



Employment Toolkit

2014



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How to use this toolkit

This toolkit was designed to be used by people in IRIS, those who are important to them, and IRIS Consultants. This toolkit can be used in its entirety (e.g., you can start on page 1 and work your way through it to the end) or you can choose and use only the sections that make sense for your plan. If you want help with this toolkit, you can ask your IRIS Consultant or anyone else who is important to you to help you.

This toolkit contains many internet links to websites and helpful resources. If you do not have a computer with internet, you can consider accessing one through your local library, a friend or family member, your school, or a service provider with whom you are working. You can also ask your IRIS Consultant to help you gather important information from these websites that interests you the most.

If you have questions, please contact the IRIS Information Center at:

1-888-515-4747 (Toll Free/TTY)
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Introduction

You can work if you want to. IRIS can support you on your path to employment.

Everyone can work, regardless of ability. With the right planning and supports, people with the most complex challenges can generate income and contribute to their communities through work. Work looks different for everyone. Some people work a little; others work a lot. Some people work for an employer; other people start their own businesses. The kinds of things that people do and the tasks they perform at work are endless. Most people only see or know about a small number of jobs that exist in the community. Sometimes it is limited knowledge about job possibilities that can make us think that there are not many options.

This toolkit was designed to provide information to consider when thinking about and planning employment. In these pages are some key resources to learn about and include in your employment planning process. There are also some questions for you to consider as you plan. These questions can help you decide what is most important to you. Your IRIS Consultant and other important people in your life can talk with you about these questions.

IRIS Values Employment

Employment is 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. Generating private income is a realistic goal for all working age individuals in IRIS.

Overview of the Employment Planning Process

The path to employment is not always a straight one; the journey looks different for everyone. There are some critical steps for you to take along the way. Your IRIS Consultant and other important people in your life can help you.

You do not have to use this toolkit in order; you can jump to any section that makes sense for you. You can use all of this toolkit or just parts of it. And you can incorporate this toolkit into other resources you or your team members use.



Bookmark This!

Top 10 Websites on Employment for People with Disabilities

These are the 10 most helpful resources and information about employment on the web. Take time to browse and explore what they have to offer!

1. United States Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy: www.dol.gov/odep
2. Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr>
3. InControl Wisconsin Self-Directed Employment Planning Modules <http://www.incontrolwisconsin.org/icevents/self-directed-employment-planning-modules/>
4. Paths to Employment Resource Center (PERC): www.percthinkwork.org
5. Work Support: www.WorkSupport.com
6. The Rural Institute's Transition and Employment Projects Website: <http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/default.asp>
7. Institute for Community Inclusion: www.communityinclusion.org
8. Wisconsin Employment First www.wiemploymentfirst.com
9. The Employment Network: <http://employmentnetwork.ning.com>
10. National APSE: www.apse.org

Note: If you do not have a computer with internet at your home, you can consider accessing one through your local library, a friend or family member, your school, or a service provider with whom you are working. You can also ask your IRIS Consultant to help you gather important information from these websites that interests you the most.

You Can Work

Work brings many benefits to our lives. Some people work because they want to do something meaningful. Some people work because it is where they meet new people. Some people work just for the paycheck or the fringe benefits. You may know exactly what you want to do for work, but if you don't know, that is okay. There are ways you can get to know what you are good at and explore your options. This toolkit will explain how to do that.

You or people around you might have concerns about work and how it could affect your health, your benefits, and other parts of your life. It is important to talk about those concerns and find out if there are resources you can access or plans you can make to address them.

Planning Ahead

With your IRIS Consultant and/or someone else important to you, consider the following questions:

- ✓ What benefits will work bring to my life? Why do I want to work?
- ✓ Who are the people in my life that support my desire to work?
- ✓ What concerns do I have about working?
- ✓ Do other people in my life have concerns about me working?

Videos on How People with Disabilities Can Work

There are many videos online to inspire and inform people about the employment possibilities. You can watch or share these with people you know.

Making a Living is an inspirational video featuring three business owners in Wisconsin: <http://youtu.be/ibxPcKn40Ak>

New Entrepreneur is a video featuring self-employed lowans: http://youtu.be/AG6uru_QwiU

Careers is a video about overcoming barriers to pursue meaningful careers: <http://youtu.be/VHg7lvo0g40>

Pathways to Independence features service providers in Wisconsin that have changed their services to support people to pursue integrated employment: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xd3ggUwLHbw>

Real People, Real Jobs is a collection of written and video stories of people working in the community: www.realworkstories.org

Community Reflections is an inspirational video with people sharing their perspectives about work: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAZswVGSv_Q

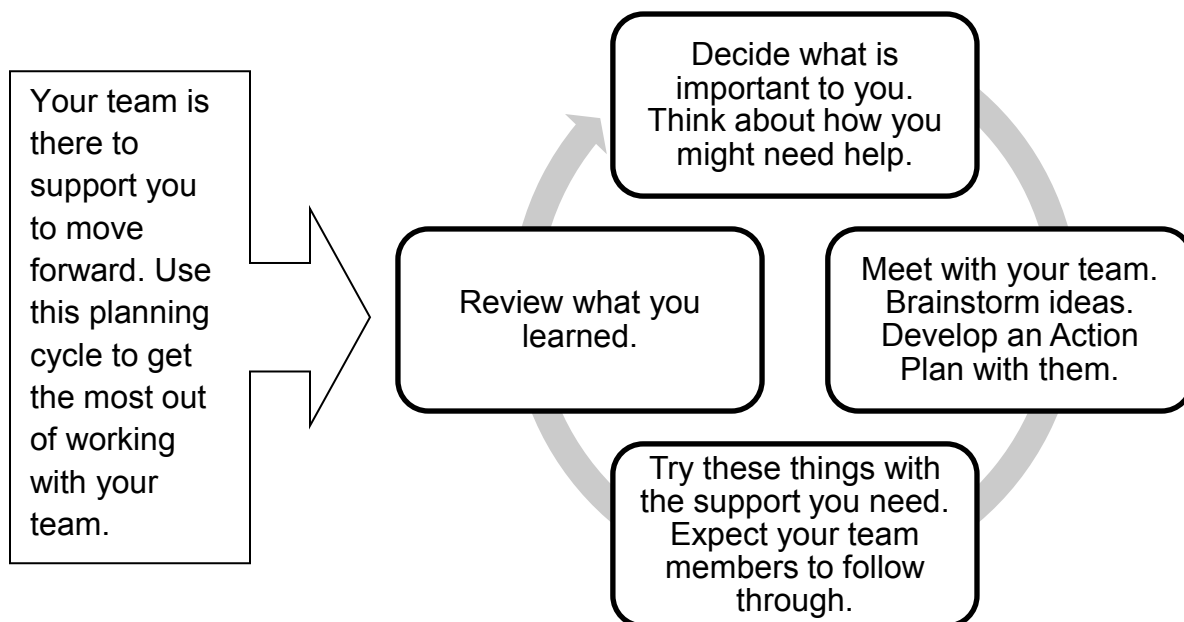
Create a Planning Team

Once you decide to move forward with employment planning, it may be helpful to create a planning team to help you along the way. Team members can be great resources to provide you with ideas, advice, feedback, and guidance. Most planning teams have “core members.” At minimum, these core members could be you, your family member or someone who is important to you, your guardian (if you have one), your IRIS Consultant, your special education or transition school staff if you are in school, your Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Counselor and the employment service professional(s) that may be working with you.

You can ask your core team members to meet with you on a regular basis. Some teams meet every month, others do not. Do what makes sense for you and your team. It is also a good idea to designate a note taker for each meeting and to make a “to do” list for each team member at the end of each meeting. These things keep team members accountable and the process moving along.

