

INSPIRING POSSIBILITIES

Day Training and Supported Employment Programs: Information for Parents of Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Introduction

Day Training and Habilitation and Supported Employment Service programs are county-administered programs primarily designed to build appropriate skills in areas such as self-care, communication, mobility, self-direction, community involvement, work preparation, and employment for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

When youth graduate from high school or complete a special education transition program for 18- to 21-year-olds, many aspects of their lives change. Among these changes is the end of special education services and the beginning of adult services. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) transition regulations require schools to help students with disabilities make connections to adult services, and develop job goals and independent living plans (if appropriate) before they leave high school or a transition program. After graduation, adult services are provided by several different agencies that require an eligibility determination and may have waiting lists. There are a number of laws (for example, the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, supplemental Security Income Program, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act,) that impact the lives of individuals with disabilities.

The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD) Act is one of these laws. It requires states to provide services and supports to adults with developmental disabilities. These services can include day training and habilitation and supported employment services, along with more general services such as case management, medical assistance, semi-independent living services, housing assistance, and community involvement.

Day Training means training that is outside of the individual's

home to build and support meaningful community and leisure time activities, and work experiences. These programs teach a variety of new skills to adults with developmental disabilities. Activity and skill development is provided to stimulate mental, emotional, and social growth based on the individual's interests, and abilities. Most individuals spend part of their day in a non-work environment with other individuals with disabilities. During this time, they are involved in planned therapeutic services, community activities, and continuing education. Services, activities, and skill development might include personal grooming, housekeeping, food preparation, communication, social integration, money handling, behavior management, recreation opportunities, sensory and motor development skills, and basic work skills.

Emily has a developmental disability, limited range of motion, and low communication skills. Emily receives physical and occupational therapy to increase her range of motion and muscle strength. She also spends part of her day learning to use her communication device more fluently, and to verbally express her emotions and feelings. Once a week she volunteers at a nursing home and distributes flowers that she arranges on her wheelchair tray. She is learning to use her communication device at the nursing home, and has begun using it on her own initiative in other community activities. As her muscle strength increases, she will have a supported work experience at the Day Training and Habilitation center.

Supported Employment Services (SES) includes on-site employment (formerly called Sheltered Workshops or Work Centers) and community-based supported employment. Supported Employment Services help individuals with disabilities develop personal, social, and vocational skills.

On-site employment provides paid employment in a

structured, protective environment with other individuals with disabilities. Work is usually contracted with local employers for specific tasks such as final assembly, packaging, paper shredding, or applying labels. The pay is generally lower than minimum wage and is sometimes piece work. This employment is often provided while building skills for supported or independent employment in the community.

Community-based supported employment provides paid employment in the community. The work setting must provide opportunities for interaction with non-disabled coworkers. There are a variety of models including individual job support (job coach), enclaves (a small group with a supervisor), and employment at small businesses, such as an artist cooperative, landscaping company, or a small engine repair shop. Common supported work includes retail sales, food service, hotel room cleaning, and company mail services. Work enclaves might include collecting recyclables, or doing grounds maintenance. Community-based supported employment is often combined with work hours at the Day Training and Habilitation center, and community activities such as group recreation and mobility training.

In general, there is more demand for community-based employment than service providers are able to meet. Some service providers offer personalized initiatives such as Customized Employment. If community-based employment is an important goal for your son or daughter, be sure to request information about the service provider's community placement record. Also ask about alternative options they may offer during the employment search, such as meaningful volunteer opportunities. Service providers vary in size, staffing, eligibility, and focus. Some providers might be focused only on day training and habilitation or supported employment services. Others might be licensed as both a Day Training and Habilitation and Supported Employment Services agency, and provide a wide range of other on-site and community-based services.

What can be done before graduation?.....

