Customized Employment: What it Is And Why We Need It!
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The Challenge
- Creating lasting satisfying, person-directed, employment beyond the confines of traditional job development

Why Customized?
- 31% of working age people with disabilities employed vs. 72.7% of people without disabilities (2010-2012)
- Overrepresented in 17 of the top 20 fastest declining occupations; underrepresented in 16 of top 20 fastest growing occupations
- Top 20 occupations with greatest growth for people with disabilities tend to be low-paying (PCAs, food service, housekeepers/cleaners, etc.)
The Sobering Reality

TX State I/DD Employment Data 2013/2014

- 46,043 in Day & Employment Services
  - 3,796 (8%) in Integrated Employment
  - 24,650 (56%) in facility-based nonwork
- 1,649 (4.5%) of DARS closures were for individuals with I/DD
- 609 (37%) of these were closures into an employment setting

At a More Personal Level...

- 6% in an “individual” job
- Average weekly wages: $192.51
- Average hours worked/week: 33
- 5% of these in a “competitive” job
- Average weekly wages: $198.94
- Average hours worked/week: 32
- National average is fairly similar

The Power of Transition

- 73.3% of students receiving transition services starting at age 14 became employed vs. 45.2% receiving services at age 16 (CPSD/Ruderman Foundation: How Can We Get More People with Disabilities Employed in their Communities?)
- Youth with previous paid work experience were 4.53 times more likely to achieve integrated competitive employment (Center on Transition to Employment Issue Brief: Post-School Outcomes for Transitioning Youth with Developmental Disabilities)
What is Customized Employment?

- Stands on shoulders of Supported Employment
- Not a service or program... it is an approach
- Not group-based or labor-market driven
- Not looking for the “Dream Job”
- Not Vocational Evaluation and Testing
- Not Interest Inventories

Customized Employment

Customized Employment (CE) means individualizing the employment relationship between employees and employers in ways that meet the needs of both.

The United States Department of Labor, Office of Disability and Employment Policy
**Customized Employment**

“May include employment developed through job carving, self-employment or entrepreneurial initiatives, or other job development or restructuring strategies that result in job responsibilities being customized and individually negotiated to fit the needs of individuals with a disability.”


**Benefits of a Customized Approach**

- Especially effective for individuals with high or complex support needs
- Applicable to anyone, with any disability (or without) seeking employment
- Circumvents the comparison of applicants made in competitive hiring
- Relies on natural relationships, supports, training

**Challenges with Traditional Approaches**

- Starts with employment demand; reacts to labor market
- Includes group employment options
- Allows for sub-minimum wage
- Selects the most skilled applicants, leaving behind those with more complex lives
- Frequently results in entry-level, minimum-wage, high-turnover trap
CE Stages

- Discovering Personal Genius
- Identify 3 Vocational Themes
- Generate List of 20
- Conduct Informational Interviews
- Job Analysis/Negotiation or Business Planning

"Who dares to teach must never cease to learn."
- John Cotton Dana

Discovering Personal Genius™ (DPG)
“Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”

- Abraham Lincoln

+ DPG/Discovery

- Foundation for all customized outcomes
- Starts from premise that ALL can work
- Answers question of what work will be best not if work is possible
- Exploration to learn:
  1. More about person, and
  2. More about community

+ Discovery: What it Is

- Provides individuals the space to showcase:
  - Who they really are, and
  - What they can do...
  - In the environments that mean the most

Are you at your best when being tested, or rather when you are exploring familiar and/or new places, people & things?
Key to Discovery
- Home Visit (DPG starts at home)
- Interviews
- Discovery Activities
- Focus on identifying **skills**
- Determine Ideal Conditions for Employment
- Foundation for Vocational Themes

Key to Discovery
- About the person, NOT the job
- Biggest challenge is not jumping to job
- Information learned during Discovery later helps determine if a particular job “fits”

Adam, Home Visit
- Worked in specimen lab at hospital as part of high school - “lasted” for one year, says he enjoyed this
- Very skilled at video game & internet searches on computer; avid reader
- Mom says he enjoys gardening: helped a neighbor keep up her yard for about a year, did a “great job”
- Mom thinks he might have mechanical skills (dad, uncle, & grandfather were mechanics)
DPG Visits, Adam