As you move through the planning process, you can include other people such as Work Incentive Benefits Specialists, Assistive Technology Consultants, Occupational Therapists, direct support staff, community members, employers, experts, or consultants in your team meetings when it makes sense to have them share information or be involved in the planning conversation.

It is important for everyone on your team to have designated roles. Most team members have specific things that they do with you based on their role in your life or their job description. Early in the planning process, team members should talk with each other about their roles and responsibilities as part of your team.



Tips on Teamwork

Keeping your team working together will help you reach your goals a lot faster than if you try to go through the planning process alone. If you need help coordinating your planning team, you can ask your IRIS Consultant or someone important to you to help.

1. Ask team members to talk about their roles with each other.
2. Get the team together every four to six weeks.
3. Establish a meeting agenda.
4. Ask someone to take notes.
5. Start each meeting by reviewing where you are at in the planning process and what you've done since the last time you met.
6. Use the meetings to problem solve and get ideas from your team members.
7. Summarize the plan of action at the end of the meeting.
8. Create a "to do" list with a name attached to each action item.
9. Set a date and time for the next meeting before the meeting ends.
10. Send a summary of the meeting and the "to do list" to all team members.
11. Check in with team members between meetings to let them know what you've accomplished and ask what they have done on your behalf.

Planning Ahead

With your IRIS Consultant and/or someone else important to you, consider the following questions:

- ✓ What are the specific things I might need help with as I go through the planning process?
- ✓ Who do I want on my planning team? Make a list.
- ✓ How often do I want my planning team to meet?
- ✓ How long do I want to meet with my team each time?
- ✓ Where do I want to meet with my team?
- ✓ Will I interact with and direct my team or will I ask someone to help me? If so, who?
- ✓ Will I make the agendas for the meetings or will I need help from someone to do that?
- ✓ Do I want someone to keep notes at my meeting? If so, who?

Determine What is Important to You

There are two ways that people work in the community - they either work for an employer by getting a job or they work for themselves by starting their own business. Within these two ways of working there are many possibilities!

Exploring your options and what is important to you can seem overwhelming, especially if you are not sure what interests you or what your employment skills are. There are ways that you can begin to explore your options. These include taking interest inventories, identifying your skills, doing online research, and arranging informational interviews and job shadows with employers. You can do these things on your own or you can ask people to help you.

Career Interest Inventories – These “tests” can give you ideas about what you should do based on your interests and skills. You can visit your local library for books with career interest inventories; ask the library staff to help you find them. Your local Job Center and technical college career center should also have career interest inventory resources. If you are in high school, your teacher can help you take a career interest inventory.

The Discovery Process – This is part of Customized Employment Planning. Discovery is used in place of traditional assessments. Discovery is a way to get to know a job seeker in order to do effective employment planning. Some employment service providers and school staff have received training on how to do Discovery. You can work with your school, family members, or service provider to engage in Discovery so that you can identify your skills, preferences for employment and where you might need support.

The Rural Institute has information on Customized Employment Planning and planning templates on how to complete Discovery.
<http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/Discovery.asp>

Transferrable Skills – If you haven’t worked before or have had limited experiences with work, you might find it difficult to answer questions like, “what do you want to do for a job?” or “what work skills do you have?” If you cannot answer these questions, someone might try to decide for you. If this happens, you might find yourself in a job that is not a good match for you. One place to start is to make a list of the things you do at home, at school, and in other places you go to. Other people in your life can observe you, give you input, and add to your list. The tasks you can perform in various places in your life can become skills that transfer into a workplace.

Job descriptions are simply a bundle of tasks that have been put together to create a position for a worker. Use the worksheet on page 11 to determine your transferrable skills.

Informational Interviews – You can learn about different jobs and workplaces by conducting informational interviews, taking tours of businesses, and job shadowing. You are not asking for a job when you arrange an informational interview, tour, or job shadow. You are networking, trying to gather information that will help you decide what to do, and getting advice on how to reach your goal. More information to help you prepare for an informational interview is on page 13.

Ideal Conditions for Work - Everyone has what are called “ideal conditions for work.” Some people like to work outside. Some people like to work in the morning or on the weekends. Some people need flexible schedules because of circumstances in their life. Some people work best in quiet places where they are able to concentrate. Others like to be in vibrant, social work environments. These are called ideal conditions for employment. Everyone has them. Is there a certain kind of work environment that would fit who you are and your personality best? Is it noisy, well lit, social, quiet, routinized, structured, or laid back? Use the worksheet on page 14 to determine your ideal conditions for employment.

Remember that your team members are part of your network. Besides the things they do in their personal and professional roles with you, team members can also help you to make contacts with employers in your community. These contacts can be used to set up informational interviews and job shadows. Later, when you begin job seeking, these connections can lead to job opportunities. After all, most people find jobs through people that they know. Some experts say that fewer than 80% of all jobs are ever advertised. Most jobs exist in what is called the “hidden job market.”

You should consider the people on your team as part of *your network of people*. All people are connected to other people. That means that everyone on your team should be thinking about who they know, what these people do, and where these people work.

Getting you connected with potential jobs is a responsibility for everyone on your team. So, think about all the people you know, the activities you have been involved in, past job experiences, volunteering that you have done, and any other ways that you have met people who might be able to connect with people about your work interests and your job search.

Do you want to be in control of your employment planning?

InControl Wisconsin’s *Self-Directed Employment Planning* series was designed to help people think about their integrated employment options, understand employment supports, and create a plan to achieve their integrated employment goals.

www.incontrolwisconsin.org/icevents/self-directed-employment-planning-modules

Putting Ideas into Action

Once you have begun to identify your interests, narrow them down by picking up to three interest areas to explore through research and informational interviews. With your planning team, develop a three-month plan to learn more about the different ways that people work in these fields. Here's an example of one woman's exploration action plan. This plan was developed at a team meeting after an exploratory conversation about her barriers and assets to working in the field of pottery, which she loved.

Allison's 3-Month Action Plan

These things will help Allison and her team members learn about working with pottery:

- Allison will visit local arts and craft shops in the area.
- Allison's sister and staff will spend time observing Allison and talking with her about her likes and dislikes.
- Allison will spend time looking on the internet for pottery business information.
- Allison will visit local farmers markets and craft sales, making sure to talk to vendors about their experiences.
- Allison will visit a local pottery studio and ask for an informational interview.
- Allison will research enrichment classes and take a pottery class.

After completing this Action Plan, Allison will:

- ✓ Have the opportunity to learn what her preferences are.
- ✓ Have had experiences to make choices.
- ✓ Have been introduced to people with the same pottery interest.
- ✓ Be able to decide to pursue pottery as a vocation or not.

After completing this Action Plan, Allison's team members will:

- ✓ Have gotten the opportunity to get to know Allison in new and different ways.
- ✓ Discover and document her talents and transferable skills.
- ✓ Be able to better identify what her support needs might be for her future goals.
- ✓ Have learned about the pottery business and will be more effective in providing her with guidance and support to pursue her goals.

Planning Ahead

With your IRIS Consultant and/or someone important to you, consider the following questions:

- ✓ What things do I like to do? What things am I good at?
- ✓ What kinds of jobs do I know about that could use my interests and skills?
- ✓ What jobs can I see myself doing right now and in the future?
- ✓ Who do I know and where do they work?
- ✓ What are my transferrable skills?
- ✓ What are my ideal conditions for employment?
- ✓ Are the things that interest me the most the type of jobs where I would work for someone else or start my own business?

The internet can help you explore.

The following websites can help you start to learn about different jobs and self-employment opportunities. After you explore online, you should explore the possibilities in your own community by talking with people about what they do, visiting businesses, and asking for informational interviews and job shadows.

