

3-21-14

To: Employment First stakeholders

From: Statewide Employment First Coordinator Mike Maley

Re: Employment First and Discovery

(Please forward to your local partners & stakeholders)

The use of person-centered planning and processes to learn about an individual's skills, interests, preferences, abilities, and strengths is important to the goal of obtaining and maintaining successful community integrated employment. The Governor's Executive Order 13-04 specifically identifies and defines the term "discovery" as one of those processes. Because this is a relatively new term to our system, the purpose of this message is to provide a little information about the process and intent of discovery.

As the name implies, the fundamental purpose of the discovery process is to find out "who the person is." It is a process that begins prior to specific employment planning. Discovery is not a formal assessment process. Instead, it is a set of strategies that explores the life of a person. Basically, it means spending time with someone to find out who they are – their interests, passions, and goals.

The discovery process will be conducted by a qualified service provider identified in the individual's Individual Support Plan (ISP). The intent is to identify a direction for employment that is based on information obtained by spending a great deal of time with an individual.

For example, a young lady in transition services wanted to work in an office environment. The Employment Specialist discovered not only the skills and interests of the person she was supporting, but thought creatively about possibilities in the community. The Employment Specialist developed a customized position for the young woman at a local doctor's office assembling client packets, sorting and delivering mail, straightening up the waiting room, and shredding documents.

The discovery process can involve a number of activities, but generally includes:

- Interviewing the individual and people who know that person well (family, friends, support staff, personal advocates, etc.).

- Observing the individual in various settings, including their own home and their surrounding community. This might include observing the individual in typical life routines and activities.
- Accompanying the individual on a planned community-based activity, including an activity that might be new or unique to the person.

The information identified during the discovery process can be captured in a narrative format often referred to as a vocational or employment profile. The profile adds to the information which drives job development efforts. This information also helps to describe the conditions necessary for achieving as good a job match as possible. One example of how the discovery process can work can be found in this story from the Montana Rural Institute on Disabilities:

http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/transition/art_William_TASH.asp

Engagement in the discovery process may not be a needed or necessary step for everyone seeking integrated community-based employment. But it is a helpful tool for many, including those with significant disabilities. Our plan is to make the discovery process formally available to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities after July 1, 2014. More information will be available soon about discovery and on training opportunities.

In the meantime, the Department of Human Services encourages providers to do what they can within existing resources to learn more about the interests and preferences of the individuals they serve so that people who want to move towards community integrated employment, in addition to seeking Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services, can head in that direction.

Thank you all for your continued involvement, support, and advocacy for services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Oregon. If you have comments or other questions, please email them to employment.first@state.or.us.

~ Mike

- For those interested in learning more about the discovery process, there are a number of websites with information. Here are a few sources:
<http://www.communityinclusion.org/>
<http://www.marcgold.com/>
<http://www.dol.gov/odep/>