Before graduation, the IEP team and a county case manager should provide the family and the student with ideas of appropriate programs, and information on eligibility requirements and waiting lists. Other parents with experience in the programs may also be good sources of information. Ultimately, families will need to determine which program is the best fit for their son or daughter. Be prepared to meet with more than one agency and request tours of their facilities. Quality programs offer services, training, and supports to help each individual make progress toward reaching their full potential.

One approach to making decisions for the future is Person-Centered Planning. Person-Centered Planning is an ongoing problem-solving process used to help people with disabilities plan for their future. In Person-Centered Planning, groups of people focus on an individual and that person's vision of what they would like to do in the future. This "person-centered" team meets to identify opportunities of the focus person to develop personal relationships, participate in their community, increase control over their own lives, and develop the skills and abilities needed to achieve these goals.

Change is Coming to Day Training and Supported Employment Programs

In Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act passed in 2014, Congress expressed concern that a high proportion of students with disabilities do not go on to competitive integrated employment or postsecondary education after leaving high school. As a result, the Amendments placed a notable new emphasis on helping youth with disabilities to achieve an employment outcome – including youth with the most significant disabilities achieving supported and customized employment outcomes.

The law also limits the employment of youth in programs that pay less than minimum wage. Employment at subminimum wages is not considered an acceptable work development strategy or a successful employment outcome. Before youth can start working in such a program, school districts and state vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs will have to document that a youth has been provided with pre-employment transition services, career counseling, and information and referral services that promote competitive integrated employment.

In addition, schools cannot contract with programs that pay youth a subminimum wage. Likewise, VR counselors must include a specific competitive integrated employment goal, including supported or customized employment, in a youth's individualized plan for employment.

These changes are to be implemented in July 2016.

The following list of questions may provide further guidance to compare options, make decisions, and determine next steps.

General Questions:

- What types of jobs and/or non-work activities are available for my son or daughter in the center?
- What types of jobs in the community are supported? What employment models are offered, such as person-centered planning, long-term job coaching, enclaves, or independent work?
- What percentage of the individuals you serve are currently working at jobs in the community?
- What specific job skills training do you provide?
- How many days per week would my son or daughter work? How many hours per day?
- Do you provide transportation to job sites in the community? Is there an additional fee?
- Do you provide transportation to where we live? Is there an additional fee?
- Is there a fee for your services? Are there other costs? How do families usually pay for services? Is the program open only to individuals with specific funding sources?
- At what age should we apply for your service? How do we apply? Do we need a referral from the county or school?

Specific Questions:

- What would a typical day for my son or daughter look like in your program?
- Which of your programs would my son or daughter be eligible for? Are there programs specifically for transition-age youth?
- What is the average weekly pay? How would my young adult be paid? How often would he or she receive a paycheck?
- What is the current average “wait time” for an enrolled individual before he or she begins doing supported work in the community?
- Can you provide long-term job supports or job advancement guidance?
- Will you help my young adult prepare for and find independent employment?
- Is there a waiting list for any of the programs?
- What is the staff-to-client ratio for each program?
- Will your staff be able to accommodate my young adult’s needs? Examples might include: wheelchair; restroom, or lunchroom assistance; hearing or language assistance; medication administration; or behavior management.

Additional Questions:

- How many people do you serve? What is the age range? Do they have a particular diagnosis or disability? Do they live in a certain geographic location or county?
- Do you work in partnership with any other organization or agency?
- What is the parent/family role and level of involvement in your program?
- What social opportunities do you provide? What inclusive activities are provided with non-disabled peers?
- What kinds of non-work opportunities do you offer? Therapy? Self-advocacy and self-determination training? Transportation training? Social interaction?
- What are you “known for?” What does your organization do well? What can you do for my young adult that other providers may not be able to offer?

For a printable worksheet of these questions with space set aside to write your answers, please go to: <http://www.pacer.org/transition/resource-library/publications/NPC-46b.pdf>

How to Find Day Training and Supported Employment Programs in Your State:

To find the contact information for the agency administering these programs in your state, visit nasdds.org/state-agencies