Dictionary of Occupational Titles describes millions of different kinds of jobs that people can do. Exploring jobs on this site can help you create a list of jobs you would like to see firsthand in business tours and job shadows. **ONet** is similar to the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*. www.occupationalinfo.org and www.onetonline.org

Wisconsin Small Business Development Center offers resources, education, and tools to help you consider self-employment and plan a business. *The First Steps* online course can help you determine if business ownership is right for you. There is also a free call-in line to get general business information and advice. www.wisconsinbdc.org

START-UP USA is a resource for information about self-employment for people with disabilities. On this site you will find helpful FACT sheets and free webinars, some featuring business owners with disabilities talking about their experiences. www.start-up-usa.biz

Wisconsin Technical Colleges can be a great resource to explore careers. Every technical college in Wisconsin has Disability Resource Service Center and a Career Development Center so you can learn about career and educational options. www.wtcsystem.edu/colleges.htm

Job Center of Wisconsin features several career inventory resources, including Career Cruising, WISCareers, and mySkills myFuture. www.wisconsinjobcenter.org/careerplanning/default.htm

Transferrable Skills Worksheet

For each environment, job, or activity complete a different worksheet. You can make copies of this worksheet. Ask people important to you to help.

1. Write the job or activity and environment at the top of the chart (e.g., cleaning the kitchen at home, shopping at the grocery store).
2. In the task column, list each specific thing that needs to be done.
3. In the skills column, list what you do to complete the tasks.
4. In the level of skill column, use a rating between one and three to rate how well you think you completed the task (3=very skilled; 2=OK; 1=needs improvement).
5. In the last column, rate how much you enjoyed doing each task (3= really liked it; 2=it was OK; 1=did not like it).

After you have completed these worksheets, on another sheet of paper write a list of the things you enjoyed doing and were good at. These are your transferrable skills. Lastly, write another list of the things you enjoyed doing but needed to improve on. These are things that you can work on to make yourself more marketable to employers.

Environment, job, or activity:			
Tasks (The thing(s) that need to be done.)	Skills (What I do to complete it.)	Level of Skill (Rate:1-3)	How much I like it (Rate: 1-3)

Examples of Transferrable Skills

Transferrable skills are the skills and abilities people gain performing regular life activities that can also be done in the workplace. These life activities could include skills you have used in previous jobs, volunteer experiences, school experiences, working around the house, doing hobbies, sports, etc. While these skills may have been used in a particular environment, by making a list of your skills, you can identify the skills that can transfer easily into work environments. Everyone has transferrable skills.

The Wisconsin Job Center provides an overview and list of transferrable skills at: <http://www.wisconsinjobcenter.org/publications/8961/8961.htm>

Here are some basic examples to get you thinking:

Environment	Skills
At Home	Operating equipment such as a push mower, weed-eater and snow blower Washing dishes and clothing Cleaning Organizing Folding Preparing food Managing the food budget
At School	Memorizing information Organizing tasks Working in a team Adding and subtracting numbers Reading and analyzing complex material
Community Involvement	Handling money Navigating surroundings Supervising children Using the telephone Relaying information
Previous Jobs	Taking direction Giving direction Assembling Analyzing data Following through Computer work

Informational Interviews and Job Shadows

Informational Interviews help you explore your options and learn what employers are looking for. It is also a way for employers to get to know you without the expectation that you are asking for a job. If you are considering self-employment, informational interviews are also a valuable tool to help you understand what it is like to run a business and get tips or advice when developing your business plan. Besides getting information to make choices about your employment goals, informational interviews can be great self-confidence builders and an opportunity to make connections, sometimes lasting ones.

Informational interviews can be held over the phone or in person. You will most likely find that employers and business owners are very receptive to talking with you about what they do. After all, most people do enjoy talking about themselves! When you ask for an informational interview, it is important to make it clear that you are not looking for a job and that you are only looking for information. Here is an example:

“Hi, my name is Mike Smith. I heard about your business from Eric Brown, who used to work for you. I am calling because I am exploring a career in small engine repair. I’d like to find out about the different job duties and what employers are looking for. I’m wondering if you would be willing to give me a tour of your business and meet with me for a short time to share your perspective.”

Notice that Mike did not ask for a job. He made it clear that he was only looking for information. Also, Mike used his social network to connect with someone at the business. Making a list of who you know and where the work might help you make connections with employers.

Job Shadows are arranged in a similar way as informational interviews. To arrange a job shadow, ask for the opportunity to observe someone doing their work for a few hours. Job shadows can help you find out what the job and the work environment might be like. Remember, when you ask for an informational interview or a job shadow, *you are not asking for a job*, you are asking for information to help you make choices about your career. Even though informational interviews and job shadows are not job interviews, you will want to be well prepared and present yourself in a positive way.

Tips for Informational Interviews and Job Shadows

- ✓ Decide what information you are looking for before you contact businesses.
- ✓ Ask people who they know and where they work.
- ✓ Do some research on businesses that interest you.
- ✓ Develop a script and make contact by phone, email or in person.
- ✓ Develop a list of questions you want to ask.
- ✓ Practice asking the questions.
- ✓ Take notes when you meet.
- ✓ Follow up with a “thank you” card.

Your Ideal Conditions for Work

We all have ideal conditions of employment. People that work in places that meet their ideal conditions for employment are happy, well-motivated employees. To figure out what your ideal conditions are for employment, think about when you are at your best. What kinds of places do you like to be in? What does the environment look like, sound like, feel like? Think about your life and how it fits with work. Think about your health, your transportation options, and your supports.

You can ask people important to you to share their ideas also. Once you've developed your list of ideal conditions, place a check mark by three to five of them that are most important to you. You do this because to get a job you may need to compromise. Not all of your ideal conditions will be met, but many of them should be. A good job match occurs when you find a place that fits what is most important to you. If you start working with a job developer, it will be important for your job developer to understand your list also.

Most <input type="checkbox"/> Important	The things I need to be a well-motivated employee...
	Hours per week
	Times during the day
	Days of the week
	Location of the job
	Workplace and environment
	Type of work
	Type of supervisor
	Type of co-Workers
	Wages/benefits
	Other:

Access the Resources You Need

Resources from high schools, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the IRIS program, and the Social Security Administration can be braided together to help you reach your employment goal. No one system or resource was designed (or has enough funding or capacity) to provide everything you need to reach your goal. While coordinating these resources takes some extra effort, combining them will help you be the most successful. Remember, you can ask your IRIS Consultant or someone important to you to help you coordinate your resources.

You might find that accessing services and resources takes time. You may even be put on a waiting list for important services that you need to find or keep a job. If this happens you and your support team may need to spend more time to seek out other options and be even more creative when developing your employment plan.

Resources Schools Can Provide

If you are in high school, there are a number of things you can expect your school to be able to do with you to help you reach your employment goals. In school you can take career classes, and be part of extracurricular activities, school clubs and sports. Being involved in these things gets you the experiences you need to identify your interest and build your transferrable skills. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) and a Post-Secondary Transition Plan (PTP) that is created around and specific to your goals is a requirement of schools. These plans should reflect what is important to you and what you hope to achieve after school.

School staff can help you explore post-secondary education and training options, as well as line up experiences in the community (such as job shadows, work experiences and internships) with the support you need. Your school might work with a local service provider to arrange these opportunities. School support and resources can be coordinated with DVR and IRIS resources.

The key to coordinating these resources is to *first* develop your goals, *then* bring your team together to talk about how they can support your goals and what resources they can provide.



Self Advocacy Check

If you have employment goals and are in transition from high school to adult life, you should apply for services with the DVR at least two years before you graduate. DVR services can be coordinated with the school and can provide funding for paid work experiences, post-secondary education and training options, and more. While the school can help you connect with DVR, it will be your responsibility to invite your DVR counselor to your transition and IEP meetings.

