# DEVELOPING NATURAL SUPPORTS IN THE WORKPLACE: A MANUAL FOR PRACTITIONERS

Stephen Murphy
Pat Rogan
Marjorie Olney
Michelle Sures
Syracuse University

Bryan Dague
University of Vermont

Nancy Kalina
Stone Belt Center

July, 1993

CENTER ON HUMAN POLICY
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
200 HUNTINGTON HALL
SYRACUSE, NY 13244-2340

This manual was developed under Grant #H128A90124-91 of the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration. Additional preparation of this manual was supported in part by the U.S. Department of ducation's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), under Cooperative Agreement No. H133B00003-90 awarded to the Center on Human Policy, School of Education, Syracuse University. The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the U.S. Department of Education; therefore, no official endorsement should be inferred.

Additional copies of this manual may be obtained by writing:

Natural Supports Project
Center on Human Policy
200 Huntington Hall
Syracuse, NY 13244-2340

CONTENTS

# PART I

# INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE PIONEER-SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY PROJECT

Supported employment has been a means for people with severe disabilities, many of whom have been considered "unemployable" or capable of only sheltered work, to obtain employment in the community. However, despite their physical presence in community work situations, and the on-site supports of job coaches, many people remain isolated on their jobs, with little opportunity to interact and develop supportive relationships with co-workers. This project, a collaborative effort between Syracuse University and Pioneer, Inc., a community employment program for people with disabilities, represents an attempt to address the above problem. The primary purpose of the project was to help people find community jobs, and become integral participants in their work places, using on- and off-site resources and supports from job personnel and other community members. Thus, an equally important but more general goal of the project was to assist people with disabilities become more valued, involved members of their own communities.

The materials in this manual represent a compilation of ideas and practices that were developed and implemented during a period of significant agency transition from

a sheltered workshop to **a** community employment service. Beginning in January of 1988, Pioneer embarked on an effort to change its philosophy and services from segregated, sheltered, readiness services to individualized, competitive employment.

**Problems With Traditional Supported Employment Practices**

Initially, staff received training in traditional supported employment methods, emphasizing the job coach as the major means of finding jobs, training the new employee, and providing ongoing services. After using this approach, the Pioneer staff observed that many of the people they served, while physically present on their jobs, remained socially separated from other employees. This occurred, in part, because of the staff's own practices that impeded the development of naturally occurring relationships between employees with disabilities and their co-workers. For example, a new employee could become socially isolated because staff developed a singular, self-contained job that was not duplicated within the company, required little or no interactions with others beside the job coach, and was performed apart from other employees. In some situations the job coach was the conduit for co-worker communications, questions, suggestions, and observations that should have been addressed to the supported employee directly. Individuals were sometimes left out of social conversations and activities because co-workers assumed that they should not or could not participate. Unfortunately, Pioneer staff often found themselves and the people whom they were serving confronted with situations they did not want or like, but which they had themselves inadvertently created.

It became obvious that the staff had to change the way they developed and designed jobs, how they introduced people with disabilities and themselves to employers and co-workers, and how they defined and carried out their on- and off-site activities. In addition, staff had to find unobtrusive, effective ways of involving supervisors and co-workers in the task-related and social activities of employees with disabilities.

**Changing The Approach to Supported Employment**

With the assistance of a grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration, Pioneer job specialists began changing their emphasis from direct service to employment consultation. Specifically, staff went from exclusively and directly training and supporting people with disabilities, to finding and activating or developing the natural sources of training and support that exist within and around individuals and work places. These changes represented attempts to relinquish control over the people served, to respect the expertise of employers and co-workers, and to assist people with disabilities to become integral members of, rather than just visitors in, their work settings and communities. The change in focus also precipitated a change in the staff's job title from job specialist to employment consultant.

This manual represents an attempt by the Pioneer staff to share their ideas, strategies, and experiences about natural supports in the work place with others interested in maximizing available on-site sources of assistance and inclusion. It is

intended primarily as an anecdotal and nontechnical source of ideas that we hope will be as interesting and understandable to lay people and novice practitioners as it is to seasoned service providers.

The authors acknowledge that the scope of natural supports extends beyond the work place, and that work is but one segment of individuals' lives. Efforts should be made to approach supports in a holistic manner. For the purposes of this document, however, the discussion of supports has been primarily limited to those related directly to the work place.

## NATURAL SUPPORT CHARACTERISTICS

The term "natural supports" has acquired a variety of interpretations in the field. For our purposes, we define natural supports in relation to work as any assistance, relationships, and interactions that:

* allow a person to secure, maintain, and advance in a community job of their choosing;
* correspond to the typical work routines and social actions of other employees; and
* enhance the individual's work and nonwork social life among his/her co-workers, and other members of the community.

Within this definition there is **a clear intent to emphasize the importance of both the process and the outcomes of developing natural supports. That is, the means of facilitating work place supports are as important as the end of achieving such supports.** This definition advocates supports that adhere to the

typical routines, relationships, and rhythms of a particular work place. Each work site is considered unique. Thus, attempts are made to avoid imposing support methods derived from other work settings or human service technologies onto a specific work site.

It should also be evident from this definition that natural supports comprise more than just work site personnel participation in training, and more than just on-site support. Assistance from friends and neighbors, family, and community members is sought to include and support people with disabilities as they participate maximally in all aspects of their work lives. Natural supports include, but are not limited to:

* Job/task support
* Social/emotional support and relationships on and off the job
* Personal care assistance
* Support with work-related activities (e.g., banking, transportation)
* Technological support

Since every work setting and each individual is unique and must be approached as such, the ideas, strategies, and methods presented here should not be interpreted as a formalized model to be applied in some prescribed, uniform manner. Rather, a natural supports orientation to integrated employment should be seen as a lens through which to view job environments, individual support needs, and work site relationships, and to construct individualized supports with, and for, people in specific settings.

As the staff of Pioneer began to change their approach from a predominantly job coach orientation and began to put a natural supports perspective into practice, they developed and refined a set of specific strategies and techniques. This manual represents a compilation and description of these methods. The manual has been organized according to the typical components of the supported employment process: job development, job design/modification, job training, and ongoing supports. Within each section various strategies will be described, and case examples will be presented that illustrate the various strategies, and comparisons between traditional supported employment practices and those associated with a natural supports orientation will be made. Appendix A contains the Natural Work Place Supports Quality Checklist[1]. which is a checklist of items offered to assist employment consultants analyze the general quality and support potential of community job settings. The Checklist also contains some quality considerations which may be of concern to employers with whom consultants may be working.

[1]Murphy, S., & Rogan, P. (1992). Natural work place supports quality checklist. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University.

## PART II

## FINDING JOBS USING A NATURAL SUPPORTS FRAMEWORK

The employment consultant must thoroughly prepare for the job search process. The first step in this process is an in-depth understanding of the individual, his or her interests, preferences, regular activities, support needs, social connections and resources, geographic and transportation issues, and functional strengths and limitations. Participating with people in a variety of settings over a sustained period of time, interacting with them and assisting them to express their interests, and consulting with those who know their strengths, preferences, and support needs, yields critical information that can be translated into vocational possibilities.

### GETTING TO KNOW THE PERSON AND HIS/HER SUPPORT NETWORK

Within a natural supports approach, the employment consultant expands upon traditional individual assessment and observations to include an emphasis on a person's support needs, resources, experiences, and social preferences. Adherents of natural supports also examine the types and levels of support individuals have used in other settings, and the capacity of family, friends, and other social contacts to provide such support in relation to work.

Below are some points to keep in mind when getting to know a person. Included is a comparison of activities that often characterize staff approaches to

traditional supported employment practice, and those additional activities that reflect a natural supports emphasis. Underlined are those points identified closely with respective approaches.

**GETTING TO KNOW THE PERSON**

| Positive Supported Employment Practices | plus | Natural Support Strategies |
|---|---|---|
| Get to know the person's skills and interests based on observations, personal interactions, and discussions with friends, family, teachers, etc. | | Get to know a person's social characteristics and preferences based on personal interactions and discussions with family, friends, teachers, etc. |
| Conduct a functional skills assessment, including observations and interactions in a variety of settings to develop a personal profile. | | Conduct a functional assessment of social skills and types of supports used in a variety of settings to develop a social/supports profile. |
| | | Get to know a person's family, friends, etc., as potential sources of support. |

## GETTING TO KNOW THE PERSON: CASE VIGNETTES

### Getting to Know James

When the employment consultant began working with James, he had been a resident of a local institution for the previous six years, and was in his final year of high school. He did not talk, used very basic sign language and gestures to communicate, and was thought to have severe mental retardation, deafness, and a visual impairment. Later it was discovered that James was very intelligent, could hear, and though visually

impaired, could see much better than had been reported. Given the changing knowledge and conflicting labels, opinions, and expectations that surrounded James, the task of getting to know him was both complex and critical to his vocational success.

The employment consultant spent several months visiting James at the institution and his family's home in the same community, hanging out together, and going to community places such as restaurants, malls, and parks. The consultant also talked with family members, institutional staff, and James' teachers, and spent considerable time with James and his family, eating meals, talking, and relaxing. It was clear that James' family was very interested and involved with him. However, his parents were recently separated, and neither felt they could handle James alone. More recently, his mother had been actively seeking alternatives to his living in the institution.

Although James did not speak, he communicated his feelings quite clearly. He laughed openly when happy, and hit himself and others, and urinated when upset. Often those around him could not understand James' reactions because his behavior did not seem associated with any obvious person or situation.

The employment specialist learned that James did not like large social situations in which there were a lot of changing activities and people, preferring small settings with few people and predictable happenings. He also liked water, and seemed to prefer tasks that had a clear beginning and end to them. This information, and the fact that the employment consultant wanted to see James function in a work setting he

liked, led her to secure an unpaid work experience at a small pet store where he cleaned fish tanks, changed the filters, and cleaned and watered bird cages.

During his time at the pet store, James got along well with the owner and her mother who helped run the store. However, there were limited opportunities for social interactions. After spending time with James and talking to many people who knew him, it was discovered that he could hear. This opened the possibilities for other means of communication to be tried.

To help James communicate with others, the employment specialist introduced him to facilitated communication, an individualized method of manual communication that allows a person to point to letters or symbols in order to express themselves. This technique allowed James to communicate in a much more sophisticated fashion, and allowed the employment consultant to learn about James from the best source- James himself.

