



Graduate to Work E-News

University of Montana, Rural Institute Transition Projects

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A Quarterly Newsletter Produced by the Eastern Montana Graduate to Work Project

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Individualized Career Planning

By Ellen Condon, University of Montana's Rural Institute

The Individualized Career Planning Model was developed in Montana over several years with the support of grants from the U.S. Department of Education and the Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities. The goal was to create a model of transition planning and career development for students with significant disabilities to promote access to community employment and self-employment. The model works equally well for adults with disabilities and anyone else facing barriers to finding or keeping a job.

The Model

- The goal is paid, community-based employment or self-employment for each job seeker regardless of the severity of her or his disability. This is accomplished through customized planning, work experiences, and employment opportunities, all driven by the job seeker's interests, support needs, strengths, and contributions.
- Alternative resources that increase consumer and family choice and control over services, such as Social Security Work Incentives, are incorporated into planning efforts.
- Linkages between agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, Community Rehabilitation Providers, Workforce Investment, and the schools are developed to promote the collaborative funding of employment activities for each job seeker.

What Is Customized Employment?

"Customized employment means individualizing the employment relationship between employees and employers in ways that meet the needs of both" (Callahan, 2002). Work experiences and jobs are created, carved or negotiated for the individual job seeker based upon her/his needs, strengths, and interests.

Why Customize?

For individuals with a significant impact of disability, customizing an experience or employment setting increases the opportunities for their participation and maximizes their competent performance. When required to compete against applicants without disabilities for a job opening, or having one's skills and abilities compared against an existing job description, people with a more significant impact of disability don't measure up (Callahan, 2002). However, if an individualized approach is used to represent a person's contributions to employers needing those contributions, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics, employment becomes a reality for all people.

Discovery

The first step to customizing employment is called Discovery. This is a process used to get to know a job seeker. Information about the person's interests, strengths, environments, or activities where s/he is at her/his best; supports that are effective for her/him; and present levels of performance is gathered through a series of activities, interviews and observations.

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Resources:

ODEP - Office of Disability Employment Policy, Customized Employment Fact Sheets
www.dol.gov/odep/more.htm#fact

The Advance, Volume 15, 1, June 2005 Customized Employment - A Discussion: An interesting "Model" or the Next Generation of SE? Callahan, M. & Rogan, P.
www.apse.org

TASH Connections, Volume 28, 9/10, 2002. Customizing Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities.
www.tash.org/publications/newsletter/previous_newsletters.htm

University of Montana's Rural Institute
<http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition>

For information about how these concepts are being applied to help students visit these links:

The Individualized Career Planning Model <http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/careerplanning.asp>

Customized Career Planning Articles <http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/Onesizearticles.asp>

More tools and resources for the process of Discovery <http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/Discovery.asp>

Samples of Customized Employment with Students www.myti.org

Individualized Career Planning, cont.

Vocational Profile

For job development purposes, Discovery information is captured in a written format called the Vocational Profile. The Profile guides the selection or creation of school and community-based jobs. It is offered as an alternative strategy to more traditional or standardized forms of vocational evaluation.

The Profile and the Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

By completing the Vocational Profile for students at age 14, the information can be used to guide transition planning, career exploration, and vocational preparation for the middle and high school years. Through the Discovery and Profile process, the skills that a student needs to learn or become more proficient in within their home, community, recreation and leisure activities, and employment are identified and thus form the goals for Transition Planning in the IEP.

Customized Planning Meeting

Now it is time for the Customized Planning Meeting. This is a structured group process that guides future job development activities. Outcomes of the meeting include:

- Terms of negotiation for a job in which the individual can succeed
- A summary of contributions the person can bring to an employer
- A list of specific tasks the individual can perform
- A list of specific employers in the community whose businesses might:

- ▶ match the person's conditions for employment
- ▶ value the person's contributions
- ▶ have a need for the specific tasks the person can complete

Representational Portfolio

The Representational Portfolio is a marketing tool job developers can use to represent job seekers to employers. It is a pictorial representation of the individual's contributions and capabilities, based on the information gathered during Discovery, captured in the Profile, and summarized in the Customized Planning meeting.