Effective Transition Planning is essential to employment success after high school. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has a library of information and resources on transition services and planning for students, educators, and families. Some things worth looking at on this website are the *Opening Doors* series of handbooks on self-determination, employment and postsecondary education and training, as well as the *Transition Action Guide* module. <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/transition.html>

Resources DVR Can Provide

If you want to work and are in high school or beyond school, you can get help from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). DVR works with people with disabilities who are unemployed, underemployed, or fear losing a job, or need to make a career change due to disability. DVR is also a source for services and support to get education or training in order to get a job and become more self-sufficient. DVR has offices around the state.

To get started with DVR, you will need to complete a referral and application for services. You can get help to complete your application from someone on your team or from DVR. It is helpful to include your most recent Long-Term Care Functional Screen (LTC-FS) with your DVR application. You can get a copy of your LTC-FS by contacting the IRIS Information Center at 1-888-515-4747.

After you have submitted your application, a decision will be made about whether or not your local DVR office can help you right away or if you will have to go on a waiting list. You will be assigned a DVR Counselor. That person will work with you to create your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). DVR can provide funding to pay for a

variety of services to help you address barriers to employment and get the support you need to find the right job. Some examples of things that might be in your plan are:

- funding for an agency to complete a vocational assessment with you;
- someone to help you look for a job (a job developer);
- funding for a work incentives benefits analysis;
- funding for tuition expenses to complete a job training or educational program;
- funding for assistive technology or equipment to be used in your job search or at work;
- transportation help until you are able to afford these with your own work income or;
- funding for someone to help you with your job training (a job coach).

Paths to Employment Resource Center (PERC) features a free webinar series called the “Employment Strategies Series.” With this series you can learn about the different employment service models available to you, including Customized Employment, Support Employment, Job Development, and Vocational Futures Planning and Support.

<http://www.percthinkwork.org/education/courses/employment-strategies-series>

You may not need these things or you may need different things. DVR also supports business plan development and can provide a limited amount of funding to start-up a self-employment venture. If you work with DVR, your counselor will determine the specific things that DVR can help you with based on your employment plan and your needs.

DVR is a voluntary program so you do not have to work with DVR if you do not want to. However, IRIS funds might not be able to cover the supports and services you need to reach your employment goals due to the rules and policies of the state and federal government. People are most successful in reaching their goals when DVR and IRIS work together. Your IRIS Consultant can support you to access DVR services and help you change your IRIS plan, if you need to, as you work with DVR.

Planning Tip:

It is important that you, your DVR Counselor, and your IRIS Consultant are communicating during the employment planning process in order to coordinate resources and make a smooth transition to long-term support once you are done working with DVR.

It is also important for you to know that DVR is not a source for long-term employment supports. DVR will only provide services and funding for supports until you are stable at your new job or with your new business. If you need long-term job coaching or personal care in the workplace, IRIS could be your resource for this kind of ongoing support.

Resources Social Security Can Provide

Social Security provides a range of work incentives that help you work and keep the benefits you need. In the next section, you will find out how to connect with a Work Incentives Benefits Specialist to determine what work incentives are available to you based on your work goals and the benefits you receive. One of the work incentives that provides funding to help you reach your employment goal is a Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS plan).

A Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS plan) is a Supplemental Security Income (SSI) work incentive. It is a written plan that allows you to set aside income that would normally affect your SSI payment for a specified period of time so that you may pursue a work goal. With a PASS you could set aside money to go to school, start a business, or pursue vocational training that helps you achieve an employment goal. PASS could also be available to people who receive Social Security Disability Insurance (or SSDI). The website www.passplan.org provides easy to read information about PASS planning and has examples of successful PASS plans.

You can find out more about PASS (and other work incentives) by talking to a Work Incentives Benefits Specialist. You can find a Work Incentives Benefits Specialist near you at: www.wibsa.org.

Resources IRIS Can Provide

Your IRIS budget can be used to purchase services and supports you need for employment. Your IRIS services can be coordinated with school resources and DVR resources to create a “holistic” plan to help you achieve your goals.

How a person in IRIS chooses to spend his or her monthly budget is completely individualized. Throughout the employment planning process you may need to revisit your plan and adjust your IRIS budget accordingly. Your IRIS budget can be used to purchase employment related services such as community-based prevocational services, supported employment services, Vocational Futures Planning and Support, or Work Incentives Benefits Counseling. Talk with your IRIS Consultant about these and other service options, and how they might help you achieve your long-term care related outcomes.

Planning Ahead

With your IRIS Consultant and/or someone else important to you, consider the following questions:

- ✓ The support and resources school has provided me so far are...
- ✓ The support and resources DVR has provided me so far are...
- ✓ These resources were provided because....
- ✓ Resources and activities I would like to ask my school about are...
- ✓ Resources and activities I would like to ask DVR about are...
- ✓ Am I interested in learning more about PASS (Plan to Achieve Self-Support) planning?
- ✓ How much money is there for employment planning services and supports in my IRIS budget?
- ✓ How might I use this funding to get the supports and services I need?
- ✓ What do I expect to get out of these supports and resources available to me?

Advocating for What You Need

There may be times in your planning process that you have questions about the services you are receiving. You might also disagree with decisions that are made. You can get your questions answered and support to advocate for what you need.

WI FACETS provides information and referral services for families, as well as free one-to-one support by phone and in-person, including support for families at school meetings and mediations. www.wifacets.org

The **Client Assistance Program** is available to answer your questions about Vocational Rehabilitation services and support you in addressing problems you might have with DVR. <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/cap.htm>

The **IRIS Ombudsman** can provide you with information and support should you experience problems with IRIS. www.disabilityrightswi.org/programs/fcop

Schools, DVR, and IRIS Coordination

The best employment outcomes happen when systems and people work together. To make this process go more smoothly for job seekers, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) have created agreements and process guides. To be an effective self-advocate, you (and those supporting you) should be aware of the following resources. These can ask your team to use these documents with you as you plan together.

The **DVR/DPI/DVR Interagency Agreement** provides detail on the independent and shared commitments that each state agency has for people in state programs. http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/pdf_files/dpi_interagency_agreement.pdf

The **Transition Action Guide** is one of the most helpful resources for you and your team in the school-to-work transition process.

Full version: http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/pdf_files/tag.pdf

Short version: http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/pdf_files/tag_short_version.pdf

The **Technical Assistance Guide for Adults Seeking Employment** is a guide for people beyond high school involved with DVR and long-term care. This resource will help you understand how these programs can support you. This guide also contains a helpful question and answer section.

www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/lc/PProgramOps/prevoc/integratedemply.pdf

Let's Get to Work

The *Let's Get to Work* project has been working on changes in Wisconsin that will lead to improved integrated employment outcomes for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities in transition. The *Let's Get to Work* project has a website with many tools and resources for people to use in transition. There is also a series of videos on the website for family members and educators to learn about transition and planning for life after high school. www.letsgettoworkwi.org

Address Barriers to Employment

Some of the more common barriers to employment that people in IRIS face are lack of transportation options, uncertain goals, or a lack of employment experience or education, fear of losing important benefits, and need for assistive technology and workplace adaptations. This section of the toolkit will help you learn about some options and resources to overcome these common barriers.

Getting to and from Work

Transportation could be a barrier for you, especially if you live in a rural area. There are several ways people get to work; knowing about these will help you explore options in your area.

As you prepare to start your job search, it will be important to figure out how you will get to work, as well as when and where transportation is available. This will determine where to conduct your job search and the hours you are available for work.

