Assessing the Quality of Supported Employment Services

ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

SERVICES

Introduction

This assessment tool is based upon 18 quality indicators of supported employment as described by Nisbet and Callahan (1987).'   These indicators were developed during the implementation of a model demonstration effort and are based upon field research, literature reviews, input from practitioners, and a national validation study. It is designed to be used by persons who are in the process of developing and implementing individualized supported employment models,

This quality assessment approach is designed to: a) provide direction in the development of supported employment services; and b) provide a means to measure the overall quality of existing supported employment services.   If this instrument is to be used to guide the development of supported employment services, the indicators can be considered a checklist of vital components. In order to use the tool to assess the quality of existing services, a rating system has been developed. The instrument is not intended to result in a fixed numerical score, but rather should be viewed as a profile of the supported employment service being rated.

The instrument is organized into three sections: *Administrative Issues; Job Matching and Development Issues; and Job Training and Support Issues.* There is some overlap between the sections and categories. This was done in order to ensure completeness and establish some consistency across categories.[2]

Instructions

There are no absolute values assigned to the quality indicators. Rather, each item can be rated as outstanding (O), acceptable (A), needs refinement (NR), or unacceptable (U). An item would be rated outstanding (O) if there is little room for improvement - a nearly optimal condition. An item would be rated as acceptable (A) if it is both present and of a reasonable level of quality. If it is inconsistent or below professional standards, an item could be rated as needing refinement (NR). If an indicator is determined to be in conflict with professional and business standards, it should be rated unacceptable (U). If an indicator represents a component that is not currently part of the supported employment service, the rating should be left blank.

I. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

(A)   Agency Philosophy and Mission

1) The agency has a mission statement that reflects the perspective that persons with disabilities have a right to integrated community-based employment,

2) The agency has publicly stated its commitment to supported employment, and is actively encouraging support from staff, families and the community.

3) Financial support has been secured from all available sources (State office of DD, Vocational Rehabilitation, SSA, JTPA, etc).

4) The agency demonstrates a desire to facilitate and implement supported employment by offering a variety of employment options based on individual needs and preferences.

5) The agency has a plan to secure and maintain long-term supports for employees. (Family/friend network; co-worker/employer supports; case management, etc.).

(B)   Agency Administration

1) The agency demonstrates its commitment to supported employment by offering staff and parents families in-service training and forums for discussion.

2) If appropriate, there is an existing conversion plan which includes: changes in staffing patterns; resource reallocation; and specific timelines for implementation of supported employment.

3) There is a management information system associated with the supported employment program to collect relevant data on employment outcomes.

4) There is representation by persons with disabilities on the governing board of the agency.

5) There is representation on the governing board of the agency by families of persons with disabilities.

6) There is employer representation on the governing board of the agency,

7) The Board reviews the supported employment process and outcomes on a regular basis.

(C) Fiscal Management

1) There are resources allocated for specific employment services, i.e., job development, placement, training, follow-along.

2) There are discrete resources allocated for client transportation.

3) There are allocations for staff development and training costs.

4) It is possible to track costs for facilitating and supporting individuals in each of the areas of supported employment.

5) There are plans to divest existing capital/real estate/facilities, etc. associated with traditional, segregated services.

6) Additional forms of revenue for the agency and the support services have been sought. (e.g., employer participation, work related expenses).

7) Administrative costs are proportionate to the number of clients being served.

(D)   Image Enhancement and Public Relations

1) There is a public relations plan that has specific objectives related to employment outcomes.

2) The public relations plan contains: strategies for implementation, identification of staff responsible for implementing the plan, and materials that are image enhancing.

3) There are specific attempts to interact with and present information to community businesses, community groups, families, schools, etc.

4) The attitude, actions and dress of agency staff represent the values of the agency, enhance the image of persons represented and are acceptable to local businesses and the community.

5) The agency staff is knowledgeable about current employment conditions in the community.

6) The agency and its staff presents an image of personal competence rather than handicapism and charity.

7) The agency has developed "networks" and relationships with employers and employer groups.

(E)   Interaction and Coordination with School Programs

 1) Supported employment personnel are directly involved with students before graduation from high school (IEP's Transition Plans, direct training, consultation).

2) School and supported employment personnel are involved in an effort that focuses on transition and supported employment.

3) Strategies for transferring responsibility from school to supported employment services are clearly documented and used.

4) Supported employment personnel provide feedback to school districts on outcomes and status of graduates.

5) Local school districts are encouraged to prepare students for integrated supported employment through the provision of non-school vocational experiences.

(F)   Effective Use of Community Resources

1) Relationships with existing job providing agencies have been developed (eg. Voc. Rehab., Job Services, Community Developmental Services, JTPA).

