

Employment Values

IRIS regards employment as a universally valued activity that benefits people, their community, and society. People who work have better health and a stronger sense of belonging, purpose, and self-worth.

The road to employment begins at different places for people; benefits from investment and support; and often requires patience and persistence. Even so, generation of private income is a realistic goal for all working age individuals, no matter how their abilities may vary.



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Ready. Set. Go!

The path to employment looks different for everyone. If you have health concerns or have not worked in a long time, getting out at your own pace with the flexibility you need can be the key to building your confidence and stamina. Some people start by volunteering or getting involved in their local TimeBank. Building community connections can help you polish or gain new skills, explore work interests, get positive references, and grow important relationships with people who can give you ideas and job leads. Research has shown that both employment and volunteering have positive health and social benefits.

Did you know that most job opportunities are never advertised? Many people find jobs by networking and tapping into the “hidden” job market. Seeking employment by connecting with the people you know and other community members is a more effective way of finding a job than looking for help wanted ads and submitting job applications.

If you are interested in using any of these strategies, talk with your IRIS Consultant who can introduce you to resources and help you to create a relationship map that you can use to get connected on your employment journey.



www.Wisconsin-IRIS.com

Pathways to Employment



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IRIS Connections

The First Step to Employment

October is National Disability Employment Awareness month, which is a great time to think about employment. Everyone starts their employment journey from different places. This edition of IRIS Connections features Aaron Moureau’s story, and how he followed his interests and skills and found a fulfilling job. There are also examples of resources that can help you start or continue on the path to meaningful employment.

When thinking about employment, people often do not know where to start. Some might not know what their skills are, what kind of work they can or want to do, or where to begin. If you are thinking about employment, try answering these three questions:



1. What are some of your interests?
2. What skills do you have?
3. Where are your favorite places to be?

Your answers to these questions can become the starting point for you to begin exploring careers and job opportunities in your area.



Care to Volunteer?

Volunteering can be as fulfilling and meaningful as employment. A great resource for finding volunteer opportunities is VolunteerMatch, which lets you search for opportunities based on area, interest, and age group. Their main goal is to bring good people and good causes together, and everyone is welcome.

Access VolunteerMatch at:
www.volunteermatch.org



Aaron's Employment Story



Aaron Moureau

Aaron Moureau is a motivated young man living in Menasha, WI. He took his first steps toward employment during high school, and he graduated a few years ago.

Growing up, Aaron always wanted to cook, and often helped his mom, Kathy, in the kitchen. Aaron loved cooking, and he looked for ways to improve his skills and see where his passion would take him. He pursued his goal by taking cooking classes in high school and at The Arc Fox Cities, an advocacy organization, where he identified his interests and started developing his skills.

“...other jobs can give you experience and opportunities that may lead you to your employment goal.”

When Aaron was finishing high school, he knew he wanted to find employment that let him explore his passion for cooking. His teacher helped him get started with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). Aaron prepared for employment and worked on his interview skills with help through the DVR, and he kept his eyes open for jobs in the community. He applied to Zuppas, a popular café in Neenah, WI, and they agreed to interview him.

Aaron connected with Vocational Support Services (VSS), a program of Goodwill Industries. The people at VSS gave him tips on how to dress for an interview and held practice interviews to help Aaron feel more comfortable and prepared. His daily practice paid off when Aaron was hired!

Aaron was very excited to start working, but he was worried about doing a good job. Reflecting back on the past 10 months of working at Zuppas, his mom Kathy said “From when he first started and how nervous he was, and now how relaxed he is and how great a job he does, it’s like ‘wow’.”

Most people are nervous when starting a new job, but Aaron shows that sticking with it is the best way to get over that nervousness.

For now, Aaron’s job coach supports him during work, and Aaron has been able to work independently more and more. His current goal is to be able to work entirely on his own. Aaron’s shift is usually over the lunch hour, which is the busiest time of day, and he is happy to stay busy.

Peter Kuenzi, the owner of Zuppas, is very happy and impressed with Aaron’s work and positive personality. He said, “When I ask Aaron how he is doing, he always answers, ‘Awesome!’ I have no other employee like that.”

Aaron has a good relationship with his coworkers, and they include Aaron as one of the “gang.” The group of coworkers spends time together outside of work as well. Part of Aaron’s job is to make sure that new employees feel like they are part of the team. Aaron is eager to support and encourage new employees in training at Zuppas.

When Aaron was asked why he wanted to work, he responded, “So I could have a good job and make awesome friends.” He is achieving this with his new friendships and willingness to train new staff. It is pretty clear that he is excited about working and will continue to be successful wherever his goals take him.

Aaron found a job he is happy with, but his journey is not finished. Most of his time at work is spent bussing tables and keeping the place clean, but his main goal is to be able to work in the kitchen and develop his cooking skills. Aaron’s story is a great example of one way to pursue your employment goals. If it is difficult to find a job you can be passionate about, other jobs can give you experience and opportunities that may lead you to your employment goal.



Upcoming Events

IRIS Networking and Learning Events and ICA Listening Sessions

- Nov. 7 Onalaska
- Mar. 3 Racine
- May 8 Trego

Other Events

- Oct. 29-31 **Wisconsin Self-Determination Conference**
Wisconsin Dells
- Nov. 14-15 **Across the Lifespan Conference**
Wisconsin Dells
- Jan. 10 **5th Annual Youth Transition Conference**
Wisconsin Dells

For more information, visit:
<http://www.Wisconsin-IRIS.com/events>

Planning Ahead for the Holidays

The holidays are full of hustle and bustle. There are places to go, people to see, and shopping to do; your workers may have just as many plans as you! Take some time to talk with your workers about holiday time off. The holiday season may change their availability.

During the holidays, many offices may be closed or open during limited hours. Planning and preparing for closures can also reduce your stress.

IRIS office hours are listed online at www.Wisconsin-IRIS.com. The IRIS toll-free phone number (1-888-515-4747) is answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including holidays.

IRIS wishes you a stress-free, happy, healthy holiday season!

Pictured left: Aaron and Dillon, his coworker.

Employment Resources

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is an important resource for people with disabilities who are seeking employment or self-employment. The DVR provides funding for employment-related services and supports. Visit the DVR online at dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr.

Project Search is a program that places students in a workplace setting for their final year of high school. Students are supported by staff as they gain work experience and learn job-related skills. Visit the Project Search website (www.projectsearch.us) to learn more about the opportunities they offer.

The **IRIS Employment Toolkit** contains helpful information and resources for anyone who would like to learn more about employment. Toolkits are available from your IRIS Consultant or by contacting the IRIS Information Center at 1-888-515-4747 or info@Wisconsin-IRIS.com.



Questions about Employment?

If you have questions and want to learn more about finding a job or starting your own business, contact your IRIS Consultant or the IRIS Information Center at 1-888-515-4747 or info@Wisconsin-IRIS.com.