Taking the Bus: If you live in a large community, there may be a public bus system. Riding the bus may seem like a confusing or scary idea if you are unfamiliar with it. There are Orientation and Mobility Trainers who specialize in helping people with disabilities learn to ride the bus. If you are interested in learning to ride the bus, talk to your IRIS Consultant or DVR counselor (if you are working with DVR), or contact your local Aging and Disability Resource Center or Independent Living Center for information and referral.

Taking a Taxicab: Both large and small towns in Wisconsin have taxicab companies. Many of these taxicab companies provide reduced fares to people with disabilities and seniors. Call your local taxicab company to ask about this option.

Sharing a Ride: Ridesharing can be a great way to get to work. Ride share programs exist all over the state. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation coordinates the ride share programs.

Getting Rides from Others: Many people rely on family, friends or other community members to get to and from work. You may also be able to arrange rides with co-workers. If needed, you can offer financial compensation (like helping with mileage reimbursement or gas money) to people who help you get to and from work. Some communities in Wisconsin have TimeBanks. TimeBanks are community systems where people exchange their time and services to help out each other. Being involved in a TimeBank could be a way to contribute to your community and get rides from others.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation can help match you to other commuters in your area.
<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/travel/commuter/index.htm>

Ways you can pay for this kind of transportation support are:

- Your own money (remember you will be earning wages and will have more money once you get a job). Most working people pay for their gas or transportation to and from work;
- DVR – until you are able to pay for this with your own money or find another way to pay for it or;
- Social Security Work Incentives like the PASS plan or Impairment Related Work Expense.

Getting a Driver's License: It may be possible for you to get a driver's license. Work with your team to explore this option. Sometimes people who *do not* drive purchase vehicles so that others can drive them places. Even if you do not have a license, you can purchase a vehicle. And, if you are on Supplemental Security Income (SSI), you are allowed to own one vehicle. If you need assistance to purchase a vehicle, Social Security's Plan to Achieve Self-Support might be an option. Aging and Disability Resource Centers may also have information on affordable car purchasing programs in your community.

Specialized Transportation Services: Specialized transportation services may be an option for you. The rates for these kinds of services may be higher than some other options. Talk with your IRIS Consultant to determine if this option works within your monthly IRIS budget.

Employment Support Agency: If you receive job coaching services from a supported employment agency, they might be able to give you a ride to or from work. Like specialized transportation options, relying on a service provider may be more costly. Talk with your IRIS Consultant to evaluate the pros and cons of this transportation option.

Uncertain Goals or Lack of Experience

You may not have had enough experiences to help you make decisions about your employment goals. The only way to overcome the barrier of inexperience is to get experience. You and your team may be concerned that employers won't hire you because you do not have a work history or references from employers. That is OK; there are things you can do to build work skills, experience, and references to add to your resume. Your plan can include helping you gain more experience!

If you are working with DVR and you have limited or no work experience, you should talk to your DVR Counselor about DVR's Temporary Work option. This service is sometimes referred to as "paid work experience" and provides time limited paid work in integrated community based jobs.

DVR is able to pay your wages during a temporary work situation. Temporary Work is designed to help you explore your skills and interests, learn new skills, add experience to your resume, and adjust to work. The timeframe for a Temporary Work situation is

individualized to your needs and is negotiated between you, DVR, and the employer. While the purpose of the temporary work will usually be achieved within three months, there is no minimum or maximum time frame for a DVR Temporary Work experience.

High school is an ideal time to build work experiences, but it is never too late to start. Paid work experiences are the preferred option; after all, work is more rewarding when you know you are getting paid for your effort. If you are working with someone who is trying to line up a paid work experience, there are things you can do to build your resume, gain experience, and build your confidence and self-determination skills.

For starters, you could make a list of things you have done in the past to help people. Have you watched your sister's children? Have you helped a neighbor paint their fence? Do you mow the lawn for your dad every week? If you have done these things, you have childcare experience, painting experience, and lawn care experience.

Volunteering can also help you build skills and broaden your social network to tap into for a future job search while providing much needed services to your community.

People who are working are healthier and happier than people who don't work. Research on volunteering has shown these same health and social benefits. If you choose to volunteer, be sure to find out if the organization you are interested in has a volunteer program. Most non-profit organizations can work with volunteers. However, private "for profit" businesses cannot work with volunteers because there are laws, known as the Fair Labor Standards Act, that protect people from being taken advantage of by for-profit enterprises.

Exploring your options and trying new things is the best way to overcome barriers and find the right job match. The most effective employment plans use several strategies, including informational interviewing, job shadowing, volunteering, and work experience.

Education and Training

If you have explored careers and found that you need to enroll in a degree program to reach your goals; colleges, universities, and technical colleges all have career services and disability resource staff that can help you understand your options for post-secondary education.

They can talk with you about their programs, how accommodations can be made based on your disability, and give you information about the jobs that graduates from their programs have gone into after school.

The *National & Community Service* website has information about the benefits of volunteering and helpful tips to consider when volunteering:
www.nationalservice.gov

The website *Volunteer Match* is a resource for you to find volunteer opportunities in your area:
www.VolunteerMatch.org

***Think College* is a resource designed to help people with intellectual disabilities learn about and explore options for college and post-secondary education.**
www.thinkcollege.net

Transition programs available in schools for 18-22 year-olds are designed to prepare students with disabilities for community life. Typically, they focus on helping to create a bridge to adult services like DVR and IRIS, and help students build self-determination skills and work skills.

If you are a person with a learning disability or a developmental disability, this does not mean you are excluded from taking classes or entering a degree program at a post-secondary school. Technical colleges and other post-secondary education and programs offer options and supports for people with intellectual disabilities. If you are in High School you may even be able to begin taking classes while you are in an 18-22 year old transition program. Ask your teacher, guidance counselor, or transition coordinator to help you explore your options. Grants are available to students with disabilities who pursue post-secondary education and training.

Using Work Incentives

Did you know you can work and keep the benefits you need? One of the biggest barriers to employment that people with disabilities face is the fear of losing public benefits like Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medical Assistance (MA), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Medicare and other subsidies. These benefit systems are very confusing and you may get wrong or misleading information from people who are trying to help but do not know the rules of these programs.

You do not have to be an expert on Social Security Work Incentives. There are professionals known as Work Incentives Benefits Counselors available throughout the state. They can help you understand your benefits and the Work Incentives that help you go to work without losing the benefits you need.

**To find a Work Incentives
Benefits Specialist near
you, visit:
www.wibsa.org**

Did You Know?

- Students on SSI under the age of 22 can earn \$1,750 per month/\$7,060 annually (2014 amount) without affecting their SSI payment. This is a Work Incentive called Student Earned Income Exclusion.
- A person eligible for SSI can continue to get Medicaid coverage until they reach the threshold of \$33,361 in annual earnings (2014 amount).
- People on SSDI can use nine Trial Work Periods to test their ability to work without losing their monthly SSDI payments.

These are just a few of the many Work Incentives available. The Social Security Administration website has easy to read information about Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). On this site you can learn more about the benefits you receive and the Work Incentives for those benefits. www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/generalinfo.htm

The Paths to Employment Resource Center's (PERC) Work Incentives Benefits Counseling online tutorial is free and available anytime. This short session will help you understand why Work Incentives Benefits Counseling is a key resource in the employment planning process. The web tutorial also features a series of short video perspectives. www.percthinkwork.org/education/courses/work-incentives-benefits-counseling-101

Using Technology to Increase Independence

When people think of workplace supports, they usually think of people such as job coaches, co-workers, or supervisors. What about technology and adaptive aids? Technology can increase a person's independence at work. A talking calculator can be helpful for someone who has difficulty with numbers; a picture task board can replace a job coach providing direction to complete a sequence of work tasks, a digital watch can remind a person when it is time to return from break, and an iPod Touch has many applications that have been found helpful in the workplace.