Using facilitated communication, James began to communicate his feelings and opinions to those around him. He began to unravel the questions that surrounded his behavior. For example, he explained some of the reasons why he became upset, what made him happy, who he liked and disliked, and where he wanted to live and work. He also explained that he often had little control over his emotional reactions, indicating that they were often precipitated by certain sounds that bothered him terribly. These sounds were often inaudible to others. For example, certain kinds of lights, fans and other background noises were sometimes so painful to hear that James could not concentrate on anything he was doing, and caused him to strike out

at others or himself in frustration. Since others did not comprehend his reactions, even those who knew him best considered him emotionally disturbed and severely mentally retarded. Often professionals reacted to his behavior in punishing ways.

Facilitated communication enabled the consultant to know James much better, and allowed James to participate actively and meaningfully in his own job search and selection, to relate what types of job supports he wanted and needed, and eventually, to interact directly with his supervisor and co-workers on his job.

Learning **About Doug's Social and Support Needs**

When the employment consultant first met Doug she observed a rather quiet young man of 22 who lived at home with his elderly grandmother, and had few social contacts. He had a history of mental illness, and had been classified as paranoid schizophrenic. Doug expressed an interest in working, indicating that he preferred working in carpentry-type work, but had little carpentry experience. He said that he was open to most jobs, but did not want to work in janitorial or kitchen positions.

Doug lived in an area of the city that was not readily accessible to public transportation. He did not drive, but wanted to get a driver's license. His grandmother was his one consistent source of family support. She cooked his meals, cleaned his clothing, advised him financially, and offered him emotional support. However, she opposed Robert's working, fearing that he would lose his Social Security income upon which they both depended financially. She was also very concerned about Doug jeopardizing his medical benefits which covered his medications.

Other than his grandmother, Doug had few consistent social contacts. He expressed suspicion and distrust of individuals he knew, such as teachers, social workers, and former classmates, and he did not want to ask them for job leads. In observing Doug at home, and in numerous other social situations with friends and professionals, Doug was seen as shy and uneasy, and would likely need some encouragement and support to become comfortable and involved in social interactions at work. Doug seemed to enjoy being included in joking and light teasing, and liked people who interacted with him in that way. Despite his shyness, Doug expressed a preference for working around others, not alone, as he enjoyed the socializing of others around him.

**Assessing Lee's Physical Characteristics**

Lee is a young man with cerebral palsy who had a burning desire to work in a real community job. However, he had no work experience, and was deemed unemployable by school and adult service professionals who concluded that he was physically too disabled to hold a job. While his intellectual skills were not known, Lee was considered to be a personable young man with a good sense of humor, but was also described as having very limited use of his arms and hands, poor communication skills, and difficulty using the bathroom and controlling his drooling. Lee used a wheelchair and had a voice-synthesized Touch Talker communication device. He preferred to communicate using gestures and some speech, though the latter was difficult for others to understand.

At the time Lee was referred to Pioneer, he was enrolled in a day treatment program that he had attended for several years after leaving high school. Since his family could not care for him at home, Lee lived in a nursing home. However, he saw family members and spoke with them frequently. Finding a job near his living situation was a key element to successful employment. Lee wanted to work close to where he lived since he needed to use the specialized lift-equipped public transportation service, which was very unreliable. If the bus was late, Lee wanted to be able to get to work as quickly as possible. In good weather, he hoped to travel to and from his job in his electric wheelchair.

In discussing his work interests, Lee expressed a desire to do some kind of computer or office work, though he was not specific about what kind. He did mention an interest in working around other people. Lee's major support needs at work appeared to center around getting physical support and job accommodations, transportation, and personal assistance. Regarding the use of the bathroom, Lee decided to use a leg bag.

Lee had partial use of one arm and minimal use of his fingers. He was able to grasp and hold objects by pressing them between his thumb and lower forefinger, and using his other arm for leverage and support. By spending time with Lee, and observing his movements in different settings and activities, the employment consultant developed a sense of what he liked, what he could do, where he might need assistance, and what type of support he preferred.

Key Points to Consider When Getting to Know a Person

* Understand a person's social and support characteristics and preferences.

* Accompany people to a variety of social settings and situations with which they are familiar.

* Get to know a person's family and friends and see how they interact with and relate to each other.

## DEVELOPING JOB LEADS AND CONTACTING EMPLOYERS

Just as natural supports are considered while getting to know a person, they are equally important to consider while developing job leads and contacting employers. Traditionally, supported employment professionals have attended primarily to the person-task match during job development. That is, attention has been given to the type of work tasks a person could perform, and in what jobs such tasks could be found. In addition to work tasks, we must carefully examine the social climate or work culture of potential job sites in order to address the social and support needs of each supported employee. Specifically, we need to assess a work setting's general capacity to provide a supportive atmosphere, and to look for individuals within the setting who would be interested and able to offer assistance, friendship, and support.

The following table summarizes both traditional supported employment practices and additional natural support strategies to be considered when developing job leads.

### Using Personal Networks for Job Leads and Sources of Support

When developing job leads from a natural supports perspective it is important to tap the personal networks of the job seeker, as well as those of the employment consultant. Too often this strategy is given lip service, but not fully pursued. Individuals, family members, friends, and associates have often been left out of the process, and released of any role in finding employment with the job seeker. Personal connections can be used to: generate ideas for possible work places to explore; provide information about specific businesses, including the name of a contact person;

## DEVELOPING JOB LEADS AND CONTACTING EMPLOYERS

| Common Supported Employment Practices | Natural Support Strategies |
|---|---|
| Contact employers "cold," check want ads, make walk-in visits, use personal contacts to gain employment entry. | Focus on personal contacts to gain entry and ongoing social support. |
| Focus on job tasks when looking for jobs. | Look for jobs based on compatible social culture and based on person's expressed social and support preferences, in addition to job tasks. |
| Secure jobs based on market availability, regardless of work force turnover. | Seek settings with a stable work force for support continuity. |
| Sell agency and its services to employer (e.g., employee screening, OJT, TJTC, etc.) | Present self as consultant, discussing collaboration and typical employment procedures. |
| Provide training and ongoing support. | Support business personnel to provide training and support. |
| Determine job success based on productivity and retention. | Emphasize the importance of social inclusion. |

act as a reference; and actually provide an "in" for the potential employee. Rather than rely on cold calls and other anonymous marketing techniques, this approach can personalize the job search process and expand the opportunities for finding the right job. What's more, the usual practice of finding jobs for people should be replaced by a more consistent pattern of intimate job seeker involvement in his/her job search.

In addition, using personal networks can result in developing necessary **job-related supports.** If, for example, a family member knows someone who works in a particular company or department of a prospective employer, he/she should consider the inside person as a potential support person, or as a source of inside help to secure support other employees.

Employer References. In the absence of a personal connection or company insider to serve as a reference or source of support at a particular business, employment consultants must find effective alternatives. Other employers with whom the agency has worked successfully have proven to be meaningful references or contacts for prospective employers. One efficient way to link prospective employers with active employers is to develop a photo portfolio of supported employees working at various companies. The portfolio, which can be left with an employer for several days, also should include the names of the other employers and supervisors with whom the agency is working. This strategy was suggested by this project's Employer Advisory Board as a way for staff to introduce themselves and the people they are serving to prospective employers. Sometimes, seeing a photograph of a person with a disability working competitively can be enlightening to an employer, and may stimulate some ideas concerning where and how he or she might employ someone. Of course, permission of all those presented in the portfolio must be obtained.

Agencies without an Employer Advisory Board should consider developing such a group consisting of area employers with whom the agency has successfully worked, or would like to work. Such a Board could meet on an "as needed" basis, and advise

the agency on everything from brochure design and job development strategies to area employment trends and work site adaptations. This kind of Board could also advise the agency about community organizations with which to affiliate (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, etc.) in order to obtain additional linkages to other employers.

**Adopting a Consultant Role**

When seeking jobs, employment consultants should introduce themselves to prospective employers as consultants who will assist the employer and co-workers, **as needed,** to train and support the new employee, not as the primary provider of job training and on-site supports. That is, rather than do it **for** employers, employment consultants work **with** job personnel in a supportive role. Since employers/supervisors typically train, supervise, and support new employees and their entire work force, it is unnatural to take these responsibilities from them. The employment consultant can facilitate these activities as needed, serving as an ongoing resource to the employer and the supported employee.

Within this context, the employment consultant avoids being the primary provider of direct, on-site training and support services, promising to quality check the employees' work, performing some of the employees' work tasks, and determining when and if to fade from the job site. Instead, employment consultants link into existing procedures, and assist with modifying or supplementing these as appropriate. Certainly, this does not imply that a consultant will **never** provide direct instruction or support, or remain on-site for periods of time. However, in these instances, the

consultant should always be problem-solving how to pull in co-workers, and how to be a discrete presence.

**Job Site Work Culture/Social Climate**

In order to maximize the chances for **a** good person-job match, supported employment professionals have tended to focus on how well an individual might perform the required work tasks. However, consultants within **a** natural supports perspective view the employment situation more broadly, emphasizing the importance of social inclusion, and assisting new employees to become an integral part of the work place. Unless people feel comfortable, accepted, and supported at their place of employment, it is unlikely that they will achieve maximum work performance, satisfaction, and longevity.

Employment consultants consider not only the person-task match, but also the level of person/setting compatibility. That is, the extent to which the job's social culture will be inclusive and supportive of the person being served, and compatible with the preferences and characteristics of the new employee. Thus, employment consultants examine the physical features of work settings (e.g., layout, location of employees) to assess their support implications. They also look at the extent to which co-workers are supportive of new employees, have informal interactions during work and breaks, share job tasks, and generally cooperate with each other. Employment consultants examine whether **a** job's social climate is one where the supported employee is likely to feel comfortable, relaxed and valued, given his/her personality, background, and interests, and where the turnover rate is not so great as to preclude

establishing sustained co-worker relationships. Job seekers should be involved in scoping out possible jobs as much as possible.

**Work Force** Compatibility and Stability

Given the importance of on-site, long-term supports for many supported employees, employment consultants should analyze job leads in terms of work force stability and characteristics. How and to what extent are current workers similar to the prospective employee in age, gender, education, dress, interests, and so on? Will these factors influence the comfort and support of the potential employee? How stable is the work force in terms of turnover? The lower the attrition rate, the more permanent and stable the sources of support are likely to be. Too often employers and jobs are targeted for development because of their high personnel turnover, frequent availability, and willingness to hire almost anyone.

