

Utah Division of Services for People with Disabilities

- School to Work Program - What is Customized Employment?

WHAT'S CUSTOMIZED ABOUT IT?

Customized Employment is defined by the Department of Labor as, "a flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job candidate and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both." It is a strategic technique to hiring and retention that focuses on the strengths, needs, and interests of a job candidate. This technique is especially useful for individuals that face multiple and/or complex barriers (including disabilities) to finding and retaining meaningful work. The US Office of Disability Employment and Policy (ODEP) has found use of customized employment is associated with significant positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

There are several components of customized employment, including discovery, job search planning, job development and negotiation, and post-employment support.

Discovery: "Information gathering" phase. Determine person's interests, skills, and preferences related to employment. This will be done through interviews with the person and their family or friends. This should be a time-limited process that leads to jobs matched to the person that will provide opportunities to learn and advance in a community-based environment.

Job Search and Planning: Job coach uses information learned about the person seeking employment from the discovery process to develop a plan toward meaningful employment. This includes determining a list of potential employers and drafting a personal profile for the job seeker.

Job Development and Negotiation: Use connections, networking, and meetings with employers to determine company needs and establish how the individual seeking employment could contribute to and learn from the company in a customized position. During this time, the terms of employment, including pay and hours should be discussed. This requires creativity, negotiation, and informational interviewing skills to advocate for the needs, skills, and interests of the person.

Post-Employment Support: Set up on-going post-employment supports to monitor the employment relationship and ensure the employer and person are satisfied with the placement and that there are opportunities for advancement if desired.

Customized Employment is considered a person-centered process, driven by interests, so not all tasks will be performed at the same time or duration for each job seeker. It is focused on a person's ability and choice.