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# Customized Employment

*A topical paper by  
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## Customized Employment

Imagine being forced to work in a job that you do not like and are not interested in doing. Imagine that you didn't want this job - someone else selected it for you. Unfortunately, this is a reality for many people with disabilities. If people with disabilities are not provided appropriate supports to get and keep a job, they are likely to feel isolated from the community.

The Customized Employment approach assumes everyone can work. The interests of the person with a disability are matched to the business needs of the employer. This process increases the likelihood of employee job satisfaction.

“Customized Employment is based on the assumption that integrated and competitive employment is the primary goal and priority for everyone regardless of disability or level of ability. It is presumed that all working-age individuals with disabilities can work in jobs fully integrated, within the general workforce, working side-by-side with co-workers without disabilities, and earning minimum wage or higher” (Weathers & Garnes, 2018).

Customized Employment is defined as competitive, integrated employment for an individual with a disability. It is based on the strengths, needs and interests of the individual, and is designed to meet the specific abilities of that individual. Utilizing a team approach, the skills of the individual are matched with the needs of the business (Callahan, Shumpert, & Condon, 2014).

According to Michele Burney, Project Director of ND Vocational Rehabilitation Expanding Support Employment with North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities at Minot State University, there are four major features of Customized Employment: Discovery, Job Searching Planning, Job Development Negotiation and Post Employment. Burney states, “*it's about individualizing the employment relationship between employees and employers in ways that meet the needs of both*” (M. Burney, personal communication, November 2018). Within this process, Customized Employment allows an employment specialist to:

- Identify an individual for the Customized Employment Services
- Facilitate a person-centered career planning meeting and begin developing a discovery profile
- Set up and complete informational interviews to build a pool of employers that may lead to possible employment opportunities
- Submit an individual intake to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), along with a mini discovery profile
  - Schedule and complete job shadows and workplace assessments. Talk to VR about authorizations for interview clothes, job related expenses such as shoes, uniforms, transit tickets, and other equipment that maybe needed for accommodations

- Create a video resume
- Submit discovery documentation to VR
- Assist the individual with applying and interviewing for positions in their job goal
- Once a person is employed, let team know the following information
  - Where the job is
  - What will they be doing
  - Hours per week
  - Start date and wage
  - Other helpful information that may be needed

With the completion of these steps, post-employment support will be needed. The overall goal of Customized Employment is to assist people with disabilities to be competitively employed. Once this is completed, the person with disabilities will be working for a company of their choosing. This empowerment will give individuals with disabilities the confidence to work toward and achieve the goals they set for themselves, while fulfilling both the employee and the employer's needs.

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## REFERENCES

Callahan, M., Shumpert, N. & Condon, E. (2014). *The Customized Plan for Employment*.

Weathers, R. & Garnes, L. (2018). The Discovery Process. *Bringing Resources Into Developing Gainful Employment: BRIDGE the Gap* (pp 5-21).