may include:
 - a. development of general work readiness skills;
 - b. development of non-job specific strengths;
 - c. assisting a recipient in determining their individual strengths, interests, abilities, skills, experiences, and support needs;
 - d. assistance to aid the recipient in becoming gainfully employed;
 - e. assisting a recipient in determining conditions and employment settings optimal for their success;
or
 - f. assistance to become self-employed, including supporting the recipient as they determine their own business concept and develop a business plan, and providing appropriate referral to community resources for additional guidance in developing and launching a business.
2. Allowable supported employment activities for employment services may include:
 - a. job coaching, utilizing systematic instruction to assist the recipient to learn and carry out their job duties;
 - b. ongoing periodic support on the job to assist the recipient to remain gainfully employed;
 - c. support for maximizing hours worked, pay, benefits, and opportunities for career advancement based on the recipient's abilities, interests, and priorities; or
 - d. job coaching support to assist the recipient to maintain self-employment, including ongoing periodic assistance, counseling, and guidance after the business has been launched.

C. Implementation.

1. The employment services specialist must ensure the safety of the recipient at all times in the provision of services.
2. The employment services specialist must provide services in a manner that results in the intended outcomes and goals of service delivery including:
 - a. development of work skills needed to perform the job and obtain or maintain job stability;
 - b. maximum integration of the recipient in the work setting and the broader community;
 - c. development of a system of natural supports in the workplace and community; and
 - d. employment that leads to increased, competitive earnings and work-related benefits.

D. Monitoring services.

1. The provider agency must monitor the delivery of employment services and, annually at minimum, evaluate the effectiveness of the services at the agency level and provide supporting documentation to SDS as requested.
2. The employment services provided to each recipient shall be evaluated using a defined evidence-informed methodology, in which data is recorded and reviewed to ensure that the services:
 - a. are furnished in a timely manner in accordance with each recipient's support plan;
 - b. are delivered in a manner that supports the recipient in achieving their desired employment outcome;
 - c. do not include payment for the supervisory activities provided to all employees at a recipient's workplace;
 - d. are delivered in a manner that protects the recipient's health, safety, and welfare.
3. The provider must instruct direct service workers to notify the program manager, the supervisor, or the appropriate authority when there is cause for concern about a recipient's health, safety, or welfare.