

CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT

Customized Employment (CE) is job placement for persons who have disabilities which significantly impact their ability to find or keep a job using traditional job search methods. The goal of CE is to match Job Seekers' strengths, skills, interests, and support needs with a tailored or "customized" position in their community.



Customized Employment consists of three phases:

- **PHASE I: DISCOVERY** – Learning about the person's skills, interests, strengths, contributions and conditions for success
- **PHASE II: JOB DEVELOPMENT** – Learning about the business needs and creating a good job match
- **PHASE III: EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT** – Identifying support needs and putting supports in place

FOCUSING ON A PERSON'S STRENGTHS: What They Can Do and Where They Can Contribute



▲ Josh is an energetic young man who was once told he would never be able to work in his community due to his disability. Josh and his Employment Specialist used the Discovery process to focus on Josh's skills and strengths, instead of his obstacles to employment. Josh's Employment Specialist then negotiated a customized position in a new café within a grocery store. The newly created position allows Josh to do what he does best – help in the kitchen, restock supplies and most of all engage with customers! Josh's assistance and skills have benefitted the business by freeing up his coworkers and giving them more time to perform their other duties.

✓ **DISCOVERY** is the first phase in developing a Customized Employment Plan.

The Discovery process involves getting to know the Job Seeker in "their world" to identify interests, skills, strengths and supports needed on the job. On average, Discovery takes about 6-8 weeks and usually includes:

VISITS TO THE HOME AND NEIGHBORHOOD:

- Daily activities are observed including chores and tasks, hobbies, talents, interests and support needs.
- Staff take photos/videos of the Job Seeker engaging in everyday life activities. Photos and videos are approved by the Job Seeker/Guardian and used to prepare a Visual Resume for potential employers.
- The Job Seeker's neighborhood is explored to identify transportation options and local businesses.

INTERVIEWS:

- People who know the Job Seeker best – family, friends, teachers and coworkers – are interviewed to create a complete picture of the Job Seeker's unique strengths, interests, and life skills.

PARTICIPATING IN ACTIVITIES TOGETHER:

- The Job Seeker's interests are explored and skills are confirmed by participating with the person in both familiar and new activities at home, school and in the community.

PLANNING:

- The information gathered through Discovery, along with a review of the Job Seeker's medical, school and other records helps create a Discovery profile.
- The Discovery profile tells a positive narrative about the Job Seeker's contributions, skills, interests, and the type of conditions (environment and supports) needed on a job.
- Photos are used to create a Visual Resume to present to potential employers.
- The Job Seeker and team meet for a final planning meeting to review the Discovery profile and work collaboratively to develop the Customized Employment Plan.
- This personalized plan identifies specific skills, interests, conditions for employment, tasks the person can perform and a list of potential employers that may be a good match for the Job Seeker.

✓ **JOB DEVELOPMENT is the second phase of Customized Employment.**

- When Discovery is completed, the Employment Specialist uses the information from the Discovery Phase to search for businesses that may have tasks that are a good match for the Job Seeker.
- The Employment Specialist contacts businesses to learn more about their company and present the Job Seeker's qualifications and visual resume. Sometimes the Job Seeker and Employment Specialist visit businesses together.
- When a good job match is found, the Employment Specialist negotiates with the employer to develop a new position that benefits both the business and the Job Seeker. This customized (new) position must pay minimum wage or above.

✓ **EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT is the third phase of Customized Employment.**

- The Employment Specialist identifies the kinds of supports and frequency of supports the new employee needs to do the job, and coordinates with the employer to implement supports.
- Employment Specialists continue frequent communication with the employee and employer to ensure the employee has the supports to learn and maintain the position.

Customized Employment uses an individualized approach to employment planning and job development – one person at a time, one employer at a time.



Jacob "Jake" and Steve Hegedus

RIGHT PERSON. RIGHT JOB TASKS. RIGHT SUPPORT.

◀ "Hiring Jake has definitely been good for our warehouse operations and staff. Jake weighs and prepacks the products for the warehouse staff so all they need to do is put them in their carts. We have definitely increased our production – and every day, hour and minute we are saving money by having Jake perform these duties.

"The hiring process was easy and seamless. VRS staff worked with me to find out what tasks I needed done and then relayed Jake's skills and showed me his visual resume. We had wanted to fill this position for a while but it seemed a little like a pipedream. A big benefit to me was that I didn't have to sift through 15 candidates and interview them all. Jake is a great fit for this position and he does a really good job. He is very reliable and meshes well with the other staff."

—Steve Hegedus, Operations Manager at Unlimited Supplies, Plymouth, MN

Learn more about Customized Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation Services:

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/CustomizedEmployment.htm>

<https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities>



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