If you are working with DVR and think assistive technology could help you, ask your DVR Counselor about including an Assistive Technology Assessment in your IPE.

Depending on the task and support need, some creative solutions known as assistive technology could be a better fit for you than relying on a co-worker or paying for a job coach to be at your side.

Assistive technology is any item, piece of equipment, or product system (whether pre-made or customized) that increases, maintains, or improves what a person with a disability can do. Assistive technology can be low-tech (such as a picture board, digital watch, or keyboard guard) or high-tech (such as an iPad or standing wheelchair).

The Abledata website at www.abledata.com is a great place to look at possible devices and adaptive aids.

To explore your options, you can contact an Assistive Technologist in your area or call the Job Accommodation Network (a national resource). You can learn more about assistive technology resources and events, and find a local contact at the WisTech website: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/disabilities/wistech/index.htm

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is a free consulting service designed to increase the employability of people with disabilities by providing individualized worksite accommodation solutions. The JAN website is full of helpful tools and resources. Their website also contains a database, called SOAR, that contains of hundreds of examples of how simple adaptations or assistive technology can be used on a job or in school. You can also talk to, i-chat, or email a JAN specialist for free information and advice. www.askjan.org

Wisconsin's Independent Living Centers (ILCs) have equipment loan closets for you to try devices before you decide to purchase them. ILC staff have received assistive technology training. To locate an ILC near you, visit:

www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/disabilities/Physical/ILCS.HTM

Planning Ahead

With your IRIS Consultant and/or someone important to you, consider the following questions:

- ✓ What experiences have I had that relate to my employment outcome? What kinds of things might I do to get more experience?
- ✓ What am I most worried about when it comes to becoming employed?
- ✓ If I was offered my ideal job tomorrow, what would prevent me from taking it?
- ✓ With what barriers to employment will I need the most help? What might this help look like?
- ✓ What concerns do I have about my benefits? Have I had a Work Incentives Benefits Analysis done in the past? If so, what did I learn from this? If not, what should I do to get an analysis?

Find the Right Support

Finding the right support to help you reach your employment goals is a critical part of the employment planning process. IRIS provides you with the flexibility to design your supports in a way that makes sense for you. You can combine your personal networks and the resources available in your community with your monthly IRIS budget to create a plan that works for you. The funding available in your monthly IRIS budget can be used to purchase services from employment support agencies, hire independent employment supports, or mix the two options to meet your needs.

Connecting for Employment

What kinds of help do you need to explore, find, and maintain employment? Think about this before choosing from available services. Look at your community, your connections, and your own assets when thinking about supports. Taking the time to map out the people you know and the places in your community can reveal options for help that you might have overlooked if you skipped over this important step.

When it comes time to plan out how you will spend some of your monthly IRIS budget on services and supports for employment; approach the issue of finding the right support like you would go about shopping for something you need. When you buy something at a store, you typically take time to decide what you need, compare products, consider the benefits, try to find a bargain, and so on. The same goes for support services.

Before you choose to spend your monthly budget on a service, be a smart shopper. Take the time to explore your choices and find out what will meet your expectations the best. If you do this, you will most likely be more satisfied with the result than if you hadn't.

Finding Employment Support Agencies in Your Area

You might be wondering how you will find an employment support agency. There are several ways that you can find out about the employment service providers available near you. You can ask your IRIS Consultant, your local Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) or your DVR Counselor for names and information about agencies in your area. The Job Center is another place you can go to look for information.

Another way to find out about employment service agencies in your area is to talk with your friends who have jobs. Find out who they worked with to get a job and what their experience was like. If you have access to a computer and the internet, you can go online to look up information about agencies in your area that provide employment supports. Many employment support agencies have websites. Even if you do not have your own computer, your local library has computers available to the public.

Mapping People and Places Worksheet

Relationship maps give structure for thinking about the people in your life and the places and associations in your community. Draw the circle shown below on a piece of paper. Brainstorm with your team all of the people and places in your community. In each section of the circle, write down the names and places that correspond with the section labels. You can make any other notes next to the names that might be helpful to you.

Skills and Interests: In this section, write down your skills and interest areas. Fill the section full of names of people you know that share those skills and interests. Also write down places that value those skills and interests and where people with those same skills and interests go. This could include employers!

Community Affiliations: In this section, list people and places you are connected to through association in your community. These are things like churches, clubs, and groups you or the people you know belong to.

Places/Work/Learning: In this section, list the places you go to frequently (like cafes, salons, or grocery stores), the workplaces of the people you know, and the schools and places for learning in your community. If you or your team members know someone in these places, put the name next to the place.

Once you have completed your map, you can create plans with your team to connect with these people and places for informational interviews, tours, job shadows, and other helpful ways that can help you reach your goals.



*(Invitation and Networking Map
Cindy Kernan with Dave and Faye Wetherow)*

Example Map

Skills & Interests

Me - traveling, crafts, healthy living/eating, music, people
Mom - gardening and crafts
Tom - fishing and outdoors
Amy - cooking, kids' sports
Chris - fixing things, metal art
Lisa - yoga, on boards/groups (well connected to community)
John - farmers market
Kim - teaching, plants, biking, skiing

Community Affiliations

Stoney Field Garden Club
Knitting group at Sal's
Our Savior Church
Kiwanis
Food Co-op Board of Directors
Farmers Market
Food Pantry on 2nd Street
Sunshine Place
Home and School Board
Bay Area Action Network

Dollar General (Julie, manager)
Dick's Factory Outlet (Gundersons)
Technical College (Susan)
Sunville Youth Network (Joe)
Kid's Korner (Angie)
Anytime Fitness (Mike and Lisa)
Candy's Bed and Breakfast (Linda, Mom's former coworker)
Grocery Store (Elizabeth)
Daily Grind Coffee (Allen)

Places/Work/Learning

This is an example of what a map might look like. As you can see, there are a number of people and places on this map. Your map will have people and places also. Work with your team to create a plan to connect with these people and places. You can make connections by sharing your dreams and interests with others, getting involved in community groups, helping out, and asking for people's ideas.

Choosing an Employment Support Agency

You may live in an area where there are several agencies to choose from or you may live in an area where only one or two are available. Whether you have several options or not, think about what you expect and learn about the services they offer before you enter into a working relationship. Contact the agency and ask to have an interview with them about their organization and the services they offer. This will help you to find out if the agency can offer the types of supports you need in the way that meets your expectations.



Self-Advocacy Check

11 Steps to Selecting an Employment Service Provider

1. Ask your IRIS Consultant for employment support agency contacts.
2. Ask your DVR Counselor for a vendor list.
3. Talk to the people you know about what agencies they have worked with.
4. Look over the agency's website.
5. Select more than one agency to interview.
6. Prepare your interview questions.
7. Ask someone to attend the interviews with you.
8. Take notes during the interviews.
9. Find out their fees.
10. Review what you learned in the interviews.
11. Talk to people who are important to you about what you learned before you decide which agency to choose.

Two sets of questions for interviewing employment support agencies are provided on pages 35 and 36. One set of interview questions are to be used if you are choosing an agency to help you find a job. The other set of questions are to be used if you are choosing an agency to help you start a business. You can make copies of these questions and take them to the interview with you. You can add, remove, or change any questions you want. You should start each interview by introducing yourself and provide an explanation of your goals and what is important to you.

Hiring Independent Employment Support Staff

You can hire one or more people to help you with different parts of your employment planning process. If you do this, it is wise to create a job description, advertise for the position, and develop a plan to provide necessary training to your support staff.

