

Employment Supports Guidance for Individuals and Families

COVID-19

The physical and emotional health and safety of individuals and families is the top priority of the Division of Services for People with Disabilities (DSPD) and the Department of Human Services (DHS). This document is intended to give information about how COVID-19 has impacted DSPD employment services. Sections of this guidance will address: temporary changes to services; how staff can continue to work with individuals through virtual methods; considerations to discuss when returning to work in various risk levels and conditions; and expectations for Providers and Support Coordinators during COVID-19.

Please reach out directly to your Support Coordinator or dspd@utah.gov if you have any questions.

Definitions

- “Supports” are the help or tools that are needed to do something successfully.
- “Accommodations” are changes made to a workspace or tools someone could use to help them do their job well.
- “PPE” stands for Personal Protective Equipment such as gloves and masks.
- “Telehealth” or “virtual” employment services means staff might support you to do your job over a phone, or through a video on a tablet or computer.
- “Providers” are agencies who provide services and supports to individuals with disabilities.
- “Vocational Rehabilitation” is a program which provides individuals with more resources to help find and keep a job.
- “Assessments” are activities you or your staff will participate in to discover work skills and learn about what a community job could look like.
- “Furlough” describes a situation where a job is reserved for an employee while they take leave.
- An individual’s “support team” includes people chosen by the individual to help them in Person-Centered Planning, such as their Support Coordinator, Provider, family members, or friends.

Employment Service Requirements Still in Effect During COVID-19:

- Providers and Support Coordinators are available if needed to assist you and your family in deciding whether to continue working, return to work, or look for work.
- You can access employment skills training delivered by certified employment specialists to help maintain or develop new work skills. DSPD is encouraging your staff to provide this training virtually whenever possible.
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) resources are still available if you are interested in seeking work. Meetings with a VR Counselor can be virtual when needed.
- Workplace accommodations vary based on your employment situation. If an accommodation is needed, you should be supported to coordinate an accommodation directly with your employer.
 - [Contact your local VR office](#) with questions about workplace accommodations.
 - Information on Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations during COVID-19:
 - [Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act | US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)
 - [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

Changes to Employment Services During COVID-19

- All DSPD Employment Services can temporarily be delivered through telehealth.
 - Telehealth services must be provided virtually in real-time, not through a video or audio recording unless both you and your staff are present to view a recording as a training activity.
 - You and your family may observe more staff using electronic devices to communicate, train and job coach through approved, secure virtual applications. Some common examples of approved apps during COVID-19 are Apple FaceTime and Google Hangouts.
- Employment services may be used to assist you to receive unemployment benefits.
- More employees are needed in essential jobs right now. If you are interested in any of these jobs, DSPD is encouraging support teams to actively explore these opportunities when it is safe to do so.
- Providers and Support Coordinators are being asked to seek the input of the employer when deciding whether to provide virtual or remote job coaching.
 - Workplace conditions, accommodations and the your ability to access and use technology all impact how job coaching supports are implemented.

Changes to Service Activities During COVID-19

- If a provider is unable to offer employment services during COVID-19, the Support Coordinator should initiate and assist you in searching for a different provider agency with the capacity to administer individual employment supports.

Job Coaching

- Individual job coaching supports that utilize Telehealth are approved and should be used whenever possible.
 - Virtual job coaching activities could include: providing step-by-step task instruction through an electronic device; modeling a work task through a virtual platform and then observing task completion for accuracy; role playing interactions with customers or co-workers; or prompting and remote monitoring of quotas or assignments through a video or voice check-in.
- Telehealth is not a replacement for situations where in-person job coaching best meets your needs.
 - You and your family are encouraged to communicate with your support team about whether virtual or in-person job coaching are effective for you.
 - You or your family may recommend or observe staff using a combination of both in-person and telehealth job coaching supports for you.

Trainings and Assessments

- You can use telehealth to hold meetings with staff.
 - Examples of virtual assessment activities include: virtual observation of an at-home hobby/interest; resume edits over a shared document; sessions to observe a skill you might use at work that can be completed in a safe environment; conversations with family and friends and home visits observed by a job coach through cell phone, tablet or laptop.
 - Examples of remote job development include: search online for job requirements by industry or skill level; providing support for virtual job tours and interviews; scheduling virtual meetings with business professionals; hosting online interviews; completing an online occupational credentialing program and updating resumes.
- DSPD welcomes input from you and your family for all virtual employment training activities.
 - In some cases, family and friends may be asked to participate with you during an employment training to ensure success through a virtual platform.

- Creativity of staff and family members to deliver employment training activities through virtual platforms is encouraged. You and your family can reach out to the support team if they have questions or need support accessing technology such as a tablet.
- Some employment activities may need to be postponed if the service can not be safely performed in-person and cannot be performed virtually.