Gathering information about work place social climates may be difficult at first glance. That is, the true colors of job site personnel and procedures may not become apparent until one spends considerable time in a particular setting. Also, supports may evolve over time rather than emerge immediately. Thus, the process of learning about work place cultures and support possibilities should be viewed as ongoing, with as much information gathered as possible prior to deciding to accept a job.

## CASE VIGNETTES DESCRIBING JOB DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYER CONTACT STRATEGIES

### Finding a Job for James With the Help of Another Employer

An ideal job for James was one where background noise and changing work and social conditions were minimal, social interactions were readily and consistently available, and **a** steady pace of work was desired. Because of James' slow movements, speed could not be a requirement for long term job performance. In addition, although he had done very little spontaneous socializing, James had demonstrated a good sense of humor, and a willingness to socialize with others. Thus, it was important to find a job where he would be physically and socially integrated, and have opportunities to develop social relationships. In the past James experienced trouble adjusting to change. This might have been due to his lack of involvement in and knowledge of such changes.

James did not independently use public transportation. It would be up to the employment consultant to either provide or arrange for transportation.

The consultant found out about a possible job opening at a local dairy from a supervisor at another company with whom she was working successfully. The supervisor at this company said the employment specialist could use him as a reference, as he knew the boss at the dairy. It was felt that knowing the boss would not only be an advantage for James getting the job, but also in identifying and obtaining sources of on-site supports once the job was secured.

After attending an initial meeting and touring the dairy, the employment consultant identified some positive support characteristics and possibilities. The job was a regular, ongoing (versus seasonal) position that was physically proximate to many other employees. The work place seemed busy, but relaxed, with people spontaneously joking with each other. Employees seemed sociable and cooperative, not competitive. The supervisor noted that while it was hectic at times, the work setting was enjoyable, and the turnover was minimal. The floor supervisor was very personable and positive about working with James. In fact, when the employment consultant and supervisor were discussing the company, the job, and the required training, the supervisor mentioned that she had once worked in a special education classroom, and enjoyed her work there.

The employment consultant told James of her impressions, and he agreed to visit the site and interview for the job. The interview occurred during a time of day when the machinery was operating, so he could get a sense of the noise level. James liked the job and the people he would be working with, and agreed to try the job even though he said the background noise was too loud. An accommodation such as headphones would be considered after James started working.

**Using Neighborhood Contacts to Locate a Job for Carol**

Carol expressed a clear interest in a job that involved office work and clerical duties. Carol was a personable individual who enjoyed socializing with others. Thus, she was also interested in finding work that allowed her social opportunities.

After looking for office jobs unsuccessfully for about a month, the employment consultant and Carol talked about expanding the types of settings in which she would consider working. Carol agreed to do this. In order to involve Carol in selecting desirable settings, the consultant and Carol went on a tour of her neighborhood. Knowing that Carol and her family had lived in their neighborhood a long time, and that she and her father shopped and did errands together for many years, the consultant believed that Carol would know many settings, could pick out those she liked, and would have some established employer contacts. For several days Carol and the employment consultant drove around her neighborhood and Carol identified businesses that she and her family patronized, and where she might like to work. One setting Carol expressed an interest in was the local supermarket.

The consultant and Carol contacted the store's manager and wondered if he had any work doing the kind of jobs Carol identified. The manager knew Carol and her family as regular customers, and told her about a stock clerk job he was trying to fill. Carol was very interested in trying the job, but wanted to start working just a few hours a week. The other employees at the store also knew Carol, and immediately stepped in to make her feel welcome.

Discovering the Right Work Situation for Doug

While interested in doing work "with his hands," Doug had no experience with work he liked. He thought he would enjoy almost any job that involved physical labor. He was described by those who knew him as "a loner," and Doug could not name a long time friend, except his grandmother. He did say that he would like to work with

people around his own age. A job in a low key environment where social relations were informal and the emphasis was on cooperative tasks rather than individual production quotas seemed ideal. Doug agreed that he did not like, and wasn't very good at, doing "fast" work.

Since transportation was likely to be troublesome because of where Doug lived, the consultant and Doug spent considerable time looking for possible jobs within a few miles of his home. Eventually they found an opening in a local furniture construction and repair store. Doug could walk or bike to work, or arrange for someone to pick him up or take him home in bad weather. He was hired and did upholstery stripping and general store cleaning and maintenance. It was a small company with about ten other employees, and people often did jobs together. The atmosphere was informal and friendly, and the workers were mostly young men about Doug's age. On the surface it seemed to be a good job and social match.

A problem arose immediately in that the other employees swore and teased each other in sexually explicit ways that made Doug uncomfortable. He felt that they didn't like him, and were trying to upset him. Although both the supervisor and the employment consultant tried to reassure him that this was not the case, Doug remained unconvinced, and began to withdraw from the others. This elicited ridiculing, led Doug to dislike his job and co-workers, and finally resulted in him missing work. Eventually, Doug quit.

After this job experience Doug proclaimed that he would no longer work with people, only with animals. After a brief search, a job was found in a veterinary hospital

where Doug would be caring for the animals, and cleaning up the animal and office areas. Doug still had to work around other people as he carried out his tasks, but the social atmosphere was more subdued than in his previous job. There was minimal swearing and needling. Whatever teasing occurred was gentle and not threatening. In retrospect, perhaps Doug's reference to his grandmother as his identified friend should have been more seriously considered when selecting a work setting.

One major problem with the job was transportation. The site was not within walking distance of Doug's house, and not located on an adequate bus route. But Doug wanted to try the job despite this problem, since he could ride his bicycle in good weather, and thought he might be able to arrange a ride with a co-worker or pay a driver when the weather was inclement. As a temporary measure, the employment consultant agreed to serve as a back-up driver until a permanent solution could be found.

**A Supportive Contact for Lee and the Right Location**

Lee was interested in computers and/or office work. Because of his physical characteristics and lack of computer experience, the employment consultant began looking for computer and office jobs that did not require a lot of speed. Within walking distance of Lee's residence was a university that offered numerous office and computer jobs. Also, one of the employment consultants had some contacts at the university. The director of the Law Library had a son with a disability and was an active advocate for persons with disabilities. She was very open to considering Lee for computer and clerical positions within her setting. After some discussion, the

librarian identified several relevant jobs, but all included some tasks that Lee could not do. She agreed to create a position by combining tasks from various jobs that needed to be done on a regular basis, but were often neglected because people did not have time for them.

The jobs Lee would be doing included simple data entry, using the computer to make signs and other visual aids, placing electronic sensor strips in new books, and stamping in-coming journals and publications. He would be working along with an office full of students and others his age in an informal, sociable setting.

**A Good Contact. Job Match, and Social Atmosphere for Jacki**

Jacki was interested in a job that involved reception work and a sociable atmosphere. The employment consultant had established a good relationship with the area supervisor of a fast food chain. When told about Jacki, he suggested she talk to the manager of another store who was looking for someone to fill a telephone position. This particular manager, who had a reputation for being flexible and supportive, was looking for an order-taker to take food orders by phone. He described the job as somewhat stressful since the employee would be working during busy times when many orders had to be taken quickly. The position was a critical one for the store because the entire business was take-out and depended solely on telephone orders.

An immediate and major concern about this job was its social climate. The bulk of Jacki's time would be spent on the phone, minimizing social discourse with co-workers. Further, the pace of the setting seemed to preclude others from assisting

Jacki, as they were too busy with other tasks, such as food preparation and delivery. Also, fast food franchises have reputations for high turnover, and for hiring mostly high school students. Under these conditions, it seemed Jacki would enjoy minimal social continuity with her co-workers, and appeared to be out of place at age 39.

Several concerns also arose around Jacki's ability to do this job. First, while the job involved using the telephone which Jacki liked and was familiar with, it was a busy, high pressure position that required a level of intensity with which Jacki was unfamiliar and untested. When asked if Jacki could work hours which were not as busy, the manager said that during non-peak times they didn't need a specific order-taker, and relied on food preparation employees to answer the phones.

Jacki was anxious to return to work, and agreed to interview for the job. After talking with the store's manager and observing the work setting, both Jacki and the employment consultant changed their minds about the social climate. The atmosphere was very positive and vibrant, and included a lot of interaction and support. While the work was often hectic, there were many co-workers all around her who joked and kidded with each other as they worked. It was also evident that if the pace on the phone or in the kitchen became too busy for one person to handle, the supervisor and other workers would assist the employee until the pace receded or the person caught up. Finally, most employees at this setting were about Jacki's age, had worked at the store for many years, and had created a stable, congenial social atmosphere.

**Key Points to Consider When Looking for a Job and Analyzing a Job Setting's Support Prospects**

## Job Seeking:

* **Does the job seeker, his/her family or friends, and any acquaintances know someone who might have a job that coincides with the applicant's interests and skills?**

* **What assistance or support might these contacts be willing to provide during the job search process, especially those who work in a setting that has been targeted as particularly interesting or appropriate for a particular job seeker?**

**Work Place Analysis:**

* **Are people working in close enough physical proximity to be physically and socially supportive? What is the general layout of the work environment?**

* **Are people formally introduced and oriented to the job, and assisted to adjust? By whom?**

* **Are informal, positive social interactions observed among co-workers during work hours? What is the nature of these interactions: criticizing, joking, chatty?**

* **What is the overall climate of the work place: cooperative and supportive, competitive, adversarial, individualistic?**

* **How do people describe their jobs and the work atmosphere?**

* **What is the turnover rate of employees?**

* **What is the potential for promotions and job growth?**

* **What kind of climate exists during break and lunch times?**

* **Are there after work gatherings, recreation activities, outings, etc., that are open to all employees?**

A final consideration was technological. The job required the receptionist to type the orders on the computer and read them back to the customer. In most cases the computer was programmed to record orders using minimal key strokes. However, since Jacki was totally blind, she required adapted computer equipment. As in her previous job, Jacki was equipped with a voice synthesized computer. She also wore specially designed headphones which not only freed Jacki's hands to handle the computer, but also transmitted the person's order into one ear and the order as Jacki typed it into the other.

