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Quick Facts

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Employment Specialists Services and Benefits to Businesses and People with Disabilities

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INTRODUCTION

Many individuals with significant disabilities who have been unable to secure employment or to maintain employment have achieved employment success by securing services from an Employment Specialist. Employment Specialist services have been so successful in working with people with significant disabilities many community programs such as welfare to work, Veterans, older workers, transition, and others have begun to utilize the talents and skills of employment specialists.

One important law for employment specialist services has been the Americans with Disabilities Act. Employers are asked to examine possible accommodations to assist their efforts to recruit and hire people with disabilities and a potential accommodation available to them often is job coaching services. Some businesses have started offering co-worker job coaching as well as reaching out to community programs in an effort to advance the employment of people with disabilities on the worksite.

KEY POINTS

What is an Employment Specialist? ■ An Employment Specialist is known by several professional titles such as employment specialist, job consultant, job coach, and staffing specialist. He or she may come from a variety of backgrounds to include teaching, rehabilitation, or business and be responsible for assisting an individual with a disability in obtaining a job by creating a positive job match; maintaining a job through on-site assistance and other workplace supports; and advancing careers with career development. In many cases the employment specialist will spend time at the workplace to learn the job duties and industry standard and then assist the new employee to build proficiency over time. In addition, the Employment Specialist will provide many valuable services off of the job site such as counseling and review of job duties. If the consumer is uncomfortable with the Employment Specialist at the job site, the supports will be provided off-site.

What are Employment Specialist Services? ■ Employment Specialists do a variety of duties in the course of assisting someone both on and off the job site. Below is a list of duties for a typical Employment Specialist.

- Gathers assessment data and assists the person with a disability to develop a list of interests and potential skills.
- Gathers employment information by doing job analyses at business sites in order to match a person with a position.
- Provides one to one training on a job site.
- Provides job retention services to the employer and person with disability.
- Maintains evaluation data for performance reporting.
- Provides services off-site.

Who do Employment Specialists Support? ■ Employment Specialists support both the individual with a disability as well as the employer. These are the primary customers for an Employment Specialist. However, they will interact and provide consultation services to parents, community funding agencies, other community support programs.

What supports do Employment Specialists provide? ■ Supports will vary from person to person and it is the role of an Employment Specialist to provide some or all of the following supports for an individual:



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- advocacy, as well as competitive integrated employment as a whole,
- identification of interests, skills, and possible accommodations that are needed,
- job development and marketing services to businesses,
- one to one on site job coaching to model behaviors and provide job training, and
- provide on-going job follow-up and retention services and off-site supports as needed.

Who pays for Employment Specialist Services? ■ Funding sources of supported employment services are varied. Many programs who employ Employment Specialists have been approved to be a vendor of services for the state Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. In addition, Mental Health Disability, will provide funding for supported employment services to community rehabilitation providers. Programs such as Medicaid Waivers, Social Security Work Incentives and foundation funds are also available for use in funding Employment Specialists.

What questions do businesses have regarding Employment Specialists? ■ Businesses have many questions for employment specialists. Some of the typical questions an Employment Specialist can expect to be asked by a representative from a business are:

- Who pays for the time and services of an Employment Specialist?
- Who is liable if an Employment Specialist gets hurt at the work site?
- How long will the Employment Specialist be on-site?
- Can the agency provide a background check on the Employment Specialist?
- What is the person's disability?
- How will the Employment Specialist train a person with a disability?
- How can I accommodate a person with a disability and is it expensive?
- Who can help me with the cost of an accommodation?
- What happens if the person is not successful here at the job?

Employment Specialists can expect to hear these as well as other questions from employers and should be prepared with answers.

What are the benefits to businesses who utilize Employment Specialists? ■ Businesses want to know if they invest in a program which offers training from an Employment Specialist, will it help increase their productivity. Hiring people with disabilities is an investment for an employer as is their recruitment and hiring of all personnel. Therefore it is important to share the benefits with the employer. Here are some!

- Employment Specialists reduce the time it takes businesses to locate workers by giving the business access to a pool of pre-screened candidates.
- The up-front work of an Employment Specialist will complement the screening and hiring process of the business.
- Training and staff support from the Employment Specialist will dovetail with the style of the company. The Employment Specialist will ensure this continues until the new employee is completely up to speed.
- Employment Specialists can assist with the identification of other accommodations for the company and be a resource for their diversity efforts.
- Employment Specialists can assist the employer with tax credits such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and the Disabled Access Tax Credit for small businesses.
- Employment Specialists will provide on-going supports and job retention services.

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