Social Security Benefits Analysis

The other major component of the Individualized Career Planning Model is the incorporation of Social Security Work Incentives, such as PASS plans, into transition and career planning. SSA Work Incentives can be utilized to fund supports that augment what schools and/or agencies are providing for employment; fund employment supports that are unavailable to a student between the time he/she graduates from school and the time he/she begins receiving services from adult agencies; or fund tools, equipment, or services needed for an individual to begin her/his own business.

Callahan, M. (2002). Employment: from competitive to customized. *TASH Connections Newsletter*, 28(9), 16-19.

Resources:

Marc Gold & Associates
www.marcgold.com

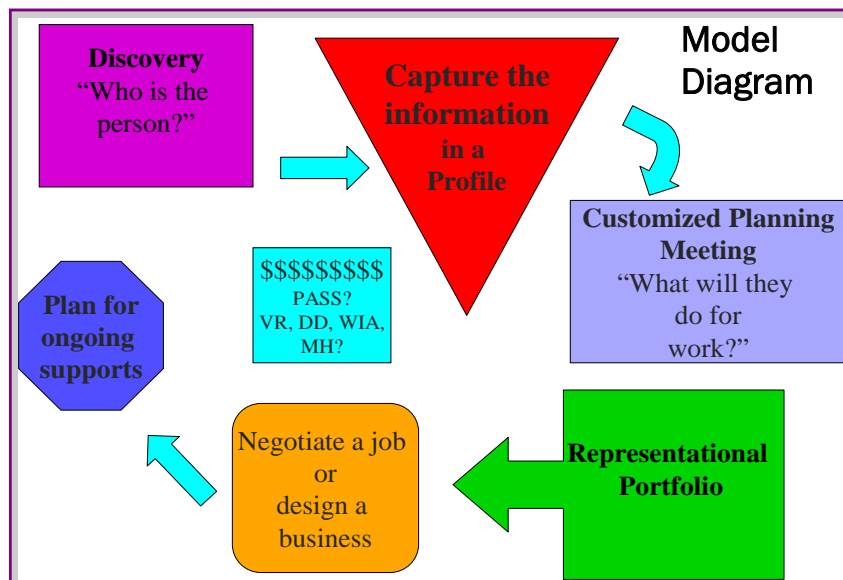
Griffin-Hammis Associates, LLC
www.griffinhammis.com

Training and Technical Assistance for Providers hosted by the Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center
www.t-tap.org

NCWD - National Center on Workforce and Disability/Adult, based at the Institute for Community Inclusion, UMASS, Boston
www.onestops.info

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation:
<http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/dsd/mvr.shtml>

Montana Developmental Disabilities Programs:
<http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/dsd/ddp/index.shtml>



Who Are We? Getting to Know the EMGTW Team

A partnership of three agencies – Eastern Montana Industries, Montana Vocational Rehabilitation (Miles City office), and The University of Montana Rural Institute – is implementing the 2005-2006 Eastern Montana Graduate to Work Project. (For a description of the agencies, please refer to the September 2005 EMGTW E-News.) In this newsletter, we'll introduce you to the primary players from each of these agencies, as well as to the two job seekers with whom the teams are working to learn and apply the Individualized Career Planning Model.

Rhonda Shumway, Montana Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

114 North 7th, Miles City, Montana 59301

Rhonda has been a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for Montana VR since October 1993. Rhonda earned her BS in Rehabilitation and Related Services from Eastern Montana College and her MS in Special Education with an emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling from Utah State University in May 2000. Rhonda's past work includes everything from short order cook to employment specialist to housekeeper. In her current position, Rhonda serves individuals with a wide range of disabilities, including students with disabilities who are transitioning out of high school. Rhonda serves the counties of Carter, Custer, Fallon, Garfield, McCone, Powder River, and Prairie in southeastern Montana.

