

## **Employment Preparation Services (EPR) Recommendations**

### **Purpose of EPR-**

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

### **When is EPR recommended?**

EPR is recommended over day, supported employment, supported living, or another DSPD service when:

- The person is interested in working in a competitive and integrated job in the future.
- The program's planned daily activities, training and direct support time are related to employment. Some examples include: job coaching in a sheltered workshop or a sub-minimum wage job, investigating employment interests, and group or one-on-one prevocational skills training.
  - The purpose for the activity can help you determine the difference between EPR and a day service. Please use the service code descriptions and professional judgement in determining the best activities to support the services you provide. For information regarding the difference between EPR other DSPD services refer to:  
<https://dspd.utah.gov/providers/epr/>
- Additional prevocational skill development is needed before the person can actively seek a CIE position.
- The person would benefit from more options, information, or experiences to make an informed decision about employment.

Note: If a Day Service code was previously utilized to support a facility-based work setting, sub-minimum wage contract work, or any other non-CIE work situations, shift supports from Day Services to EPR or Supported Employment in a group Daily (SED) by March 17th 2022.

### **When is EPR not recommended?**

- If other supports are available, such as Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) through Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to develop prevocational skills.
- If an individual has made an informed choice not to pursue CIE.
- If an individual is needing job development support to seek a new CIE position.
- If an individual is currently working in CIE. Additional recommendations for this situation are:
  - Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR)/VR supports should be fully utilized to support CIE before requesting any DSPD employment supports.
  - EPR would not be recommended when someone is working in a CIE position. If additional vocational skill building is needed, other supported employment services like VR supports, SED or Supported Employment Individual (SEI) are recommended. However, additional EPR would be recommended if the person has lost a job, and prevocational skills were identified that are preventing the person from returning to a competitive and integrated job. Unique situations that fall outside this guidance should

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be handled on an individual basis.

- If an individual is currently placed in CIE, but wants to work additional time on piece-rate contracts.
- If service activities and training focus on habilitative skills, life skills, or independent living skills.
- If an individual is interested in enclave work, at minimum wage, with the staff support provided through SED.

### **Support Coordinator considerations-**

- As Support Coordinators advocate for individual needs, EPR should be considered if time-limited preparation or skill training is needed before seeking CIE.
  - While informed choice activities can occur during any direct care service, EPR is an appropriate service option to help a person who is unsure about CIE to gain information, explore the available options, and participate in multiple work experiences to decide if CIE is a good fit for them.
- Support coordinators should facilitate conversations and planning with people, families, and providers to discuss EPR, and document next steps.
  - Educating people and their families on the differences between EPR, and other day and employment services is vital as teams meet to address individual support needs.

### **Service provider considerations-**

- EPR separates employment from day service activities as required by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Providers should decide if they will focus on day, and/or employment activities and ensure they are contracted to provide the distinct service(s) they choose.
  - Providers should be prepared to connect a purpose to each planned activity, or skill training. Doing so will help distinguish EPR from other service options.
  - Some overlap is expected just as it would be for a non-disabled peer. Social activities, leisure activities and other interactions could happen with coworkers or with friends. As much as possible match the purpose of the activity to the service being used.
- Informed choice for employment can be offered through any service and must be offered to every working-age person as needs and interests change and at least annually.
- EPR should only be accessed for a person that has expressed interest in working in CIE, or is unsure about what work could look like for them and needs more time, information or experiences to make a decision.
- Work with the person and their support team to find the service combinations that work best for the person and meet their needs.
- Individuals who receive home and community based services (HCBS) must have opportunities to seek employment and work in competitive integrated settings. All services should be offering an informed choice for employment. Informed choice is the process of choosing from multiple options based on accurate information, knowledge, and experiences. A choice is informed when

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an individual has options, information about the options, and experience with the options.

- Day service providers should not help the person job develop, obtain skills specific to employment or fill out job applications. These are all supports that should be provided through Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) or through DSPD services like supported employment or EPR.
- Day service providers do need to have a process of how they support people to make an informed decision about working or not and then how they would connect them to the supports they would need to pursue work if they are interested to be compliant with the Settings Rule.

### **Considerations for the person-**

- EPR is only recommended for those expressing interest, or might be unsure about working in Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE).
- People should be supported to decide whether they want to pursue a competitive integrated job in the future.
- If a person is unsure, they should know that EPR can give them time to decide, and some hands-on experience in jobs that interest them.
- Are there prevocational skills that the person wants to work on to prepare for CIE?

### **Family/natural support considerations-**

- Sheltered workshops will be transitioning to EPR by March 17, 2022.
- Transitioning between EPR, and another DSPD or community alternative can be quick or gradual, and is based upon individual need.
- Families are encouraged to begin conversations early with the Person-Centered Support Team (PCST) to prepare for changes to services, activities, or routines when EPR services are nearing an end.
- Many alternative service options such as: day services, supported living and non-DSPD community resources remain available after the EPR service time limit ends. As the EPR end date approaches, individuals will be prompted to prepare for future employment by meeting with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), or identifying replacement services, activities, goals and training.