## PART III

## JOB CREATION, JOB MODIFICATION, AND INDIVIDUAL ADAPTATIONS

Job creation, job modifications, and individual adaptations are often used when securing jobs for people with severe disabilities. Ordinarily these techniques are used to assist people perform their job tasks more productively and efficiently. However, they should also be used to maximize natural supports in order to reduce the need for professional assistance and job site interventions.

### Job Creation and Modification

Sometimes called job carving, job creation may occur when a person wants to do a specific type of work in a particular setting, but the work does not exist as a pre-defined job. For employers, productivity and cost effectiveness are often determinants of whether job creation is advantageous. With implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), more and more employers will become familiar with job modifications as a component of reasonable accommodations. It is often easier to modify existing jobs than to create new ones. Such modifications usually entail replacing tasks that a person cannot do with equally important tasks that he/she can do.

Job creation and/or modification can prove extremely helpful for individuals with severe disabilities who do not typically fill all the stated requirements of formal job descriptions. It is important to remember, however, not to create jobs that inadvertently segregate people from their co-workers. This can be a danger because

**STRATEGIES FOR JOB CREATION, MODIFICATION, AND ADAPTATION**

| **Traditional Supported Employment Practices** | plus | **Natural Supports Strategies** |
|---|---|---|
| Create, modify, and adapt jobs with job performance and eventual independent functioning in mind. | | Create, modify and adapt with social inclusion in mind. |
| Create, modify, and adapt according to employer, job coach, and/or professional specifications. | | Create, modify, and adapt according to co-worker specifications and consultant supported employee preferences. |

a created or heavily modified job can be the only one of its kind in a work setting, leaving the individual to work alone or to be the only employee doing modified tasks. Under these circumstances, co-worker supports may be more difficult to arrange.

Work Adaptations

Individualized adaptations have been an integral part of supported employment since its inception. The primary intent of adaptations has been to increase an individual's work quality, rate, capacity, and independence. Within a natural supports framework, adaptations can minimize the need for outside intervention by employment consultants. An important consideration in the development of individual adaptations is to involve both the supported employee and work site personnel. By doing so, the employment consultant insures the adaptation meets the requirements of the person and the job, reduces the "expert" facade of the employment consultant, and taps the

expertise and creativity of others. While such modifications and adaptations sometimes involve complex technological equipment, more frequently they entail the simplest changes and no complicated equipment.

## CASE SCENARIOS DESCRIBING JOB CREATION, JOB MODIFICATION, AND INDIVIDUAL ADAPTATIONS

### Adapting for Background Noise

James was concerned that he would be bothered by the dairy plant's background noise, and not be able to successfully complete his job. In order to minimize the problem, the employment consultant and supervisor arranged for James to complete his work early in the day before the large machines were operating. Modification of these hours did not detract from the social opportunities available to James, since he was still working during regular work hours and sharing the same physical space with other employees. After several days on the job, James complained about the painful effects of the background noise from the overhead lights. The employment consultant suggested he try a Walkman radio to block out the noise. This minor modification worked extremely well, changed James' outlook toward the job, enabled him to work without manual assistance from the consultant, and allowed him to become more relaxed and jovial as he worked.

The most obvious obstacle to James' social inclusion was his difficulty communicating with co-workers. While other employees talked and joked with him, and he understood them, he could not easily respond without the assistance of someone who could support him through facilitated communication. Up to that point,

James had used a computer to communicate. However, he could not bring this equipment on site with him, and so was excluded from many employment interactions. In order to facilitate on-site discourse, the consultant arranged with a state funding agency to purchase a laptop computer which was portable and practical in his work setting. The supervisor and several co-workers volunteered to work with James and the employment consultant during their breaks to learn how to facilitate James. This greatly improved spontaneous conversations, and helped co-workers and James understand each other much better.

**Computer Adaptation and Co-Worker Assistance**

Despite her concerns about the hectic pace of the job, Jacki agreed to try it out. Jacki could not see the screen on which she was supposed to type incoming orders, and on which vital customer statistics appeared, such as name, address, and phone number. In order for her to manage the flow of orders that came to the store during the rush hours, Jacki needed an adapted telecomputer system that allowed her to hear the order in one ear, and hear what appeared on the screen in the other. This system was very similar to the existing computerized order system already being employed at the store, and required only the installation of a voice synthesizing capacity. Jacki was not a fast typist due to her cerebral palsy, but typing was minimized by the fact that most orders came from repeat customers whose vital statistics were already in the computer. Also, the store's entire menu was programmed into the computer requiring only a keystroke to record and activate information.

Another important source of work place support provided by the employer was paying Jacki for the time it took for her to braille the special coupons that were in effect that week. Having the braided coupons available allowed Jacki to quickly respond to price inquiries that she couldn't remember without having to type them into the computer and wait for a response. The supervisor also modified the criteria used to assess Jacki's initial job performance. He allowed her more time to achieve the criteria of taking orders. With this flexibility, Jacki learned the job, and achieved the required performance criteria.

Simple Adaptations and Self-Care Arrangements

A few simple adaptations such as a computer key guard, a jig that allowed the sensor strip to be secured in books using one hand, a plastic box which was level with Lee's wheelchair tray allowing him to insert library books without damaging them, and a bungie cord which attached a rubber stamp to his wheelchair for easy retrieval when dropped, have enabled Lee to perform basic job duties independently.

A major problem facing Lee was the assistance he needed to use the bathroom. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that there were few male employment consultants available, and Lee did not want co-workers to assist him in this activity. A large part of the problem was created by the fact that Lee refused to wear a leg bag for fear of infections. Both Lee and the employment consultant, at Lee's request, spoke with the nursing staff at his residence to see if such occurrences were preventable, or at least, could be minimized. The staff agreed to cooperate in this regard, and the consultant agreed to follow-up if necessary. With such

assurances, Lee agreed to try the leg bag. The staff and Lee also felt that he would require little or no assistance with his bathroom needs if the leg bag was effective, especially since Lee would be working only four hours per day.

**Key Points to Consider with Job Adaptations and Modifications**

* The person with disabilities must be involved as much as possible in any decisions to modify his or her job or work area.

* Co-workers and employers should participate in problem-solving concerning how to adapt a particular task or environment. This involvement is critical because people in the work setting are often familiar with "shortcuts," and how to do the job easier yet maintain acceptable productivity.

* Adaptations should be as unobtrusive as possible, preferably blending in with existing practices and/or materials found in the work setting to maximize inclusion.

PART IV

ON SITE TRAINING AND NATURAL SUPPORTS STRATEGIES

Within a natural supports perspective, job training and social inclusion are intimately linked. With this approach the primary function of the employment consultant is **to use the methods, people, and resources of the existing work place** in training the person to do a job, providing the necessary supports to ensure successful adjustment, and assisting the supported employee become an integral, valued part of work place social life. This includes a commitment to supporting the individual long term, but viewing the employment consultant as a consultant to the employer, rather than the primary source of direct training and support.

**JOB TRAINING STRATEGIES**

| **Traditional Supported Employment Practices** | **Natural Supports Strategies** |
|---|---|
| Job coach observes/discusses job requirements with supervisors and co-workers in order to learn the job. | Consultant works with supported employee and work site personnel to assist with training through consultation, modeling, and direct service, as needed. |
| Job coach develops a training plan and teaches the new employee the job. | |

## ELEMENTS OF JOB TRAINING AND NATURAL SUPPORTS

When considering job training, employment consultants focus on three primary elements: 1) the employer's typical training routines; 2) the involvement of work site personnel in job training and support; and 3) the support preferences of the individual with a disability.

### Typical Routines

Before a person starts a job, the employment consultant should understand how the employer orients and trains any beginning employee. In working with the supported employee and employer/supervisor to determine what supports may be needed, how they will be provided, and who will provide them on and off site, the consultant attempts to create a sense of typicalness around the entire employment situation, including job orientation and training.

Traditional Versus Natural Supports. The approach described above differs from a traditional job coach orientation where the job coach first learns and then teaches the new employee the job, and where training is considered the coach's initial, primary and exclusive domain. A traditional approach can lead to ineffective and inefficient instruction because those who know the job best, the co-workers and supervisors, may be excluded from the training process. In addition, such an orientation may inadvertently isolate the supported employee from the ongoing social interactions of the work place, by exaggerating the person's difference to co-workers, using the coach as a conduit for communication with other workers, and presenting the individual and his/her job coach as a self-contained social unit. In order to

minimize social separation and assist the supported worker become an integral and active part of the work place, the consultant should strive to establish the same conditions of employment and benefits as are enjoyed by other personnel doing similar work. These conditions include the same or similar work hours and space, orientation and training procedures, breaks, benefits, memberships, and social opportunities.

Negotiating Supports. In some situations, the employer or supported employee may not want to follow the training and support methods typically used by the employer. For example, one or both parties may prefer that the employment consultant provide the job orientation and training. In those situations, the consultant, employer and supported employee must clarify the situation and negotiate a solution that addresses the needs of each party. It may be, for example, that the employer and employee agree to the consultant initially attending and assisting, but not conducting, job training. In negotiating matters like this, it is important that the consultant recognize that every employment situation is unique and that natural supports must be individualized. However, individualization should not legitimate physical or social separation of employees with disabilities. Thus, the consultant must remind the other parties that individualized supports are integral elements of the typical work world, and negotiate an agreement where inclusion as well as production are inseparable parts of the employment situation.

Employer-Based Suggestions. The Employer Advisory Board for this project emphasized two important points regarding the provision of natural supports: be

candid early in the relationship, preferably in the first contact, about how the employment consultant will relate to the employer and the supported employee; and be responsive when an employer calls for assistance, though not necessarily by intervening directly. These principles should serve as excellent guides when consultants deal with all parties to the employment process, conduct job development, and negotiate specific aspects of on site training and support.

Going On Site Before a Supported Employee Begins. In traditional supported employment practice, a job coach may spend up to a week or so on a job site before a new employee begins the job in order to learn the job, and to prepare any needed accommodations or adaptations. Although the implementation of natural supports strategies requires the consultant to have substantial information about the job and the setting before placement, employment consultants may not have to spend extensive periods of time on the job before a new employee begins. Every situation is different, and should be approached that way. Thus, the consultant must consider how his or her presence may positively or negatively influence the opinions and behaviors of the co-workers and supervisor. Some potential benefits from spending time on site before the supported employee begins include:

1. Knowing the job, equipment, physical layout, and social situation may aid the new employee's performance and adjustment.
2. Identifying potentially helpful, supportive co-workers may enable new employees to feel comfortable.

