

TRIAL WORK EXPERIENCE

AUTHORITY

Federal Regulations: CFR 361.42
Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, Section 7.

*For the purpose of this manual, use of the terms **must** or **shall** reflect the requirements of Federal law or regulation or state or administrative regulation and must be adhered to strictly.*

INTRODUCTION

In the past an extended evaluation period was used for consumers with significant disabilities when a decision could not be made by the counselor regarding the consumer's capacity to benefit in terms of an employment outcome. The 1998 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act mandate that consumers with significant disabilities be afforded real work experience rather than an extended evaluation period. In review of our Department records, it appears that counselors have, in fact, been providing real work experience for consumers with significant disabilities through our current supported employment system, utilization of job coaches and employment specialists, and other individualized services.

We expect that counselors will continue to determine consumers with significant disabilities eligible and provide appropriate services through Supported Employment, Rehabilitation Technology, and other individualized services that will lead to an employment outcome. Trial Work Experience (status 06) will be used in those rare instances when eligibility cannot be determined. Keep in mind when this decision is made the counselor should take into account the broad range of services, supports and creative employment options that can be accessed for consumers with the most significant disabilities. The consumer will be given a full opportunity to explore and demonstrate his or her abilities, capabilities, and capacity to perform in work situations through the use of trial work experiences. The counselor will arrange for trial work experiences that are of sufficient variety, over a sufficient period of time, and with appropriate supports and training to obtain evidence of employment potential.

The counselor's approach should be individualized, flexible and adaptable. The approach will need to be holistic in nature while seeking out resources to ensure all avenues are investigated. One technique that is recommended for the counselor to assess the consumer and develop a profile for employment potential is the use of "Person Centered Planning." This systematic approach to learning about a person will assist in identifying many factors needed to develop a trial work experience.

There are many advantages to Person Centered Planning. Examples of life areas to include in the plan are listed below:

- family relationships
- family involvement and support
- what is important to the consumer
- past experiences both positive/negative
- community resources the consumer uses regularly
- consumer preferences
- consumer gifts and capacities
- consumer uniqueness
- most marketable characteristics of the consumer
- practical assistance for consumer needs
- physical assistance the consumer needs
- instructional strategies that have been most effective with the consumer
- health issues and daily medical care
- natural supports including family and friends
- transportation issues
- personal care assistance needs
- ability to independently perform activities of daily living
- determine daily medical care

Person Centered Planning can identify compensatory strategies which counselors may introduce in the counseling session, such as job carving, job queuing, job sharing and assistive technology. A rehabilitation technology assessment can identify technology needs.

The trial work experience(s) must be assessed periodically. These assessments will be used to make a timely eligibility determination. The consumer will either be accepted for services or determined to be ineligible based on this clear and convincing evidence, beyond probability, that the consumer cannot benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome.

CASE DOCUMENTATION

The case will be placed in status 06 in the Case Management System for tracking purposes and service expenditures. An Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) should be completed with the consumer to the extent possible to identify services, service providers, funding and beginning date for services.

When designing an appropriate trial work experience, it is expected practice to complete a self-report eligibility worksheet with the consumer reviewing all areas covered on the eligibility worksheet. The use of the self-report eligibility worksheet is recommended primarily to identify appropriate trial work experiences. A consumer

can offer more personal insight in identifying important employment related information where medical and other treatment providers' records and notes may not be comprehensive. The counselor will also be able to examine seven key areas of functional capacity that will determine limitations and barriers for the consumer. These seven areas will concentrate on the consumer's mobility, work tolerance, work skills, self-care, self-direction, communication, and interpersonal skills. Once these limitations are known, the counselor and consumer will be able to discuss and design an appropriate trial work experience, which may include rehabilitation technology.

Greater success will be found when the counselor and consumer work together in outlining needs, wants, and realistic goals. This planning process will be beneficial in identifying appropriate service needs to be outlined in the IPE.

RESOURCES FOR TRIAL WORK EXPERIENCES:

PACE

Preparing Adults for Competitive Employment (PACE) is an internal community based work adjustment program. There are a number of PACE programs available statewide. Each program has been designed by the local staff to meet the needs of their community and consumers.