Creating a Job Description: You should think carefully about exactly what you want the employment support person or people to do for you. Some people you meet might be very good at one or two parts of the employment planning process (such as networking with potential employers) but not as good at other parts (like job coaching or ongoing support after you start your job).

Think about the qualities you want the independent employment support staff to have who are helping you. For example, is it more important to you that they have a lot of experience, or that they are very enthusiastic about the work they will do with you? Do you want someone who lives close to you so you can meet often, or are you OK with telephone calls and emails? Do you want to find someone who knows a lot of people in the community so that they can help you network and connect to others? Do you want someone who is outgoing, has sales skills, or has teaching and training experience? These are some of the things you will want to consider. You may also have other preferences for the people you work with.

You will need to figure out how much you can pay the support person(s) based on your monthly IRIS budget. Your IRIS Consultant can provide you with guidance for this.

The independent employment support staff person's job description should include:

- The job title
- The general expectations and specific job duties
- Number of hours per week (and schedule if you have one)
- The hourly wage or amount you plan to pay
- A list of the experience and qualifications you are looking for
- Training that may be available (or required)
- Time period (if any) that applies to the work

On page 40, you will find a sample job description. You can use this to get ideas, but the job description you create will probably look different.

Recruiting and Hiring Strategies: There are different ways you can recruit and hire independent employment support. You could be their employer. With this option, the IRIS Financial Services Agency serves as your employer agent and takes care of handing all employer and employee related paperwork. Or, you could use the model referred to as "Agency with Choice" option where you share responsibility with an agency to recruit, hire, and supervise the people who support you. Your IRIS Consultant can explain these options to you.

Once you have written a job description and learned how you can hire your support staff, the next thing to do is to create an advertisement for the position(s). When you are advertising, you will need to include a job title, general job duties, number of hours per week, pay, and how they should contact you for an interview. An example of an advertisement for an *Employment Support Specialist* can be found on page 40. You do not have to use that job title or make your advertisement look just like the example. Your advertisement will probably look different. After creating your ad, you can give it to people you know to help you find someone or post it in newspapers, on the internet (such as through the Job Center on-line), or on community message boards. Advertising through newspapers costs money. This cost can be covered by your monthly IRIS budget.

Interviewing: After you place your ad, people who are interested in the position will contact you (or the person you designated in the ad as the contact person). Next, you will need to get information from them (maybe in the form of an application or resume) and schedule interviews with them.

It is wise to plan out how you will interview people. Two sets of interview questions are included on pages 37 and 38. One set of interview questions are to be used if you are looking for someone to help you find a job. The other set of questions are to be used if you are looking for someone to help you start a business. You can make copies of these questions and take them with you to the interview. You can add, remove, or change any questions you want.

You should start each interview by introducing yourself and provide an explanation of your goals and what is important to you. You could also ask people from your team to participate in the interviews if you wish. It is always better to have an interview panel than to try to do the interview alone.

Creating a Service Agreement

Whether you decide to purchase services from an agency or to hire independent employment support staff, or do a combination of the two, you must create a service agreement.

This agreement should summarize your expectations, as well as the responsibilities that you will have during the process of working with them. The agreement should always specify the service(s) being purchased, include the dates that they begin and end, and the rate of pay. Agreements should be signed and dated by you, the purchaser, and also the individual or entity providing the good(s) or service(s).

Find, Choose and Keep Great DSPs is a set of booklets that provide excellent guidance to people with disabilities and their family members on how to recruit, hire, and keep direct support staff. While this booklet is geared toward general direct support - not employment specific support-most of the information still applies. You can modify templates to suit your needs.
<http://www.ildspinitiative.com/>

It is important to remember that the relationship you will have with the agency or support person is a business relationship. The agency or person(s) will be getting paid to provide you with the supports that you want and need for employment or self-employment. An agreement can be as simple as one page of information that you have discussed with the support person or agency prior to agreeing to work with them. Some important parts of the agreement should include:

- ✓ When they will begin working with you;
- ✓ A list of the tasks they will help you to complete;
- ✓ Timelines for each task;
- ✓ A list of the person or people responsible for completing each task;
- ✓ Required written reports and timelines;
- ✓ A description of how invoice processing and payment will occur;
- ✓ Quality measures and monitoring;
- ✓ A tentative schedule of meetings to check in and discuss progress;
- ✓ A description of what will happen if timelines are not met within reason, and;
- ✓ An end date to the contract (a date when a new agreement will be created or when the relationship will stop).

What To Do If It Isn't Working Out

Sometimes things go smoothly during the employment planning process, and sometimes there are things that happen along the way to slow the process down. You can probably think of times in your life when things did not go exactly as you expected them to go. This may happen with your employment planning. Sometimes things happen that are not expected. Sometimes these are things that you and your employment support agency or your independent employment support staff have no control over.

It is reasonable for you to expect that the agreed on tasks and timelines are completed and that your plan will not get too far off track due to too many unexpected issues with your employment support provider agency and staff. You should expect that the people working with you will follow through on the things that they say they are going to do for you. If they do not, then you may need to go through a process to find out why things are not getting done as planned.

It is wise to plan ahead for how you will let your supports know when you are not satisfied. Some people let their support staff know this by calling a meeting to review the original agreement or giving a written "warning." You can work with your IRIS Consultant or other team members to get advice on how to best handle these situations.

If a period of time goes by when you are not pleased with the progress you are making, and you feel that it is because of your employment support provider or staff you have hired, you may need to search for a new employment support agency or independent employment support staff to assist you with the process. It could be that changing the way you purchase employment supports would be helpful. You can work with your team to decide on a plan of action.

Review and Plan:

Once you have had a chance to read through this section on finding the right support, consider the following questions with your IRIS Consultant and/or someone important to you:

- ✓ When thinking about my community and my personal network, what places or people could support my employment goal?
- ✓ What are some of my own personal assets and strengths that I can use to make connections?
- ✓ Am I interested in working with an employment support agency or hiring independent employment supports? Why?
- ✓ What employment support providers exist in the area?
- ✓ How do I want to research my options?
- ✓ What qualities and skills am I looking for in a service provider or staff person?
- ✓ Who will help me create job descriptions, ads, and interview questions?
- ✓ Where might I post advertisements?
- ✓ How do I want to arrange interviews and will I need some support for this?

Training Independent Employment Supports

You may want to consider training options for the person(s) you decide to hire. A person that you hire might have the personal qualities, positive attitude, and enthusiasm you want. They might lack the more 'technical' information about how to help you find and keep a job or start a business. You can work with your team to plan out how you will provide training. Some of the training costs money. The costs to provide training can be covered by your monthly IRIS budget. A sample training plan is provided on page 41.

Employment Network is a social networking site dedicated to employment for people with disabilities in Wisconsin. Events happening in the state are posted on this site. It is also a great place to search for resources or to ask questions to a community of people working together to increase employment opportunities in Wisconsin. <http://employmentnetwork.ning.com/>

The **Paths to Employment Resource Center** (PERC) offers on-line training on topics related to employment and Social Security work incentives. www.percthinkwork.org

Wisconsin APSE (Association for Persons in Supported Employment) organizes a statewide conference on employment each year. This conference features sessions on best practices in employment for people with disabilities. www.wiapse.org The National APSE site also offers training opportunities. www.apse.org

VCU's Rehabilitation and Research Training Center has free or low cost online training. The website also features many other resources. Sign up for their newsletter to get regular updates on available training and information. www.worksupport.com

Rural Institute on Transition and Employment offers on line information and tools for employment planning for youth and young adults in Transition. You can join their list to receive news, resources and information on free webinars <http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/Transition/>

Start-Up USA connects people with disabilities who are interested in self-employment (and people who support them) to training and technical assistance. Start-Up USA offers webinars (many that are free) and FACT sheets. You (or people who support you) can email or call for additional assistance. www.start-up-usa.biz

Interview Questions for Finding and Keeping a Job with help from an Employment Support Agency

Start each interview by introducing yourself and provide an explanation of your goals and what is important to you.