3. Answering co-worker questions about the supported employee may help minimize concerns, fears, and anxieties.
4. Being on site may help clarify the support person's role, and the role that others can play in supporting the person.
5. Knowing the people and the routines can alleviate concerns and answer questions expressed by the supported employee.

Some potential problems associated with spending time on site before an employee begins include:

1. Contributing to a perception of the new employee as incapable because of extensive job site preparations.
2. Learning the job first gives supervisors and co-workers the impression that the consultant will provide all training and support.
3. Being on site early could begin the unwanted precedent by co-workers and supervisors of using the consultant as a conduit for communicating with the new employee.
4. Developing a task analysis and training plan may discourage co-workers from sharing creative and efficient solutions to training and support problems.

Our preference is toward spending as little time on site as possible prior to when the supported employee begins working. However, each situation is unique. So consultants should give careful consideration to the preceding issues and collaborate with the supported employee and employer regarding their preferences in order to

determine whether to go on site, how long to spend there, how to conduct the training situation, and what to do (if anything) prior to the new employee starting. An employment consultant may be able to lay the ground work for co-worker involvement but avoid spending much time on site before the employee begins. This could occur during the first few hours or days of a person's employment, or be accomplished the day or two before the supported employee begins. In this way, training activities may remain with the employer, and the consultant can stay in the background during the first few days of the job.

## Involvement of Co-Workers

Consultants also develop strategies for including other employees in the work and social routines of the supported worker. In emulating the training methods and routines of the work place, the consultant, as much as possible, uses the same people and resources to carry out the training and orientation as is typically the case in a given work setting. This collaborative approach does not preclude the employment consultant from participating in job training. It does presume that co-workers are the instructors of first choice.

Certainly, there will be instances when existing work site training methods and personnel are not sufficient for a particular supported worker. This should not serve as an excuse for a consultant to take over the situation. In such instances, the consultant should work with co-workers/supervisors to supplement existing techniques, using methods that are as consistent and compatible as possible with the

ongoing activities and relationships of the setting, and which involve others rather than primarily the job coach. Of course, the consultant should be readily available to provide assistance and on-site intervention, if necessary.

There are several conditions or circumstances that can greatly enhance co-worker involvement with a supported employee. Some of these include:

Physical and Social Proximity. If one or two employees work in physical and social proximity to the person with a disability, they will be in a good position to provide daily supports, if needed. Typically, it is recommended that more than one co-worker be involved in order to provide back-up when another is absent. While some co-workers may emerge spontaneously as allies and support people, others may require some coaxing. Close physical and social proximity can facilitate the consultant and/or supported employee seeking a co-worker's involvement gradually over an extended period of time, or by inviting the co-worker to become involved in a particular task or activity. If co-workers are not proximal and if the work place is sufficiently flexible, and the supported employee willing, it may be helpful to modify the physical and social arrangements of the work place in order to maximize such proximity and more easily solicit the needed supports.

Leadership/Mentor Role in Business. Within most work settings certain people are considered leaders due to the respect of others, their work skills, and/or their seniority. Often these individuals, either formally or informally, can play an important

training and mentoring role for new employees, can serve as a model for other workers, and can greatly facilitate the acceptance and adjustment of a supported employee.

Performance of Same or Similar Job. In many work situations, the most knowledgeable and effective sources of support come from those who are doing the same or similar jobs. Employees who naturally work together to complete all or part of a job are more likely to interact. Ideally, these individuals will be in close physical proximity to the supported employee, and will be open to becoming involved.

Spontaneous Participation. At times, one or more co-workers come forward and immediately develop positive relationships with the supported employee. These people may or may not work in close proximity to the individual or perform similar jobs. If they do, all the better, since they can be supportive on several levels. However, even if they do not share similar space and jobs, these employees can make important contributions to the quality of the supported employee's work life, including facilitator linkages with other employees.

Intangible Social Dynamics. The characteristics of co-workers who play support roles vary enormously, and to some extent, reflect the complex interactions and factors that surround typical friendships. As with many friendships, people develop close relationships because they "hit it off," or "click" with each other. And this dynamic occurs to no less a degree between people with severe disabilities and nondisabled co-workers. Wonderful relationships have developed with co-workers who might have been least expected to be involved or supportive. These individuals

have not always been considered leaders or mentors, and sometimes have not emerged immediately, but after the supported employee has been on the job for a period of time. Thus, consultants should not only look for and attend to those who are considered leaders, and/or who come forward early on, but to those co-workers who may emerge later and who the supported employee likes.

### Active Participation of Supported Employee

In establishing and facilitating work place training and supports, the employment consultant must respect the expressed preferences and needs of the supported employee. In some instances a person may have specific preferences for how training is offered, what type of adaptive equipment is provided, and what kind of supports are included and who offers them. A person may not be able to communicate his/her preferences easily. In these cases, consultants may have to discuss possibilities with those who know the person, try out several options, and interpret a person's preference from the way he/she reacts to a particular situation.

In some situations employment consultants may be so eager to secure a job for a person that they fail to consult the individual regarding important aspects of the job, or will accept conditions of employment which may be neither typical for that setting nor in the supported employee's best interests. For example, an employer may place a supported employee in an isolated location, or pay him/her less than other employees for doing the same job. While these conditions may help the person get hired, they must be discussed with the employee, and considered in light of their financial and social implications, and the person's preferences and interests.

## CASE SITUATIONS DESCRIBING JOB TRAINING STRATEGIES

### James' Supervisor Did the Initial Orientation and Training

Despite James' expressive communication difficulties, he was able to understand fully directions given to him by others. It was decided that his supervisor would train him just as she did other new employees. If James had questions, he could, with the assistance of the employment consultant, use facilitated communication. This approach was used, and the employment specialist withdrew from the work area within a week of James beginning his job, only returning when requested by James or the employer. During that time, James' supervisor assumed her usual supervisory functions, reminding James to return to work if he slowed down or wandered away from his job area.

James still required some assistance from the employment consultant when using the bathroom and getting ready to work. He employed a driver to take him to and from work.

### Doug **Learned the Job** Without "Coaching"

Doug, a young man with a label of undifferentiated schizophrenia, works in a veterinary clinic. The employer, Robert, and the consultant felt very confident that Doug could learn the job directly from his supervisor, just like other new employees in that position. Doug and the employment consultant decided that for the first day of work, the consultant would be on-site, but remain in the break room. The supervisor of the kennel agreed, and assumed full responsibility for training. Doug quickly picked up on the tasks, and from then on all supervision and support were completely

furnished by Doug's employer and co-workers. The employment consultant's role focused on bi-monthly off-site visits or calls with Doug, some initial, regular calls to his supervisor, infrequent visits, and decreasing assistance with transportation arrangements.

**Jackie Was Instructed and Supervised Like Everyone Else**

Jacki's job required that she learn to take and record orders in a fast food, take out restaurant, using a computer. Part of the job also entailed recording callers' names and addresses in order to facilitate both delivery and future orders (though many were repeat customers). Adaptive computer equipment was required in order for her to do the job. Similar to the actions of traditional job coaches, the employment consultant had to teach Jacki the job since no one else understood both the adapted computer and the employer's software system.

The job itself, and the specific tasks were quite easy to understand. The difficult part was doing the tasks under the pressure of high volume. One particularly troublesome element was remembering all the store's special coupon prices and codes which were programmed into the computer and changed every month or so.

The employment specialist and Jacki began working off site to learn the restaurant's menu and computer program, and to begin memorizing the current prices. This was critical to Jacki's success since she could not read the computer screen and needed to record orders quickly and accurately.

When Jacki began, she started her on site training during times in which orders were slow. During this time, the consultant made sure the computer was operating

**properly, and oriented Jacki to the equipment and systems. The supervisor also participated, orienting her to the overall job tasks and work setting, and introducing her to other workers.**

**When Jacki moved to the busy hours, she was very slow. It was felt that her speed would improve as she became more familiar with the routine, prices, and pace. But in the meantime, the supervisor and co-workers could not take that much time away from their own tasks to help her. The specialist agreed to serve in a transitional helping role, relieving Jackie when the phone calls became backed up, but doing this only when the back-ups became a problem, and only until Jackie's speed improved. In this way co-workers still served as sources of instruction, and remained in place as sources of support, which was consistent with the way Jackie's position had been handled in the past. After about a month Jacki's speed had improved to the point where she could handle the busy periods with minimal assistance. Moreover, since her co-workers had consistently interacted and worked with her during her training period, they became familiar with the adapted computer system, and replaced the consultant as her primary sources of support.**

Key Points to Remember When Doing Training and Facilitating Natural Supports

* The setting, tasks, and training have been selected with attention to the setting's typical routines and the supported employee's preferences.

* Training and support strategies avoid creating unnecessary, obtrusive activities that highlight a person's differences and hinder social inclusion.

* The new employee is introduced on the job in the most typical and valued way.

* The consultant, new employee, and employer have discussed on-site training and support options, including co-worker involvement, before and after the individual begins work.

* Potentially supportive co-workers have been identified.

* The consultant is clearly aware of the social and support preferences of the supported employee, and training and support will be provided as a partnership between the consultant, employee, and employer.

* Responses to employer concerns have been addressed, satisfactory solutions found, and a willingness to help the new employee work through problems that may arise on site such as performance, transportation, health and medical issues, the departure of a key co-worker, etc., has been expressed by consultant, employee, and employer.

* The employer has been informed about potential issues that may arise without violating the new employee's rights, promoting labeling, or establishing false expectations.

## PART V

## ON-GOING SUPPORTS

In traditional supported employment services, "ongoing supports" have been defined as those services provided when **a** new employee has "stabilized" in the job- that is, when he/she is determined to be performing the required job tasks consistently and satisfactorily with less intensive support. Ongoing supports also include ancillary supports, which are those on site services a person might need in order to successfully function in **a** given employment situation. Ancillary supports are not directly related to task performance, and include such services as transportation, personal care, etc. Within a traditional supported employment framework, the job coach gradually "fades" his or her presence from the site as the supported employee performs the job and ancillary tasks independently or with an allowable (as determined by the funding agencies) amount of ongoing support.