Decisions about work

Below are recommendations for you to consider if you lost your job, are still working in an essential position, are furloughed, or are considering a return to work.

Recommendations for individuals who have lost their job due to COVID-19:

The process for responding to situations where you have lost your job remains unchanged during COVID-19. Job loss should be addressed on a case-by-case basis with support from local offices of DWS, USOR, DSPD and other community resources. DWS has more unemployment information for people who have lost their jobs and need help with child care, unemployment benefits or other assistance due to COVID-19.

Recommendations for individuals working in essential positions during COVID-19:

DSPD is committed to remaining flexible in meeting the needs of individuals in essential jobs. If you are working in an essential job you might consider these questions:

- Is this worksite still the right fit for you?
 - If not, should a meeting with your support team be scheduled to discuss other vocational interests?
- How have your work hours or schedule changed because of COVID-19?
 - Are any changes temporary or permanent?
- Do current supports meet your needs?
 - If not, have you talked to your Support Coordinator about your concerns?
- Do you need more information before you can make an informed decision about work?
 - How has your health and safety been changed because of COVID-19 related changes at the worksite?
 - If your job requires, would you be okay with a temperature check or COVID-19 test?
 - Are you able to correctly and easily use PPE?
 - Are you able to social distance appropriately?
 - Do you have any concerns about your worksite?

- Do you need help to advocate in the workplace?
- How have you used technology at work, like a tablet or smartphone?
 - What did you like about it?
 - What did you not like or what was hard about it?
 - Would you like to use it more?

Recommendations for individuals who are furloughed due to COVID-19:

If you have been furloughed due to COVID-19, employment supports may be used to assist you to maintain skills, investigate new interests and talk with your employer to make sure you can keep your job.

Questions you and your family could consider when returning to work:

Resources for returning to work in any phase of [Utah's color-coded health guidance system](#):

- **You and your support team** should review [Protecting High Risk Individuals](#) and the [Workplace Safety Checklist](#) documents **carefully**, to learn more about how providers and employers should be protecting high-risk staff and individuals who choose to return to work.
- Each industry will respond differently depending on the risk. You and your provider may need to adapt and prepare for frequent on-the-job changes. As individuals return to work, support staff should be familiar with how employers are responding to different risk levels. The [“Phased Guidelines for the General Public and Businesses”](#) gives business recommendations divided by risk level, industry or job title.
- Providers and businesses that employ individuals will be adhering to the Federal, State and local health and safety guidelines. The location of the business where the employment services are delivered will determine the necessary precautions.

Individual considerations -

- What does your day look like while you have not been going to work?
 - What do you like about it?
 - What about it has been hard for you?
- What do you want your day to look like?
 - What does your family want?
 - What would it take?
- Would you like to go back to work?
- What does your family think about you going back to work?

- Do you, or someone you live with, have any [risk factors identified by the CDC](#), like asthma, diabetes, aging, heart disorder or get sick frequently?
 - Now that you are aware of all the risks and benefits of returning to work, do you still want to go back?
 - Are the workplace risks the same for you and your coworkers?
- What changes might need to be made in your routine to make sure you, your family and roommates stay healthy and safe (wash hands upon return, change clothes, etc.)?
- If you choose not to return to work, how does this impact your life (mental health, supervision needs, etc.)?
- If your job requires, can you learn how to protect yourself and others by:
 - washing your hands often;
 - not touching your eyes, nose and mouth;
 - covering your coughs and sneezes;
 - wearing a protective mask or cloth face covering; and
 - following social distancing recommendations?
- If your job requires, would you be okay with a temperature check or COVID-19 test?
- Do you have any additional concerns that need to be addressed?

Work environment -

- What can you, your staff or your family do to prepare for changes on the jobsite?
- If your schedule or work tasks change, meaning you have different assignments or need to work less or more hours, do you think you can keep your job?
 - Do you want to keep the job if your tasks or schedule changes?

Support needed for success on the job -

- What changes could we make to all your daily routines to support you to be a better employee?
- Do you need to add new supports or adjust existing supports?

Transportation -

- How have your options for transportation to a work site changed during COVID-19?
 - What transportation options may be available temporarily if needed (UTA, rideshare, natural support, provider transportation, etc.)?

Financial considerations -

- Do you have financial needs right now?
- Can [Utah Work Incentive Planning Services](#) help you understand how returning to work will affect your Social Security benefits (SSI or SSDI)?

Considerations for individuals in group employment settings

- Necessary environmental modifications for social distancing and infection control protocols should be made to the group employment setting.
 - Group employment settings should avoid situations where multiple high-risk individuals are working in close proximity for long periods.
- Group employment settings are not exempt from workplace health and safety guidelines.
 - This includes any travel restrictions and any industry level guidelines related to the group work contract.