- Gardening: Landscaping company; tree removal (neighbor)
  - Dug beds, raked smooth, dug holes with trowel, planted flowers (accurate with spacing, colors, etc.), safely used all tools. Performed all tasks independently after being shown how to do them. Worked without interruption until tasks were completed. Asked "boss" what else he could do.
- Mechanics: auto-repair shop
  - Listened while mechanic explained, didn't want to try to do tasks, asked if they could leave to get some lunch

Other DPG Visits, Adam

- Local library
- Museum of Military History library (particular interest in military history)
- Local DJ (computer skills)

Vocational Themes

- Link between Discovery and job development
- Broader than job descriptions - hold many jobs
- Once DPG is complete & themes are verified, job development begins
- Need 3 confirmed themes to start JD
Adam - Emerging Themes

Initial Information:
- Great organizing, alphabetizing, etc.
- Likes movies
- Original idea: video store

More Exploration, Themes:
- Medical
- Technology (audio/video production)
- Agriculture

From Themes to Jobs...

(Developing the List of 20)
“If you don’t know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else.”
- Yogi Berra

Customized Job Development
- Developing vs. Finding
- Lists of 20
- Economic Development approach
  - Informational interviews with local businesses or identify community needs to create opportunities
- Blend & braid resources
- Not asking for jobs... creating opportunities that strengthen the community as a whole

Focus on Small Business
- Generates over 85% of all new jobs
- 20 million (out of 37 million) are owner operated
- Only 17,000 have more than 500 employees
- Most are undercapitalized
- Many do not have HR/formal job descriptions
- Easier to reach the decision maker
- Hiring is personal in smaller companies
Adam: Medical Theme Informational Interview

Possible CE Outcomes

- Negotiated Jobs
  - Created, carved, restructured, or unbundled
- Resource Ownership
- Self-Employment/MicroEnterprise

To be customized, employment must be:
- Paid, competitive work
- Integrated settings
- Ongoing support

All I ask is the chance to prove that money can’t make me happy.

~Spike Milligan
Transition to... Life... Full-Time!

Resource Ownership

- Job seeker contributes a resource that increases business profitability, e.g.,
  - Equipment, tools, vehicle, college degree
- Creates a job opportunity and enhances workplace prestige
- Supports community economic development

Scott’s Ice Cream

- Relationship with local restaurant
- Job opportunities limited
- Scott purchased industrial ice cream machine:
  - PASS
  - K-Fund

Self-Employment: Em's Coffee Shop

http://www.emscoffeeco.com/trailer.htm

Liss: Ebay Reseller

Interests/Skills:
- Communication, computers, fashion

Support Considerations:
- Home-based, accessible

Link: business maximizes
independence and income

$1k Net, Y1
$28k Net, Y2

PASS to fund stock AND eradicate overpayment
Advice from Liss

“It’s a lot of work, but if you love what you do, have a good plan, and people to help you along the way, it’s an extremely rewarding experience.”

www.ebay.com/usr/rabidbutterfly82

Funding CE Outcomes

- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Plan to Achieve Self-Support
- Individual Development Accounts
- Family Self-Sufficiency Programs
- Loans: Guaranteed, Revolving funds
- Agency or Personal/Family Investment

Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act, 1999 (TWWIIA)

“Despite such historic opportunities and the desire of millions of disability recipients to work and support themselves, fewer than one-half of one percent of Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income beneficiaries leave the disability rolls and return to work.”

TWWIA, 1999 (cont.)

“If only...one-half of one percent of the current [SSI] and [SSDI] recipients were to cease receiving benefits as a result of employment, the savings to the Social Security Trust Funds...would total \$3,500,000,000 over the working life of such individuals, far exceeding the cost of providing incentives and services needed to assist them in entering work and achieving financial independence...”


Final Thoughts... Throwing Down the Gauntlet

Ticket to Work Goal:
½ of 1%

46,043 people with I/DD receiving day or employment services

230,21 people

I hope they live long lives and have their own place. I hope they make money. I hope they learn every day. I hope they meet new people, celebrate their birthdays, write letters, clean up, go to friends’ houses and drink coffee. I hope they have a good breakfast every day, call people on the phone, feel safe.

-Lois Curtis
Questions??? Comments???

THANK-YOU!!!