From a natural supports perspective, "fading" should begin at the **outset of employment,** and is not considered an end in itself unless accompanied by naturally occurring job site supports and social inclusion. **If fading merely implies the absence of job coach support, it is inadequate and incomplete.**

Ongoing supports are aimed at assuring the new worker's continued learning, inclusion, and support. The satisfaction of the new employee, the level of his/her social inclusion with others on the job, and the satisfaction of the employer and co-

workers with the person's total involvement are key indicators of the suitability of supports in a specific situation.

**ONGOING SUPPORTS**

| Traditional Supported Employment Practices | plus | Natural Supports Practices |
|---|---|---|
| Talk with employee about his/her job and how it is going. | | Find out from employee how they are feeling about their job **and** co-workers. |
| Survey employer or visit site regarding task performance. Learn how the employer views the supported employee's strengths and limitations. | | Continue to facilitate social connections as needed. Foster an understanding of the employee among his/her co-workers. |
| | | Assist the individual to share his/her interests and hobbies with co-workers. |
| | | Support supervisors and co-workers who support the employee. |
| | | Recognize that the employee may prefer the assistance and support of co-workers over that of the consultant. |
| | | Monitor the consultant's optimal involvement on-site to ensure the provision of appropriate supports, yet avoid stigmatization and getting in the way. |

## PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS

In order to understand what kind and level of ongoing supports are needed, the consultant should maintain some contact with the employer and the supported

employee after he/she has faded. Such contact could take several forms, and need not include visits to the work site. It is a real art to determine how much an employment consultant should visit a particular job site, since each setting is so unique. In some situations, if visits are too infrequent, a seemingly satisfactory situation may develop problems that might have been solvable, but have deteriorated to a point of crisis. On the other hand, too much consultant presence can interfere with a person's social inclusion, undermining the support co-workers can provide to a struggling new employee, and stunting the development of on-site problem solving.

While maintaining contact with participants in an employment situation, the consultant should consider the following activities:

**Employer Assessment**

Ongoing supervisor/employer feedback is sought to assess individual performance, and if any changes are needed to improve instruction, productivity, or support. If the employer has a formal evaluative process already in place for other employees, s/he should apply this to the performance of the supported employee, assuming reasonable accommodations are included if necessary. The employment consultant should ask the employer what type and frequency of contact s/he would like to have from the consultant. For example, some employers prefer the consultant to stop by the job site on a regular basis. Others opt for the "don't call us, we'll call you" approach to ongoing support. Thus, formal or informal meetings with each employer may be arranged on a regular, but typically decreasing, basis. Performance information is may be collected by the consultant as part of his/her records, including

the same performance information used with other employees, such as punctuality, productivity, response to supervision, initiative, relations with others, etc. Areas of weakness may be noted, and a plan of remediation developed with all involved parties to address them.

**Employee Evaluation**

Through observations of and interactions with supported employees a determination can be made of how well they understand their job duties, how satisfied they are with the position and their relations with co-workers, what views and responses they have to the supports they are receiving, and what suggestions for improvements or changes they might offer. Such discussions and observations should be started during the training phase and continued periodically throughout the consultant's ongoing relationship with the person. For many supported employees, their behaviors over time provide a good indication of job satisfaction.

**Co-worker Feedback**

Informal feedback from co-workers is at least as valuable as that of supervisors/employers since other employees are working in close proximity to the supported employee, and may detect important positive and negative things which others may miss. However, fellow workers should not be viewed as formal evaluators, or "deputized" job coaches, who are supposed to monitor and formally report on the performance of a supported employee. But if the consultant is on site, he/she should try to informally talk with direct supervisors and co-workers in order to understand how the work situation is going. As with employers, key co-worker support personnel

should be asked what type and frequency of support they need to continue feeling good about their support role.

## ANCILLARY SUPPORTS

Some of the most important ongoing supports are those such as personal attendant and transportation services which, though not directly related to task performance, are intimately tied to successful employment. One of the current difficulties of supported employment is that funding may be inadequate and compartmentalized, and necessary support services are not easily obtained. Consequently, an employment consultant may have to seek creative funding alternatives. Some alternative community resources that might be used to provide work place supports include:

1. Friends, acquaintances, and/or neighbors who might be asked to assist with transportation.
2. Paid support people or volunteers, solicited through newspaper advertising, to provide supports such as transportation, personal care, work preparation, etc. In some cases people might be paid through SSI, SSDI, or other state or local funding sources.
3. Co-workers who might be willing to provide a variety of supports from transportation to personal care.

Employment consultants should keep the same important caveats in mind when providing ongoing supports as they did when conducting other aspects of a natural supports approach. These include:

The Person is **the** Primary Decision Maker

Any form or source of support must be approved by the individual being served. In some cases, supported employees may have very specific preferences regarding who provides them with specific supports. In one instance, a consultant worked for weeks to find a co-worker who would provide bathroom assistance for a newly hired employee, only to find that the supported employee did want help from anyone at work for his bathroom needs. It is important that supported employees be active participants in the development and implementation of their supports.

Supports Should Be As Consistent As Possible With Work Place Characteristics and Activities

Like training and supervision methods, ongoing supports, whether ancillary or job related, should be as consistent as possible with the typical activities of the job site. This may be easier said than done, since ancillary supports are often, by definition, extraordinary services that are not typical of most employees or work settings. However, whenever possible, the character and the routines of the work place should be carefully considered as the consultant, employer, co-workers, and supported worker plan the kind of ancillary supports that should be provided, and the form in which they should be offered. For example, it is generally preferable that a person's transportation difficulties be solved by arranging a ride with a co-worker rather than scheduling an agency or special bus. However, in some instances the latter may not be possible. The next best alternative likely would be hiring a driver. However, if a special bus is the only viable alternative, it should be used despite its

atypical character until and unless more normalized modes are found. Since people who share rides almost always share payment for gas and tolls, the supported worker would be expected to pay for support offered this way. In situations involving bathroom assistance, it may be preferable for a co-worker rather than a job coach or agency employee to provide such support, assuming that both parties are fully agreeable. However, in such circumstances it is ordinarily preferable that the co-worker not be paid, since people usually do similar types of helping voluntarily. Of course, if such support would be provided only if payment was received, or if a supported employee insisted upon it, paid support would be better than no such support.

Maintaining a sense of typicalness around ongoing support situations of employees with disabilities is often very difficult because: 1) typicalness itself is often difficult to define even within a specific employment setting; 2) hiring people with disabilities is still atypical for most employers; and 3) the support personnel and activities around people with disabilities often sets the person apart from other employees. It is the latter point, however, which is most critical in the provision of ongoing supports. The real question is whether the supports surrounding a person are sufficiently familiar and open to co-workers that they lower the barriers of difference that are often erected around employees with disabilities, and allow in the typical routines, activities, and people which comprise the raw materials of social inclusion.

## USING WORK INCENTIVE PROGRAMS TO PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORTS

Government entitlement programs, including Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), provide some incentives for people who work. These can be used to tailor supports to the new employee.

Three work incentive programs which broaden job opportunities and sources of support are the Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE), the Blind Work Expense (BWE) and the Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS). Each of these programs can assist an individual who is working to purchase personal care services, transportation, equipment and other essential supports, services and technologies.

Work incentive programs offer employees a way to continue to receive checks and medical coverage while they work. IRWEs, BWEs and PASSs increase net income to help cover work-related expenses or to be saved toward a vocational goal.

### Developing an Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE)

People receiving SSI and/or SSDI are eligible for the IRWE. This program allows a person with a disability (except blindness) to disallow certain work related expenses when calculating their monthly enticement amount. The need for *the* expense must be validated by either a physician or by the individual's vocational rehabilitation counselor, and must not be reimbursable by any other source.

IRWEs can be used to deduct the following:

* attendant care services
* transportation costs
* medical devises, procedures, drugs

* work related equipment and assistants
* residential modifications
* appliances or equipment

To set up an IRWE, the person, his or her payee, and a representative (if needed) can write or visit the Social Security Administration office. Required documentation includes a letter from a physician (if expense is "medical") or the vocational rehabilitation counselor, receipts showing expenditures, and any other documentation that may be needed for validation of the expenses to the person.

**Developing A Blind Work Expense (BWE)**

The Blind Work Expense is an SSI program. It allows a blind person to disallow any expenses incurred through working before determining SSI eligibility and when calculating the monthly SSI check amount.

The BWE can be established by the local SSI office. A personal visit by an individual and his or her representative with documentation of both monthly income and monthly expenses is all that is typically needed to initiate the benefit.

Below is a partial list of expenses that BWE's can be used to write off:

* guide dog expenses
* transportation to and from work
* federal, state and local income taxes
* social security taxes
* attendant care services
* visual and sensory aids

* translation of materials into braille
* professional association fees
* union dues
* lunches purchased during the work day
* service agreements on equipment

As with the IRWE, necessary documentation including doctors' or rehabilitation counselors' statements, receipts, and any supporting documents must be remitted to the SSA office. Greater success seems to occur when these materials are brought to the office, coupled with a face-to-face meeting with SSA staff.

**Writing a Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS)**

**PASS** is an SSI program. Anyone receiving SSI plus any income, whether it be earned (wages) or unearned (SSDI, Vets benefits, etc.) can put money into a PASS account to save toward a vocational goal. The plan can also be used to establish or maintain SSI eligibility when income is higher than would typically be allowed.

Anyone can develop a PASS for an individual with a disability. The following requirements must be met in order for the PASS to be approved. The PASS must:

* be designed especially for the person;
* presented in writing;
* have a specific work goal which the person is capable of performing;
* contain **a** specified time frame for achieving the goals-typically 18 months; no longer than 48 months;

* demonstrate how the money and other resources received will be used to reach the goal;
* indicate how the money and resources will be used;
* show how the money set aside will be kept identifiable from other funds (always in separate bank account);
* be approved by the Social Security Administration; and
* be reviewed periodically to assure compliance.

A sample PASS Plan is contained in Appendix **B.**

**Some important Questions to Ask When Doing PASS Plans**

**1. Is the goal of the plan consistent with the individual's expressed short and long term employment and community living goals?**

It is important that any PASS Plan be developed with the person's maximal participation and understanding. This participation in many cases might include family members since it involves a person's long term financial matters. While **a** PASS Plan is frequently developed in connection with a particular job, its implications can extend to other parts of a person's life, and can affect an individual's finances even if a job ends. Thus, it is important that both the long and short term effects of PASS are understood, and are consistent with both the long and short term life goals of the person.