2) Relationships with local universities and colleges in the vicinity have been established for support and technical assistance.

3) Family and home supports are used to facilitate employment (eg. transportation, job development, training).

4) Coordination is provided so that each individual's financial benefits (eg. pay, employer insurance) are maximized and that the loss of governmental benefits is minimized (SSI, SSDI, Medicaid, Public Aid).

Positive Relationships with Employers

1) A supported employment advisory board consisting primarily of employer has been formed to give advice and provide feedback to staff.

2) Employers are encouraged to provide referrals for developing new supported employment opportunities.

3) Employers are involved in the evaluation of worker's performance.

4) Employers provide feedback on supported employment procedures and trainer's roles.

5) Presentations on supported employment to local employer and civic groups are an on-going component of the service.

(H)   Effective Utilization of Personnel for Job Development and Job Training

 1) The person responsible for job development has indepth knowledge of both the targeted applicant and the training and support procedures to be used on the job.

2) Thoughtful consideration has been given to the decision as to whether to combine or separate the roles of gathering applicant information, job development, job training and on-going support.

3) If individually appropriate, jobs are developed in close proximity to already existing jobs so as to increase the number of workers a job trainer can supervise and support.

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II. JOB MATCHING AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

(A)   **Employee Selection Procedures**

1) Supported employment services are provided for a range of persons with disabilities. Persons are not excluded due to behavior, social skills, communications ability, motivational issues or degree of intellectual disability,

2) Families commitment is secured prior to participation in supported employment   services.

3) The potential high cost and intensity of supports required to secure and maintain employment are not used to reject applicants for supported employment services.

4) The supported employment agency has a position statement insuring the participation of applicants with severe disabilities.

5) Traditional vocational evaluations are not solely used to determine participation in supported employment services.

(B)   Individualization in Job Matching: Applicant and Family Involvement

1) A comprehensive vocational profile (which describes applicants' strengths, skills, routines, experiences and living situation) has been developed to guide job development efforts.

        a) Job preferences have been considered.
        b) Family, friends and connections are described.
        c) Skills and learning characteristics are captured.
        d) Past vocational experiences are outlined.

2) The process of job matching and use of the vocational profile results in the applicant and his/her family and friends becoming actively involved in the identifying and securing employment.

3) Individualized jobs rather than group-based employment situations are developed.

4) If group jobs are developed, all employees are routinely moved into individualized jobs.

5) Individuals are offered choices in the selection and maintenance of jobs.

6) Assessments used to identify potential jobs are based on ecological factors (eg. where applicants lives, transportation factors) rather than solely on traditional vocational evaluation procedures (work samples, psychological tests, readiness checklists).

(C)   Use of Job Creation Strategies

   1) Job development efforts are directed towards the specific types of employment that are consistent with the interests of the consumer.

   2) Job developers brainstorm with staff, parents and potential employees to envision specialized employment opportunities which may be created through negotiation with employees.

   3) Negotiations with employers convey the likelihood that job creation strategies may be necessary.

   4) Potential job sites are routinely analyzed in relation to the possibility of narrowing or combining existing job responsibilities to suit individual needs.

   5) Job trainers negotiate for individually-tailored job responsibilities for employees if job-threatening problems arise during training.

(D)   Use of a Variety of Payment Mechanisms

   1) A range of payment options that means paid employment for all persons with disabilities is available, including sub-minimum wage certificates.

2) Proper procedures for securing regular sub-minimum wages are documented and used.

3) Workers are paid directly by employers, both at regular and sub-minimum wage.

4) Commensurate and/or minimum wages are always sought before considering sub-minimum wages.

5) Special worker certificates through the employer are the preferred option for employee payment over an agency contracting with employers.

6) Volunteer positions are utilized only when: a) paid positions can not be developed; b) they are in settings where people typically volunteer; c) they are time-limited; d) they result in a marketable skill; e) they lead to paid employment and/or are used to supplement paid work experiences; and f) they are in valued and in integrated sites.

(E)   Development of Work Sites that Enhance the Image of Employees

 1) The employment settings in which supported employees work are highly valued by the community.

2) The jobs performed are highly valued by the community.

3) There is no apparent physical segregation of workers with disabilities from non-disabled co-workers.

4) The hours of employment are typical of those worked by others in the community.

(F) **Integrated Work in Typical Businesses and Industries That Encourage Interactions with Non-Disabled Co-Workers and Supervisors**

1) Non-disabled co-workers and supervisors are present at the work site during the work shift.

2) Supervision is provided primarily by on-site personnel.

3) Opportunities are available for non-work interactions with non-disabled co-workers.

4) Interactions with non-disabled co-workers are a part of regular job responsibilities.

