

PRISMS Conference 2018

Adult Living Workshop

Glossary of Terms: Vocational Settings and Descriptions

Overview

A **vocation** is a person's employment, job, occupation or volunteer activity. Having employment, volunteering, or engaging in meaningful activities increases one's self-esteem and enhances quality of life and sense of purpose.

This outline is to help understand the terminology that is used in describing vocational settings and associated public assistance services for people with disabilities.

1. Types of Vocational Settings and Descriptions

Competitive employment means work in an integrated setting and the employee is performing the essential job function, with or without accommodation such as having a job coach or using assistive technology. Employment meets the needs of the employer and employee and promotes the goal of economic self-sufficiency. Employees are paid competitively at or above minimum wage.

Supported Employment is competitive employment in an integrated setting, or employment in which individuals are working toward competitive employment, consistent with their strengths, abilities, and interests with ongoing support services for individuals with the significant disabilities. Workers are paid competitively at or above minimum wage.

Self-Employment involves an individual operating his or her own small business. The individual may make a product or provide services to businesses or individuals. An individual with disabilities often requires assistance from family or support staff to identify type of work that will be successful, make arrangements and set the payment structure.

Sheltered employment or workshop means work in a segregated setting with other people with disabilities. Typical kinds of work include assembly and packaging. Workers are generally paid below minimum wage, based upon the amount of work completed (piece rate).

Work Crews or Enclaves involve a small group of workers supervised by a job coach to perform competitive work at a job site. Some disability vendors assemble work crews of their clients for enclave work in the community. Lawn maintenance and janitorial services are common types of enclave work. Workers are paid at or above minimum wage, based upon the amount of work completed.

Day Habilitation (Day Hab or Day Program) is a program to help individuals achieve satisfying and meaningful connections, generally through participation in a variety of activities to promote skills in self-help, social interaction, daily living, employment, leisure, and development of personal interests. (Day Hab is a Medicaid Waiver funded support- see Adult Services below.)

Volunteer work involves donating one's time and talents to contribute to the community while the individual gains work experience and builds positive social behavior and interpersonal competence.

College, although not currently a common option for people with disabilities, can provide accommodations and/or specialized services for students with disabilities. Some colleges and universities offer student housing with supportive services for those with significant disabilities. Colleges and community colleges provide for-credit as well as non-credit classes.

2. **School Transition Services; Young Adult** (pre age 21)

Transitioning is the formal process of long-range planning for students with disabilities to move from school into the adult world.

Public Educational System provides vocational preparation and supported employment services to students with disabilities as they transition from school into adult world of work.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that mandates planning for the **transitioning of students** from high school into adulthood as part of their public education. Pre-vocational training, job sampling and job coaching may be incorporated into the Individual Education Plan (IEP). These services prepare the student to transition into work or other vocational activities upon graduation.

3. **Adults Services** (post age 21)

a. **State Developmental Disability Agency and Habilitation Services**

Within the governmental **Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)** are **Medicaid** administered programs and **Developmental Disability Services (DDS)**. These federal and state programs provide funding for vocational training and/or habilitation services for people with developmental disabilities.

Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) is a Medicaid waiver funded service, and once an individual is eligible and funded, those funds that can be used to support a combination of working, volunteering, day habilitation, or other services to meet an individual's goals.

Vendors or Community agencies, funded and contracted through an individual's Medicaid waiver, offer day habilitation services through activity centers, work crews, group work activities and individual supports. Some are center-based services while others may be mobile in various

community settings. Some people prefer to self-direct their own vocational, recreational or volunteer activities using individual support staff to assist, as needed.

b. Vocational Training and Supported Employment Services

Vocational Rehabilitation (referred to as Voc Rehab, VR, or DVR) is a joint state and federal funded program charged to empower people to make informed choices, build viable careers, and live more independently in the community. Any individual with a physical, mental, cognitive, or other form of disability that has "a substantial impediment to employment" may qualify for these services.

A VR counselor assists an individual with a disability to develop a plan leading to employment. Funded services may include career exploration, pre-vocational assessment, vocational training, small business development, job development, job coaching, and follow along services to assist someone to secure and maintain employment. Successful outcomes for employment include working in competitive employment as well as operating a small business.

4. A Note on Employment Earnings and the Impact on Federal and State (Public) Benefits

Social Security Benefits and Medicaid Funded Home and Community-Based Services Waivers

The **Social Security Administration (SSA)** is the primary benefits system in the United States for people with disabilities. The SSA's most common benefits programs are **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** and **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)**. These benefits come with income eligibility requirements. When earnings and assets exceed certain threshold amounts, eligibility for Social Security benefits, including cash benefits and Medicaid health care coverage, may be reduced or possibly terminated. In conjunction with Social Security benefits, many people with disabilities also receive services funded by Medicaid waivers for Home and Community-Based Services. Earnings from employment, above a certain level, may determine one as ineligible for Medicaid and Social Security benefits thereby also jeopardizing eligibility for waiver services.

Work Incentives, commonly referred to as **Ticket to Work**, enables a gradual decrease of benefits until a person attains full employment and financial independence. It is important to understand the regulations and consult with a benefits counselor about these incentives and the impact of employment earnings upon entitlement to Social Security benefits, Medicaid health care coverage and other Medicaid funded waiver services.

5. Resources

Employment

Wehman, P. (2007). *Real Work for Real Pay: Inclusive employment for people with disabilities*. Baltimore, Md.: Paul H. Brookes Pub.

Griffin Cary, D. Hammis, B. Keeton, M. Sullivan. (2014). *Making Self-Employment Work for People with Disabilities, Second Edition*. Baltimore, Md.: Paul H. Brookes Pub.

College

Think College at <https://thinkcollege.net/> is a web site identifying colleges and universities offering accommodations and credit and non-credit options.

Transition from School to Employment

Wehman, P. (2006). *Life Beyond the Classroom: Transition strategies for young people with disabilities* (4th ed.). Baltimore, Md.: Paul H. Brookes Pub.

Vocational Rehabilitation

<http://www.askearn.org/state-vocational-rehabilitation-agencies/> Every state has a vocational rehabilitation agency that is designed to help individuals with disabilities meet their employment goals. Vocational rehabilitation agencies assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, maintain, or regain employment.

Social Security and Work Incentives

<https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/> The Red Book serves as a general reference source about the employment-related provisions of Social Security Disability Insurance and the Supplemental Security Income Programs for families, educators, advocates, rehabilitation professionals, and counselors who serve people with disabilities

<https://choosework.ssa.gov/about/work-incentives/index.html> Work Incentives make it easier for people with disabilities to work and still receive medical benefits and, in some cases, cash benefits from Social Security.