One of the components of PACE is a slot placement. This component could be used as trial work experience. In this component a consumer is placed in a community based training site based on their abilities, interests, and choices. The duration of this training can vary from 120-140 hours. Follow-up support and guidance are primary services in this component. A job coach can be provided by PACE staff or contracted with on a consumer basis.

The counselor and PACE staff should work together to insure the effective use of a PACE slot as trial work experience. Although existing PACE slots can be considered as appropriate placements, the unique needs of the consumer are to be considered and a placement may need to be developed especially for a specific consumer.

PACE and Partnerships with Community Rehabilitation Programs Involvement in Trial Work Experiences:

PACE and Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) can compliment each other to provide trial work experience for consumers.

A CRP and PACE can work together, as a team, to develop appropriate community training sites. A CRP can provide job coaching or other services, as needed, and meet weekly with the PACE team to assess the consumer's work related progress. The PACE team can coordinate additional services with other agency providers to assess and meet the needs of the consumer through rehabilitation technology, person

centered planning, and continuing evaluation of the need for job coaching and/or utilizing Department staff to provide job coaching and support services. The responsibility of the PACE team would be to coordinate services, develop appropriate community training sites in conjunction with the CRP and arrange job coaching or other services with the CRP.

Job Coaches

The first place to look for a job coach for a consumer requiring a trial work experience would be with existing resources that may already be involved with the consumer but using the person centered planning approach. Other sources may be:

- ◆ Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs)
- ◆ Retired Department of Vocational Rehabilitation/Department for the Blind/Department of Employment Services personnel, teachers, social workers, nurses
- ◆ Graduate Programs in Rehabilitation Counseling, Social Work, Psychology, or Education
- ◆ Independent Living Centers
- ◆ Comprehensive Care or other organizations serving consumers with mental illness
- ◆ Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)
- ◆ Various community organizations or clubs

Developing Contracts for Job Coaches

The counselor must develop a DVR-9 (Agreement for Services) when hiring an independent job coach. The contract should outline the specific expectations for the job coach to assist a consumer during a trial work experience. The qualifications of a potential job coach should be closely reviewed for compatibility with the consumer(s). The Services Section of the DVR-9 should include the following information:

Job coaching activities will include:

The Job Coach will explore the consumer's ability to perform in a variety of work situations and will provide consumer instruction to assist the consumer on at least three trial work sites to determine that the consumer can benefit from services in terms of an employment outcome. This service should be tailored to each consumer's needs and provide appropriate supports which may include, but not limited to, assistance in relating to supervisors and coworkers, general orientation to the work setting, ensuring that the consumer is punctual, and helping the consumer become oriented to the actual job tasks. This may involve assisting the consumer in learning the duties of his/her Trial Work Experience through job/task analysis and other methods.

The amount of job coaching per consumer will vary based on the needs of the consumer as assessed by the DVR counselor. The authorization will be issued in advance of the service provided, specifying the actual number of hours anticipated. Any change of plans will require approval of the counselor. The rate of reimbursement for these services will be based on contracts negotiated with consumer job coaches. No obligation for services for any consumer is assumed by the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation until it is authorized.

Regular progress reports will be given to the DVR counselor by the job coach for each consumer. Reports in the form of progress notes should be made for each day of service and shared with the counselor at least monthly, and the actual amount of hours and description of services should accompany each authorization (EP-8) to document the service provided. This must be done prior to the authorization being processed for payment.

Training for Job Coaches

Training can be provided through CRP's, a local school system's School to Work Transition Program, or the UK Human Development Institute's training workshop on Supported Employment.

Carl D. Perkins Comprehensive Rehabilitation Center

If resources are not available in the consumer's home community, the Carl D. Perkins Comprehensive Rehabilitation Center (CDPCRC) is an alternative for trial work experience. The CDPCRC staff will work with each counselor on an individualized basis to develop a trial work experience program that is appropriate to meet the need of the consumer.