**2. What are the long term financial implications of the plan?**

Any PASS Plan must be undertaken with a thorough understanding of the person's current SSI or SSDI income, his/her other expenses, and the implications of

PASS on his/her financial circumstances once the Plan ends. The consultant and PASS recipient and advocates must understand fully that a PASS Plan is time limited, even if renewed after the initial 18-month period, and that expenses incurred from the Plan must be paid from the person's wages and SSI income. Thus, it is critical to know whether a person who, for example, wants to use a PASS Plan to buy **a** van, will be able to afford the costs of gas, insurance, registration, and maintenance (on top of their other expenses such as rent, food, etc.) after the Plan ends.

## CASE SCENARIOS THAT ILLUSTRATE THE PROVISION OF ONGOING NATURAL SUPPORTS

### Carol and Her Supervisor Worked Out the Problems

Carol had been working satisfactorily for several months with minimal involvement of the employment consultant. Then her supervisor called with several problems. The first problem involved her father who picked up Carol each day. He often came early, and disrupted Carol's work routine. The other problem occurred around Carol's response to supervision. When she did not want to do what her supervisor asked, she ignored the directive, wandered away and did something else. The supervisor asked the employment consultant to intervene and talk with Carol and her father. The consultant felt that any intervention should involve the supervisor discussing these issues directly with the other parties. With some initial reluctance, the supervisor agreed to speak with Carol and her father. Thus, it was made clear that it was the supervisor who had identified the problems, and that the issues were serious.

After hearing the supervisor's concerns, Carol's father changed his routine, picked up his daughter at the time she was scheduled to leave, and waited for her in the parking lot. He was sufficiently impressed with the supervisor's comments that he sought reassurance that he had not inadvertently jeopardized Carol's job. The supervisor's concerns also sufficiently convinced Carol that the supervisor's directions were not suggestions which could be ignored, but instructions to be acted on. She also understood that failing to do so could lead to her dismissal. It seems essential that respect for a supported employee demands that such concerns and their implications should be communicated directly.

**How Lee Won His Co-worker Over**

After Lee was settled into his job and sufficient co-worker supports were operating, a key support person left for another job. She was replaced by another employee who worked in the same area as Lee. Although a most likely support person for Lee, because of the her close proximity and their shared tasks, the new employee stated that she was a clerical worker not a social worker, and that she did not care to provide the supports which had been offered by the previous co-worker. She would interact with Lee professionally, checking his work, answering his questions, and providing work to do, but wouldn't assist him setting up, with his break and lunch, and closing down at the end of the day.

Other co-workers who knew Lee volunteered to provide the additional supports that he needed. During this time, the employment consultant found excuses to make more frequent visits to the library to talk to Lee and the new co-worker. Through

informal conversations, the consultant helped the co-worker get beyond Lee's disability, and begin to know him as an interesting, humorous and intelligent person. This added social involvement coupled with Lee's personality and charm eventually won the friendship of his co-worker who began to assist Lee, eventually becoming an important friend and source of support.

Another issue that arose was Lee's interest in expanding his duties at the library. He was particularly interested in doing more computer entry work. He asked the consultant to speak with the library director about this, noting that he had done so without result. The consultant, however, urged Lee to address the issue on his own behalf, recommending that he first write her a letter (with assistance), and follow up with a request for a meeting. Lee did this, and after seeing the extent to which he was serious about his request, the director began exploring new computer duties which he could assume.

Jackl Bought Her Own Accessible Van for Work

Jacki lives in a neighborhood that is not serviced by any accessible public transportation. In talking with the supported employment consultant, the two began to consider different alternatives to solve this problem. The consultant suggested the possibility of purchasing her own vehicle, which would allow her the freedom and independence to move about the community. Jacki was enthusiastic, but somewhat skeptical that it could be accomplished. At the time, she was unemployed, and received only entitlement benefits. In collaboration with her consultant, Jacki began to devise a Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) in which she could put aside earned and

unearned income to save for a vocational goal. The PASS was approved, allowing Jacki to purchase a van. She was then able to hire a personal driver, using a Blind Work Expense (BWE). The local Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped paid for the modifications and adaptations to the van.

Key Points to Remember When Providing Ongoing Natural Supports

* Supported employee has demonstrated job satisfaction.
* Supported employee is socially involved with his/her co-workers on a regular, ongoing basis.
* Employer and supervisors are satisfied with individual's work performance.
* Co-workers are providing various types and degrees of on site job supports.
* Co-worker supports are greater, or will become greater, than that provided by consultant.
* Supported employee is included (as s/he desires) in employer initiated social events such as picnics, retirement and holiday events, sports leagues, etc.
* Co-workers support individual at outside social events.
* Supported employee is socially interacting with co-workers in typical ways (e.g., before and after work and during breaks).
* Ancillary supports and funding have been carefully considered for their short and long term financial implications for the supported employee.

It is important to note that Jacki could afford the expenses for her van until she lost her first job. When she found another position that paid less, she had to supplement her income with services from an agency which assisted her to find and

pay for a personal attendant and a driver. These services allowed Jacki to retain the van she earned through her PASS Plan, but points out the importance for consultants to understand the long term implications of expenses incurred through PASS.

## PART VI

## CONCLUSIONS

In this section we would like to offer some concluding remarks, and answer some common questions regarding the provision of natural work place supports. The following are basic tenets upon which we believe natural supports are based.

### 1. EACH WORK SETTING IS UNIQUE.

Every work situation is different, and has its own idiosyncratic social characteristics. This is a critical assumption for employment consultants who must plan their activities around this basic belief before, during and after the time a supported employee has found work.

### 2. NATURAL SUPPORTS MAY BE ACHIEVED IRRESPECTIVE OF KIND OR SEVERITY OF A PERSON'S DISABILITY, OR TYPE OF WORK SETTING.

People with the widest types and severity of disability are able to find some degree of work place supports among employers of varying kinds and sizes. Supports do not appear primarily related to disability characteristics, types of business, or size of companies. Rather, natural work place supports involve combinations of setting-centered, social dynamics which exist, or can be created, between an individual and those around him/her.

**3. NATURAL SUPPORTS SHOULD REFLECT THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SPECIFIC WORK SITUATION.**

It is important to know that every work place has its own culture, consisting of unique routines, activities, relationships, and traditions. Knowing and adhering to these customs can be a prerequisite to being accepted as a peer, and participating fully in the setting's social activities. Thus, critical functions of employment consultants are: 1) understand the social routines, relationships, and activities of each job setting they encounter; 2) match these characteristics with the social preferences and support characteristics of the supported employee; and 3) with the supported employee and employer, develop supports that are as consistent as possible with the surrounding culture.

**4. ACTIONS THAT MAY BE SEEN AS SUPPORTIVE IN ONE SETTING MAY NOT BE CONSIDERED SO IN ANOTHER.**

Combining the beliefs that work settings are unique and that supports are setting-dependent, it may be seen that not all sources and types of support are equal. Supports assume value and acceptance depending upon how they are perceived and implemented within a particular work place. Thus, consultants should not assume that a type of relationship, form of assistance, or social posture which prevailed in one, or even several previous situations, will prove helpful in succeeding settings.

**5. SUPPORTED EMPLOYEES MUST BE INVOLVED TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE IN ALL ASPECTS OF SUPPORT PLANNING AND PROVISION.**

The entire employment process, supports included, must revolve around the interests, preferences, and needs of the individual with a disability. Supports, however well planned and implemented, cannot succeed without the involvement and approval of the supported individual. Such participation should include decisions surrounding what kind of supports are provided, by whom, for how long, and under what conditions. Moreover, any changes in support provision must be approved by the person. Individual involvement in support decisions, either initially or later, may be elicited verbally, or deduced through a person's responses to a situation. Thus, consultants must carefully observe and respond to how people react to surrounding settings, activities, and people.

This conclusion may seemingly conflict with the previous one where it was stated that natural supports are setting-dependent, and should be geared to the routines, relationships, and activities of the specific work place. How can natural supports be defined as setting-centered, assuming value and acceptance from work place participants, yet still remain within the control of the individual?

It was noted previously that: 1) the overall social atmosphere of the work place should be compatible with the support needs, preferences, and interests of the individual; and 2) there should be some flexibility within the setting for individual adaptations, as there is in most work situations for all employees. Thus, if a person finds a setting that is socially compatible with his/her support preferences and needs,

individuals and consultants should be able to tailor individualized supports to the general routines, practices, and relationships of the setting. Moreover, if a person's support needs and preferences are discordant with the general atmosphere of the work setting, perhaps the setting-individual match is not appropriate.

**6. THERE IS NO ONE WAY TO ELICIT THE SUPPORTS OF OTHERS.**

Facilitating positive, ongoing, supportive relationships between supported employees and their co-workers is as complicated (or as easy) as making good friends. It helps to be in the right place at the right time. So maximizing physical and social proximity to others may help foster positive relationships, but it does not guarantee that they will ensue.

Another approach that seems to help is assuming a consultant rather than a direct service posture. This means that the employment specialist establishes an initial role of consultant with the employer and employee, remains in the background as much as possible, and attempts to facilitate on-site tasks and social support as early as possible after an individual begins working. The employment consultant only emerges to assist supported employees, supervisors and/or co-workers solve problems without providing the solutions or cementing his/her on-site presence. Such a role ideally allows the typical routines and methods of the work place to orient the individual to the setting and people, permits co-workers to get to know, and become involved with, the supported employee in the same way they do with other workers, and establishes similar expectations for the supported employee as exist for all new employees.

In some cases, formal agency services must be interwoven with naturally occurring dynamics in order to provide the necessary type, amount, and intensity of ongoing support. Thus, the consultant ultimately may provide ongoing, direct services. But at least initially in an employment situation, all consultant activities should be designed as a short term means of achieving long term, naturally occurring supports.

7. EMPLOYMENT CONSULTANT ROLES AS FACILITATORS MUST BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD BY ALL INVOLVED PARTIES.

Employment consultants must communicate their roles and functions to supported employees, employers, supervisors, family members, residential staff, and anyone else who might be closely involved in the employment process. It is particularly important for employment consultants to define their roles to employers during their first contacts, solicit the involvement of co-workers and supervisors immediately, and facilitate typical, ongoing relationships with co-workers. The employment consultant should emphasize his/her consultancy, remaining in the background as much as possible, allowing direct communication to occur between the supported employee and other workers, and avoiding direct service functions that others in the setting would more typically perform.

