

## **Frequently Asked Questions for Providers and Support Coordinators: Employment Preparation Services (EPR)**

### **Section 4: Person-Centered Planning**

**Question:** *The code is not sufficient for a large % of persons wanting employment, who require 1:1 staffing for several years, possibly a lifetime.*

**Answer:** The level of support a person may receive is based on their health and safety needs for any service they are receiving. Using person-centered planning will help to identify the support level and combination of services that match the person's needs, interests, desires and goals. An individualized budget should be developed to include any combination of one-on-one and group services and activities.

**Question:** *If an individual that is retired from work (they held a job on their own without a job coach for many years working 20 hours a week) and wants to attend a sheltered workshop, what code would fit that? EPR doesn't seem to fit because they don't need employment skills, nor are they going to work. They are retired and just want to go there with friends to do contract work.*

**Answer:** We understand that there are some people in services that have chosen to retire, but still want to work in a sheltered workshop. One of the requirements of EPR is interest in Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE). If there is no intention to return to CIE, preparation should be made to shift services and supports to alternative activities or skill development. Many adults with and without disabilities choose to initially retire, then after some time away from the workforce, choose to return. If after some conversation the person would like to find a new CIE job, EPR could be used to develop any general prevocational skills needed to return. Support teams should use person-centered planning to identify motivations for why the person wants to stay in a sheltered workshop after retirement. Some of these areas might include routine, more income, or friendships. The person and their support team can then find ways to meet those needs through other services.

**Question:** *Is there an expectation that those seeking or continuing DSG are required to have some EPR and explore that, or only that it is discussed annually with them and they opt-out if they are not interested in employment and can take full advantage of DSG?*

**Answer:** EPR is not required for anyone. There is an expectation that every person of working age, 14-65 years old, be provided with an informed choice for employment so they can decide if they want to work. Deciding whether to continue informed choice

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through EPR or another service depends on the person’s interest in working at that time. When a person expresses interest in employment at any point, it is recommended to either seek Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) support to pursue a job or transition to EPR to explore work interests and develop prevocational skills if needed. If the person is not interested in working after employment options and information are offered, informed choice experiences or activities are recommended. Any part of informed choice for employment can occur during a day, supported living, residential or any other non-work DSPD service. Everyone should be offered an opportunity to make an informed choice about employment.

**Question:** *The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) refers to prevocational programs as important safety nets; where are our safety nets?*

**Answer:** EPR is a prevocational service meant to prepare a person for the general requirements of Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE). If a person is currently working in a facility-based setting, or participating in sub-minimum wage contract work, they will see EPR start to be used to support them. Their service will look different and have a time limit of 24 months. If more time is needed an extension can be requested to support the person to gain the prevocational skills they need to pursue CIE. There are also a variety of services options that a person can transition to that support continued efforts to seek employment or other meaningful activities to fill their day. No one will lose services.

**Question:** *If an individual has a history of behaviors in the community and community employment is not appropriate, but they do piece work through a provider, can we bypass EPR?*

**Answer:** Anyone working in a sheltered workshop, a sub-minimum wage job, or as an employee of a provider that is not a part of an enclave needs to transition to EPR by March 17th 2022. One of the requirements of EPR is interest in Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE). Piece rate jobs and other non-CIE work should be viewed as time-limited training and stepping stones to future CIE. EPR may be used for up to 24 months. If more time is needed an extension can be requested to support the person to gain the prevocational skills they need to pursue CIE. However, this service is for a defined period or time, meaning the person will need to choose a different service at some point. Behavioral needs should be addressed through the appropriate service to meet the person’s needs. There are also a variety of services options that a person can

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transition to that support continued efforts to seek employment or other meaningful activities to fill their day.

**Question:** *What is the fall back plan if someone has EPR and after the time limit is still not ready for competitive employment? Will they revert back to DSG?*

**Answer:** Support teams are encouraged to begin conversations early with the person to prepare for changes to services, activities, or routines when EPR services are nearing an end. DSPD has an array of services that the person can “fall back” on when the person is not interested in working at this time. Consider a different community resource, activity, class, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services, or another DSPD service that matches goals, activities and interests. If a person has not found a job after 24 months of EPR, a request to extend the service could be submitted. A short extension can be requested immediately after an initial 24 months or years later, depending on the needs of the person. There is not a specific limit to the number of extensions allowed, however, this is a time limited service. Services and supports should not be planned with the expectation of multiple extensions of EPR, instead an extension should be requested when the need for further prevocational skill development arises for someone continuing to be interested in Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE).

**Question:** *There seems to be much attention given to evidence to be provided by the consumer and their support team. This would seem to place an unfair burden of proof on the consumer. The stated time limitation seems to be at odds with a person-centered focus.*

**Answer:** In order for a service to be authorized, there must be a justification of the need for the service. The Request for Services (RFS) process is in place to review the justification and approve authorizations of services to ensure that DSPD is allocating funds appropriately to as many people with disabilities as possible. Requesting EPR through the RFS process is the same as for any other DSPD service. The person and support team do need to document the person’s interest in Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) and prevocational skills the person would like to focus on. This information can be gathered through documents the team is already using such as the [DSPD Employment Pathway Tool](#), other [person-centered planning tools](#), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) documents, documentation a provider uses to understand a person’s needs, quarterly summaries, Person-Centered Support Plan, etc. EPR is a prevocational service that is intended to provide learning and work experiences, including volunteer work, where the individual can develop general, non-job-task-specific strengths and

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skills that contribute to employability in paid employment in integrated community settings. Services are expected to occur over a defined period of time and with specific outcomes to be achieved, as determined by the individual and his/her service and supports planning team through an ongoing person-centered planning process. Someone should not be preparing for CIE continuously without having the opportunity to try a few CIE positions.

**Question:** What if I have more questions?

More information can be found on the [DSPD website](#) under the 'Providers, SCs, & Staff' tab, then under 'Providers' click on 'Employment Preparation Service (EPR)'. If you have further questions feel free to email [dspdinfo@utah.gov](mailto:dspdinfo@utah.gov), or ask your question directly to Bryn Peterson at [brynpeterson@utah.gov](mailto:brynpeterson@utah.gov) or (385) 228-3122.