1. How long has the agency been providing employment supports?
2. How many people does the agency currently work with in employment supports?
3. Of the people served, how many currently have jobs in the community?
4. What is the average number of hours people work per week?
5. What is the average pay rate for the people supported who have jobs in the community?
6. What type of assessment process is used to help people determine the jobs that would be best for them? Please describe it.
7. How does the agency go about helping people look for jobs?
8. How many people are on a caseload for agency job developers?
9. How long does it typically take the job developers to help people find jobs?
10. How does the agency train people to learn their jobs?
11. Do job coaches use task analysis and systematic instruction to help people learn their jobs and then to help people fade job coaching time?
12. Does the agency use assistive technology to help people become more independent at their jobs? If so, please give me some examples.
13. How do the people supported get to and from work?
14. Does the agency work with DVR?
15. Does the agency have experience working with people in IRIS?
16. What is the fee arrangement or cost to purchase services?
17. How will quality be measured?
18. What reports can be expected?
19. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about your agency?

Interview Questions for Planning and Running a Business with Help from an Employment Support Agency

Start each interview by introducing yourself and provide an explanation of your goals and what is important to you.

1. How long has the agency been helping people with self-employment?
2. How many people who run their own business does the agency currently support?
3. What types of businesses do those people have?
4. How long have those businesses been in operation?
5. Are the people supported to run their own businesses making income? How much?
6. Has the agency assisted people to conduct market analyses of the type of business they have in mind? If so, please describe the process used.
7. Has the agency helped people to write business plans and seek funding for equipment? If so, please describe the process you use.
8. How long does it typically take the agency to help someone start a business?
9. Has the agency helped people to market their businesses/products? Please describe this.
10. Has the agency worked with DVR to help people start their businesses? Please describe this.
11. How will you handle any specialized transportation I may need?
12. Does the agency have experience working with people in IRIS?
13. What is the fee arrangement or cost to purchase services?
14. How will quality be measured/tracked?
15. What reporting can be expected?
16. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about the supports that your agency can provide to help me start my own business?

Interview Questions for Finding and Keeping a Job with Independent Employment Support Staff

Start each interview by introducing yourself and provide an explanation of your goals and what is important to you.

1. What interests you about this position?
2. Can you describe your education, training, and work experience?
3. Do you have experience related to employment supports? If so, describe.
4. Have you helped other people get jobs?
5. How might you go about helping me look for a job?
6. How might you help me learn more about my interests, skills, and the kinds of job tasks that I could do?
7. Do you have experience helping people learn their jobs?
8. What do you know about job coaching? Have you heard of or used a task analysis and systematic instruction before?
9. How would you help me be as independent as possible at my job?
10. What do you know about job accommodations or assistive technology to help people become more independent at their jobs?
11. How do you propose to help me handle transportation to and from my job?
12. Can you describe your work style?
13. Are you willing to learn about and try new things to support me?
14. Are you willing to work with my planning team to help me reach my goals?
15. What is your fee?
16. How will quality be measured/tracked?
17. What reports can be expected?
18. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me?

Interview Questions for Planning and Running a Business with Independent Employment Support Staff

Start each interview by introducing yourself and provide an explanation of your goals and what is important to you.

1. Can you describe your background, training and education with business development?
2. Have you ever been self-employed? If so, what did you do and for how long?
3. What did you like about being self-employed?
4. What didn't you like about being self-employed?
5. Have you helped others to start businesses? If so, how? What kinds of businesses did they start? Have those businesses been successful?
6. Can you tell me about how you would support me to conduct market analysis of my business idea?
7. Have you written business plans before? Were you able to get secure start-up funding?
8. What business planning resources do you like to use?
9. Have you helped people to market their businesses/products?
10. How would you help with specialized transportation I might need to be successful?
11. Can you describe your work style?
12. Are you willing to learn about and try new things to support me?
13. Are you willing to work with my planning team to help me reach my goals?
14. What are your fees?
15. How will quality be measured/tracked?
16. What reports can I expect?
17. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about the supports that you can provide to help me start my own business?

Service Agreement Sample

Start Date:

Description of general duties:

Specifics we discussed:

Tasks:	Who is responsible:	Timelines/By When:

Tentative schedule of meetings to check in and discuss progress:

If timelines are not met within reason we will:

Monthly fee: (not to exceed) _____

Agreement End Date:

Signed:

Name and Date

Name and Date

Job Description Sample

Position Title: Employment Support Worker

Duties and Responsibilities: Provide transportation from home three days per week. Provide support for pre-employment skills training such as training in computer skills and communication skills. Help to develop and carry out plans to assist in employment exploration and planning. Facilitate connections to local resources and employers to discuss careers and job opportunities. Provide coaching and instruction to become more independent in the community and at work once employed. Provide transportation help, if needed, once employed and assist with routine appointments when requested.

Terms of Employment: Monday through Saturday afternoons, up to 25 hours per week. \$11.50 per hour plus two weeks paid time off per year.

Qualifications: Must pass a criminal background check. Must have a vehicle, valid driver's license and car insurance. Minimum of an Associate's Degree preferred. At least 4 years experience with workplace training, education, and/or direct support for people with disabilities. Experience working with teams and developing action plans. Demonstrated ability to navigate professional networks and foster community connections. Previous experience helping people obtain and keep their jobs.

Job Advertisement Sample

Would you like to help someone reach their full potential? I'm interested in photography, computers and gardening. I'm looking for an enthusiastic, reliable, and flexible person to help me explore careers, find a job, and be independent at work. Competitive wage, 20-30 hours per week, plus two weeks paid vacation each year. Email for an application: sandys@email.com

Support Staff Training Plan Sample

Use this guide to help you keep track of the training you want your independent employment support staff to receive.

Knowledge and Skills Needed for this Position:

- Discovery and Customized Employment
- Employer Negotiation
- Team Planning and Facilitation
- Disability Awareness/Etiquette
- Computer Skills – including Microsoft Office and PowerPoint
- Community Connecting and Networking Skills
- Teaching Skills and Job Training Skills

Skills and knowledge my employment support staff currently has:

- Instructional Skills – Worked as a substitute teacher for 10 years
- Team Facilitation Skills – Served as president of the local library board of directors. Coordinated volunteers for various library events.
- Computer Skills – Worked on all Office programs for several years
- Connecting and Networking Skills – Served on PTA for 5 years. Member of the church fundraising committee.
- Other relevant skills – Helps market spouse’s accounting business

Needed	Plan	Timeline
Information specific to supporting me	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shadow parents and school staff for 2 weeks. 2. Meet with case manager. 3. Review my Essential Lifestyle Plan and other written information about me. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By mid-June 2. First week. 3. First week
Disability information and etiquette	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch free videos on disability etiquette on DisabledWorld.com 2. Read the Disability Etiquette Guide: http://www.unitedspinal.org/pdf/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf 3. Take the free, on-line Disability Awareness HR Management Online Seminar www.worksupport.com 4. Attend the Self-Determination Conference with me (\$400 approx. for registrations and hotel rooms). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First two weeks 2. First week 3. First two weeks 4. November
Customized Employment Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch the free PERC Employment Strategies Series modules. 2. Take self-pace online course on Customized Employment through www.worksupport.com (\$80). 3. Attend WI APSE conference with me (\$400 approx for registrations and hotel rooms) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First week 2. By the end of July 3. October

IRIS Employment Toolkit 2014



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