Sue Nielson and Kara Phillips, Eastern Montana Industries (EMI)

PO Box 759, 805 South Haynes Avenue, Miles City, Montana 59301

Sue is the EMI Consumer Services Director, responsible for coordinating services and monitoring the compliance of those services with regulatory and accrediting agencies. She earned her BS in Vocational Rehabilitation from the University of Wisconsin and has been certified in Vocational Evaluation since 1988. Sue has also worked as a training supervisor, work adjustment supervisor, and vocational evaluator in sheltered work settings and as the EMI Vocational Services Coordinator.

Kara has been a job coach at EMI since September 2004. She has 14 years of Human Services experience working with children and adults, including two and a half years as an Adult Mental Health Case Manager. Kara's passion is working with people and helping them to be successful in life. She advocates for employers and consumers, always with a team approach and a smile.

Ellen Condon and Kim Brown, The University of Montana Rural Institute

634 Eddy, Missoula, Montana 59812

Ellen is the Transition Projects Director at the University of Montana's Rural Institute. She directs Linkages to Employment, a Model Demonstration Project funded by the U.S. Department of Education; Youth Corps, a service learning project subcontract with Creative Training Accelerating Talent (CTAT); MontanaWorks, a CARF accredited employment service; and Eastern Montana Graduate to Work, a Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities-funded project. Before joining the Rural Institute in 1995, Ellen worked in a variety of capacities in the disability services field in supported employment and residential services.

Kim is the Transition Project Coordinator working on Linkages and Eastern Montana Graduate to Work. She came to the Rural Institute two years ago after serving as the Linkages project liaison at the Bitterroot Education Cooperative where she also provided mental health case management and behavioral consultant services to students, families, and schools. She has 23 years of human service experience including work in the fields of developmental disabilities, aging, foster care, mental health, and public assistance. Kim is currently completing her MSW degree at the University of Montana and piloting customized employment strategies and the Career Planning Model with students with mental health issues and emotional disturbances. *Continued...*

Upcoming Trainings

February

- 2/14/06, 1:00-2:30, Teleconference: "Self-Employment for People with Disabilities"
15 sites – To Be Determined*

April

- 4/11/06, 1:00-2:30, Teleconference: "An Overview of SSI/SSDI"
15 sites – To Be Determined*

May

- 5/9/06, 1:00-2:30, Teleconference: "An Introduction to the Developmental Disabilities System in Montana"
15 sites – To Be Determined*

You can register for a training by emailing Kim Brown at least ten days in advance at:

brown@ruralinstitute.umn.edu

* If you are interested in hosting a teleconference site please contact Kim Brown at:
brown@ruralinstitute.umn.edu

Who Are We?, cont.

Sid (not his real name)

Miles City, Montana

Sid graduated from high school in the spring of 2004. While he was in school, Sid participated in three work experiences (Eagles Manor, Miles Community College, and the EMI Recycling Center). Now he wants to find a paying job in the community, something that will allow him to share his talents, pursue his interests, and earn money to buy the things he wants and needs. Sid is especially interested in bike repair and working with cars. He is outgoing, compassionate, physically strong, doesn't mind getting dirty or greasy, and has a great sense of humor.

Donovan

Miles City, Montana

Donovan is a high school senior who hopes to find paid, community-based employment before he graduates. He has experience working with two different lawn care services and is currently employed at the EMI Recycling Center and with the EMI janitorial crew. Donovan is interested in anything to do with vehicles and spends his spare time helping friends and family members with auto repair, upgrading, and maintenance. He is flexible, deals easily with changes, learns mechanic-type tasks quickly, is always on time, and is a fast and hard worker.

Step One: Discovery

Customized employment, an innovative approach that is being promoted by the U.S. Department of Labor, uses the same base and some of the same techniques as supported employment, a strategy which has promoted employment for people with disabilities since the 1980s. In customized employment, the process always starts with the person rather than the labor market. Customized employment presumes that up-front negotiation of a position will occur on behalf of the job seeker; tasks, how they are performed, and supports for the employee may be some of the negotiables. In order to create a customization blueprint for an individual, we must start by answering the question, "Who is this job seeker in terms of interests, contributions, support needs, and tasks that they can perform?" This process of getting to know the job seeker is called Discovery.

