

Employment Preparation Services (EPR) Fact Sheet

Purpose of EPR-

Employment Preparation Services (EPR) provides time-limited, individualized supports to gather information, develop skills, and gain experiences that will prepare an individual for Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE).

Definitions-

Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)- means that individuals with disabilities work in the community with people of all abilities; and that they are paid at a rate comparable to those people without disabilities who work in the same place.

Requesting initial or additional EPR-

EPR should be requested: if a person is working in a sheltered workshop, on a subminimum wage job, or the service provider employs the person; to reach informed choice for employment; or to develop a prevocational skill needed in any CIE setting. The Person-Centered Support Team (PCST) should meet to discuss with the individual whether EPR is the right service. The EPR authorization process is then initiated by the Support Coordinator submitting a Request for Services (RFS) based on individual need and choice.

How much time or units of EPR should be requested?

The amount, frequency, and duration of the service should be person-centered and based on the person's strengths, interests, and abilities. Use the service code, your experience, and your judgement to find a service combination that meets the person's needs. It may look like alternating a full day of each service, a few hours of each service in the same day, or a variety of other combination options.

Document the decision making process. You have at your disposal a 6 hour daily service, partial day services from 1 up to 10 hours per day, and quarter hour options for EPR. There is also job specific skill training through Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and DSPD that could be one-on-one or in a group. The combination of services used and requested should be developed using a person-centered approach. Two daily rate codes, such as a Day Service (DSG,DSP,DSI) and EPR may be billed on the same day as long as they are billed at different times and do not overlap.

Transition between EPR and other services-

Transition between EPR and all other wraparound services is expected. EPR is designed to help a person reach informed choice, learn general prevocational skills, and gain exposure to employment possibilities. As an alternative to EPR, when specific vocational interests emerge, support teams should seek supported employment services through Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), then DSPD to progress toward CIE. The PCST should review and assess service documentation and goal progress to determine if the person is prepared to transition to CIE at least annually.

Any daily activities, informed choice experiences and other employment exploration activities may lead to discovery of new hobbies, goals or interests. Based on this new information, support teams should use professional judgement to determine if EPR is still the most appropriate service, or if planned

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activities fit within the scope of other community activities, classes, resources, volunteer work, or an alternative DSPD service.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and EPR-

All services should be offering informed choice for employment. Meeting with a VR Counselor is an approved activity for EPR or any other direct care service or support. Prevocational skill development, informed choice, and other activities may lead the support team to seek out more information from VR. VR can be a resource to answer employment related questions and provide services to help eligible individuals reach their vocational goals.

VR counselors are experts on disability and employment and a recommended resource to reach informed choice. Meeting with a VR Counselor to learn more about services can occur at any time. An individual should only apply for VR services when they express interest in CIE.

Transition-Age Youth: Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), through VR are available when: the individual is between the ages of 14-21, and currently a student; or 22 years of age and enrolled in a Secondary Education Program (such as Post High). Pre-ETS services should be sought (when available) through VR prior to utilizing EPR services.

WIOA (Work Innovation and Opportunity Act) Section 511: Employers who hold special wage certificates under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (29 U.S.C. 2014(c) are now required to provide evidence that Youth with Disabilities working for subminimum wages are provided Transition Services, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services, and Career Counseling Services prior to beginning subminimum wage work. In addition, the 14(c) employer is also required to provide evidence that all subminimum wage employees, regardless of age, receive Career Counseling Services every six months during the first year of employment and annually thereafter ([34 CFR 397.1](#), [2 CFR 200.333](#))

EPR and Sheltered Workshops-

Introducing EPR represents a number of shifts for the sheltered workshop model. Medicaid funds can not be used for employment, or vocational services in a sheltered workshop setting. However, pre-vocational services can be provided and funded in a sheltered workshop setting if the services are: time-limited; their purpose is to prepare an individual for CIE; and the individual has full access to the greater community. Pre-vocational service activities continue to serve as preparation for CIE, with many notable changes.

A description of the permanent changes to sheltered workshops and sub-minimum wage work is listed below:

- All individuals engaging in a sub-minimum wage position or the Sheltered Workshop Model **must** transition to the EPR service code by March 17th, 2022.

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- All EPR service activities are time-limited. EPR can be available for a few hours at a time, or a daily service for up to 24 months. As individuals continue to work towards vocational goals through EPR, support teams should:
 - work with VR to start a job search, or begin skill development for a specific CIE position;
 - identify an alternative natural support, community resource or other DSPD service to focus on new or emerging goals; or
 - provide evidence for an EPR extension.

- 20% of EPR service time must be spent in community-based training, and/or informed choice activities.
 - EPR requires 20% of the monthly service time be delivered and located in naturally occurring community settings. This time can be spent exploring vocational interests through informed choice activities, or building general skills needed for any competitive integrated job.
 - The new requirement also allows individual exposure to more vocational options, and to a path to continue progress on vocational skills and goals. Activities focused on vocational exploration create opportunities to observe workplaces, employees and assignments in competitive integrated jobs. Training opportunities in community settings provide application for prevocational skills in authentic work situations.
 - An individual's preference about the amount of time they want to spend in the community should be documented in the PCSP as part of the goal. Goal information for the EPR service should be reviewed and updated annually as follows:
 - Include relevant information in the 'Current Situation', 'Strengths', and 'Barriers' sections about the specific and individualized assessed need related to the amount of time an individual will likely spend in the community when receiving the service.
 - Include in the 'Support' section, 'Support Details' section and the Support Strategies what methods have already been used to support the individual to have full access to the greater community and methods currently in use.
 - The effectiveness of the methods and progress for the individual should be documented in quarterly summaries.
 - The individual should be a part of developing Supports and Support Strategies and demonstrate informed consent by signing the PCSP.
 - If a PCSP includes an amount of time in the community for the individual that is less than 20% of the service time, initial approval must be given by the DSPD waiver manager. Please send the PCSP to waivermanager@utah.gov.