5) No more than two workers with disabilities work in a given work area.

(G)   Development of Qualify Jobs

1) The general working conditions of the settings are safe, friendly, accessible and comfortable.

2) The jobs targeted for development are for stable rather than temporary or seasonal positions.

3) The jobs targeted for development have a low rate of coworker and supervisor turnover.

4) The jobs targeted for development have opportunities for advancement, pay increases, benefits, and increases in responsibilities,

III. JOB TRAINING AND SUPPORT ISSUES

(A)   Use of Ecological and Job Analyses

1) Employment sites are assessed on an array of quality indicators (potential for interactions with non-disabled co-workers, wages, working conditions, etc.) prior to employment.

2) Comprehensive inventories of environments, subenvironments and work-related activities are conducted before employment begins.

3) Detailed job analysis of all critical employment and work re-lated routines of jobs are compiled prior to and during employment.

4) Job trainers perform agreed-upon job routines before employees begin work.

5) Analysis of employee performance that references ecological inventories and job analyses is ongoing.

(B)   **Use of Systematic Instruction**

   1) Job trainers reference the natural cues and consequences which the employees use to maintain successful performance on their jobs.

   2) Job trainers recognize the training procedures utilized in each specific employment settings and adapt effective strategies to approximate those natural procedures.

   3) Job trainers utilize sufficiently powerful training strategies that ensure that the employee meets essential needs of the employer (eg. equality, safety, minimal productivity requirements).

   4) When an employee is having difficulty on the job, there is a process for reviewing training procedures.

   5) Regular data collection and review procedures are used that are sufficient for decision-making.

   6) Fading strategies and timelines are documented and followed by job trainers,

   7) The agency has a procedure for the regular supervision and observation of job trainers on job sites.

(C)   Use of Modifications, Adaptations, and Technology

1) Job trainers have clear strategies for deciding on the need for the inclusion of modifications, adaptations, or technology in the routines of supported employment jobs.

2) Job developers communicate to employers the potential need for modifications, adaptations, and technology.

3) Rehabilitation technologists or other experienced persons are utilized as necessary to assist in designing, fabricating, and installing adaptations and other technology on job sites.

4) Job trainers and rehabilitation technologists, as appropriate, routinely analyze job tasks and job-related tasks for potential modifications, adaptations, and technology that may be necessary to ensure successful performance at the supported employment job site.

5) Job trainers clear all modifications, adaptations, or technology with the employer before implementation.

6) Modifications, adaptations, and technology necessary for successful performance are routinely developed for persons with physical disabilities and for workers with severe intellectual disabilities (eg. sequencing cards, counting jigs).

7) Job trainers are responsible for instructing employees to effectively utilize any modifications, adaptations, and technology.

8) Resources necessary to design, develop, and finance modifications, adaptations, and technology have been obtained.

(D)   **Coordination with Non-Work Life Space Areas**

1) Strategies are implemented to ensure that family/residential providers are involved and committed to community employment for the workers.

2) Assistance is offered to help workers use their pay to purchase recreation activities, to select and buy personal needs items and to do banking.

3) Breaks, lunch and other non-work functions of the job are an important focus of training.

4) Workers are taught to get to and from work,

5) Assistance is provided in maintaining the already existing friendships and, other relationships of the employees.

6) When appropriate, adult education opportunities are provided and are coordinated with supported employment activities.

(E)   Emphasis on Social and Communication Skills

1) Social and communication skill requirements of the job are included in the ecological inventories.

2) Social and communication skills are not considered to be prerequisites for employment.

3) Any discrepancy in the social and communication skills of an employee is determined by the demands of the job.

4) The social and communication skill requirements of the job are taught within the natural job routines.

5) Flexibility and accommodations are negotiated as necessary to ensure acceptable social and communication requirements.

6) When necessary, augmentative communication systems are utilized for the purposes of communicating with other employees and supervisors.

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7) Job trainers focus on the development of interpersonal relationships while they are training job skills and fading.

(F)   Use of On-Going Supports

1) There are no standard time limits on placement, training and follow-along services that must be met.

2) The amount and intensity of support varies according to individual needs.

3) A strategy exists for reducing the amount and intensity of support, whenever feasible.

4) Employers, co-workers and others are involved in providing long-term supports.

5) Changes in jobs or settings are made when it is clear that the worker is becoming dissatisfied with the job.

6) Re-employment assistance is provided to workers changing jobs to ensure the continuation of integrated employment.

Additional copies of **"Assessing the Quality of Supported Employment Services"** can be obtained for **$3.00** from the Institute on Disability, Morrill Hall, University of New Hampshire, Durham, New Hampshire 03824
(603)862-4320