The Miles City Eastern Montana Graduate to Work team started Discovery with Sid* and Donovan on September 26, 2005, when team members (including the young men) gathered for training on Customized Employment and the Individualized Career Planning Model. Every interaction is a learning opportunity - the training was a chance to see how they reacted in a group that included people they didn't know; how comfortable they were sharing their opinions and asking questions;

whether or not they were able to focus during a three-and-a-half-hour session; what their interests were; what their career goals were; etc. It was also a chance to plan additional Discovery activities, including visits to familiar and unfamiliar places in the community, trips to the young men's homes, and interviews with people who know Sid and Donovan well.

For a familiar activity, Sid chose to have lunch that afternoon (and the next day) with the team at a local restaurant he likes to frequent. While sharing the meal, team members watched for such things as: how Sid selected his food (did he read the menu or order from memory?); how he communicated his order (did he respond verbally to the waitress when asked what he wanted or did he point to an item on the menu?); whether or not he needed any assistance opening packages (like straw wrappers or crackers); and whether he could pay the bill if given money with which to do so. Other familiar activities involved visiting the bike section at Wal-Mart and browsing in a pawn shop. Team members watched for the kinds of items that captured Sid's interest, his interaction with store personnel and other customers, and his knowledge of money.

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Step One: Discovery, cont.

For an unfamiliar activity, Sid and the team visited a motor-sports business. Since Sid said he was interested in mechanics, Kara arranged for access to the back shop area of the store and introduced him to one of the assembler/mechanics. Observations were made about his level of interest in what the worker was doing and other tasks being completed in the shop. This also provided an opportunity to question Sid about different four-wheelers and motor bikes to gain further insight into how much he knows about them and whether this knowledge might be a contribution that could be marketed to employers.

Sid and his mother invited the team into their home on two occasions, once to see Sid's room (an easy way to gain a wealth of information about a person's interests and hobbies) and watch him perform his chores (to learn about tasks he can perform and at what level, and to better understand any support needs he might have when completing those tasks), and once to take photos for his Portfolio. Team members made note of the bike parts in the yard and the new bicycle in the house...clearly bikes are one of Sid's



major interests. In addition, Sid, his mother, and his former high school teacher were interviewed to add further detail to the emerging portrait of this young man. Future Discovery activities might include a targeted job trial at a local bike shop or oil changing business to determine the tasks he can perform and to further clarify his interests, skills, and abilities.

For Donovan, Discovery included unstructured interviews with him, his mom, his current teacher, and his employment supervisors at both of his jobs. Donovan invited the team to observe him in his favorite class, math, where team members could watch for such things as math skills, willingness to speak up in class, interaction with others, awareness of time (when class started and stopped), and ability to focus on the assignments at hand.

The team accompanied Donovan to his work at the Eastern Montana Industries Recycling Center and with the janitorial crew cleaning Pine Hills Correctional Facility. They made mental note of his work quality and speed, attention to detail, adherence to the established routine, interaction with co-workers, and ability to respond to novel situations (like when he was asked to complete a new task or perform a routine task in a different way). Further Discovery activities for Donovan will include interviews with family members, friends, and former employers, as well as visits to unfamiliar places in the community.

After each Discovery adventure, team members jotted down their observations for inclusion in the written Vocational Profiles. To help mentor Kara and Rhonda through the process with these first two job seekers, Ellen and Kim created draft Profiles, which Kara and Rhonda will now flesh out and provide to Sid and Donovan (and their families) for review and approval. (Note: Discovery and writing the Vocational Profiles has taken approximately 15-20 hours of staff time. This investment typically decreases as people become more familiar with the process and with the Vocational Profile form.)

Once the Profiles are complete, the team will hold Customized Planning Meetings and create Representational Portfolios for both young men. The Portfolios will be used as marketing tools during the job development phase of customization.

**Not his real name*

**Watch future editions of the newsletter for updates on
EMGTW project participants!**

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