

Building a Supported Employment Fidelity Scale

Plain Language Summary

A Quick Look:

Supported employment is an evidence-based way to help people with IDD find and keep competitive integrated employment. Yet, there is no widely used fidelity scale designed specifically to measure how well supported employment is delivered for people with IDD.

A **fidelity scale** turns the key parts of a service into clear, observable practices. It can show what an agency is doing well, where improvement is needed, and whether stronger services are linked to better employment outcomes.

How the Scale Is Being Developed:

1. Listen to stakeholders.

- National focus groups gathered perspectives from employment support professionals and VR professionals.
- Input from people with IDD is also part of the larger development process.

2. Identify shared practices.

- Researchers compared themes across groups and the supported employment literature.

3. Write measurable items.

- Core practices were translated into observable indicators that can be rated using interviews, observations, and document review.

4. Cover the entire service process.

- Items address job seeker profile development, job development, job-site training, long-term supports, and quality practices used across all phases.

What the Scale Is Designed to Examine:

- Whether services reflect the job seeker's goals, strengths, preferences, interests, and needs
- Whether job development responds to both the person and the business
- Whether workplace instruction builds skills and independence
- Whether support fades based on evidence that the employee is ready
- Whether communication and long-term follow-along continue when needs or workplace conditions change

Important:

The scale is still being developed. It should not be used to make high-stakes judgments about providers until testing shows that scores are reliable, valid, and fair.

What Happens Next?

- Experts and stakeholders will **review the items** for clarity, importance, and completeness.
- The scale will be **piloted with supported employment programs** to learn whether raters can use it consistently.
- Researchers will **examine** which items work well, **remove or revise** weak or repetitive items, and study the scale's structure.
- Scores will be compared **with employment outcomes**, such as job placement, wages, hours, retention, and job stability.
- The final tool may support training, quality improvement, program evaluation, and future research.

Why This Matters:

A tested fidelity scale could give job seekers, providers, VR agencies, and funders a shared definition of high-quality supported employment. **By making effective practices more consistent, more people with IDD can find, keep, and advance in meaningful jobs.**

Source: VCU-RRTC Supported Employment Fidelity Scale development project. The scale and its scoring procedures are under development.

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For more on this project, visit: <https://idd.vcurrtrc.org/research/rs5.cfm>