Because of previous supported employment experiences with other agencies and/or professionals, some employers, families, and/or supported employees, may expect employment consultants to perform job orientation and training, and ongoing supports in a very active, dominant manner. With these expectations, they may view the support consultant as delinquent when he/she discusses these activities as

responsibilities of other employees unless the consultant's orientation is clearly defined and understood. However, the employment consultant must always be flexible in his/her role in order to accommodate the initial and ongoing needs of the employer and others involved.

**8. PURSUIT OF NATURAL SUPPORTS SHOULD BEGIN AT THE VERY BEGINNING OF THE EMPLOYMENT PROCESS.**

Often, natural supports are pursued near the end of the training phase of the employment process. Such supports are thought of as synonymous with fading, since presumably, as the job coach withdraws, he/she will elicit the ongoing support and supervision of co-workers and/or supervisors. However, the daily presence of a job coach often creates social barriers between the supported employee and his/her co-workers, giving the impression that only those with special training can relate to the employee with a disability, and thereby isolating the supported employee. Thus, when the job coach is ready to fade, no other employees have been socially involved, and may be reluctant or feel unprepared to do so.

**9. NATURAL SUPPORTS CAN OFTEN TAKE TIME TO DEVELOP.**

It often takes time to get to know people, and natural supports may not fall into place overnight. As people get to know one another, they often become more knowledgeable, comfortable and accommodating.

There are no models for developing and providing natural supports. They must be improvised according to each job setting. In some instances, co-workers readily step forward and offer supports. In other circumstances, the employment consultant

and/or supported employee must reach out to people and develop more sustained relationships in order to obtain necessary supports. Sometimes, certain supports are provided and others are not. Thus, co-worker and/or external supports have to be interwoven with professional supports for a sustained period, even indefinitely, because certain supports may be difficult to achieve. In any case, consultants should be patient, but persistent, continually trying new strategies to involve co-workers, and fighting the impulse to give up and take over the support functions more appropriately belonging to those around the supported employee.

10. NATURAL SUPPORTS ARE NOT AN "ALL-OR-NOTHING" APPROACH.

The use of natural supports should not imply that an individual is either totally supported by a job coach or completely supported by people at work. At any point in time a supported employee may have any combination of "formal" (agency sponsored) and "informal" supports. These supports are dynamic, changing according to the needs and preferences of the situation.

The test of whether natural supports are in place is not whether the job coach has faded from the site, and the supported employee has achieved full task independence. A person could be working without any job coach support, and not be naturally supported. On the other hand, an individual could be receiving direct, ongoing consultant services and still be naturally supported, if such services were interwoven, or combined, with the supports of co-workers, and/or other nonprofessionals.

The purpose of natural supports is to facilitate a person's valued social participation in the work place among his/her co-workers. Such an outcome is a subjective, amorphous state which likely is best left to the supported employee to define. However, from our perspective, unless there is concrete evidence that a supported employee is a valued, productive, and socially integral part of his/her work setting according to the person's desires, natural supports cannot be claimed.

**11. THE SHORT AND LONG TERM FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF ANCILLARY SUPPORTS AND FUNDING MUST BE FULLY UNDERSTOOD AND CONSIDERED BY ALL INVOLVED PARTIES.**

When developing any supports, the consultant must understand fully their immediate and long term financial implications, as well as their employment benefits, for the supported employee. Such information must be communicated clearly to the individual and, if appropriate, to his/her family. In some cases, the immediate employment benefits for the individual may obscure the long term obligations some funding resources may entail. The consultant must always keep in mind that his/her professional obligation is to the person with whom he/she is serving, and any short term employment gains must be weighed against the person's long term financial interests.

**QUESTION: DOES A GOOD JOB MATCH PRODUCE GOOD NATURAL SUPPORTS?**

**A** good job match does not necessarily produce good natural supports, though if job match is defined broadly to mean setting-individual match, the answer is may be yes.

In many cases job matches are based exclusively on task-related factors. However, natural supports also require that social elements within a job setting be compatible with a person's support needs and preferences. Just because a person can master the tasks of the job, doesn't mean that he/she is socially participating and/or supported within the work place. As noted earlier, natural supports are not synonymous with successful fading. Many individuals with disabilities, no longer supported directly by job coaches, may remain socially isolated and non-supported by other employees. Thus, they may continue to require periodic, and often avoidable, job coach interventions around performance, social, psychological, and/or behavioral issues.

Finally, employment should not be viewed primarily as the successful matching of an individual with compatible work tasks. Work is also an important social enterprise which provides a medium for people with severe disabilities to participate socially with others, form valued relationships, improve the quality of their economic and social lives, and contribute to their communities. Unless employment is viewed more broadly than compatible task-person matches, it will lose much of its social and personal meaning for individuals with disabilities.

**QUESTION: WHAT ABOUT PAID SUPPORTS?**

Paying supervisors and/or co-workers directly to provide long term supports can be done through the Medicaid waiver or SSI/SSDI arrangements. However, this practice has several potentially negative consequences. First, it replicates and perpetuates the "paid relationship" circumstances that too often characterize the social lives of people with severe disabilities. Thus, the implications of paying for work site support would have to be clearly understood, and the action approved by the individual and/or his/her family.

Such an arrangement may also transform typical, peer relationships into more contrived associations. Depending upon how the role of paid support person is operationalized, it may turn the co-worker into a deputized job coach or quasi-supervisor, neither of which are likely indigenous to a particular job site. Of course, this outcome may occur whether or not a co-worker is paid. Thus, the way people are supported, and the roles assumed by co-workers, must be carefully attended to, whether support people are paid or not.

Finally, paying co-workers directly may be objectionable to some employers who expect primary employee loyalty and attention to their regular job. In addition, payments may create morale and relationship problems if employees compete with each other to receive support payments. Such circumstances would not only become an on site distraction, but also motivate people to provide support for the wrong reasons. Since some sources of support payments are relatively short term, the question might be raised as to what happens when these payments cease. Payments

to employees in the form of stipends may off-set the lost productivity of co-workers who provide intensive support to an employee with severe disabilities.

In most settings co-workers have been more than willing to provide support of varying types and levels. In the absence of such offers and/or possibilities, perhaps the individual and the consultant should consider carefully the merits of the work setting they have chosen.

**QUESTION: ARE NATURAL SUPPORTS LESS EXPENSIVE THAN TRADITIONAL JOB COACHING?**

The cost of supports may be less if the involvement of the employment consultant is minimal. However, as was noted above, natural supports are not an "all or nothing proposition." Nor are such supports designed to save money, but to enhance the work and social lives of supported employees. As was also indicated, the development and maintenance of solid, sustained and natural sources of work site supports require considerable time and effort. In some situations, successful natural supports operate without consultant involvement. However, in other circumstances such supports are successful, but partial, and require regular consultant participation.

# APPENDIX A

# NATURAL WORK PLACE SUPPORTS QUALITY CHECKLIST

## NATURAL WORK PLACE SUPPORTS QUALITY CHECKLIST

### I. General Employment Considerations

_____Job is typical, valued work found in the community.

_____Hours, pay, benefits are consistent with those of other employees doing the same or similar work.

_____Job is consistent with person's interests and preferences.

### II. Job Related Support Considerations

_____Job matches individual's abilities, and is challenging.

_____Position offers possibilities for task diversity and/or advancement.

_____Identified work area is physically and socially proximate to other employees.

_____Job tasks are similar to those performed by co-workers.

_____Duties and routines permit typical social interactions and supports.

_____Workers are friendly, and, if considered important, appear to reflect similar characteristics as the supported employee, e.g., age, sex, interests, etc.

_____Employees seem to like their jobs; morale seems good.

_____Worker attrition is low.

_____General work environment seems cooperative, not competitive.

_____Employer seems interested in, and open to, promoting employee diversity and providing a supportive atmosphere.

_____Job orientation, instruction and supervisory support is an established part of the employer's practices.

## III. Ancillary Support Considerations

Typical, reliable transportation options are available or can be arranged.

Employer has a positive attitude toward job accommodations (adaptive equipment, job modifications) and special services (e.g., mobility, personal services), if necessary.

## IV. Preparing for Job Training

_____The setting, tasks, and training strategies have been elected with attention to the job site's routines and the new employee's expressed preferences.

_____Supported employee's daily activities and work routines have been agreed upon.

_____Employer orientation, training, and supervision roles have been clearly delineated.

_____Potential, on-site support persons are identified, and agreed upon.

_____Role of consultant is clearly understood by all parties.

_____Plan and strategies for reducing direct consultant involvement in training and supervision are discussed by everyone involved.

_____Transportation that minimizes consultant role has been planned and agreed upon by all participants.

_____Responses to any expressed employer concerns around training issues have been considered, and dealt with.

## V. Job Training Issues

_____New employee is introduced in the most positive, typical, and valued way.

Supported employee is oriented and trained as much as possible in the same way and by the same people as other new employees.

Plan and strategies for reducing direct consultant involvement in training and supervision is in effect.

Orientation and training includes pre-work, break time, and post-work activities and interactions, if necessary.

New employee is socially interacting with co-workers regularly and typically during training.

The employment consultant, employer/supervisor, and new employee have opportunities to modify training methods.

Transportation, health, social, and other problems that may have arisen have been addressed through the collaborative efforts of all involved parties.

## IV. Ongoing Supports

_____Employee is socially involved with other co-workers on a regular, ongoing basis.

_____Supported employee is socially interacting with co-workers in typical ways

before and after work, and during breaks.

_____Co-workers are providing on-site job supports.

_____Co-worker supports are greater, or will become greater, than those provided by consultant.

_____Transportation is being provided by co-workers or sources other than the employment consultant.

_____Supported employee is included in employer initiated social events such as picnics, retirement and holiday events, sports leagues, etc.

_____Supported employee is invited to outside social events by co-workers, such as after work get-togethers, birthdays, parties, etc.

_____Co-workers support individual at outside social events.

## V. Employer Indices of Quality

Employers often measure quality according to their own criteria, some of which are different than the indices cited above. Consultants should understand and anticipate employer perspectives and attempt to balance their own concerns, and those of supported employees, with employer issues. The following list of indicators were compiled in collaboration with the project's Employer Advisory Board.

_____Employee has been adequately described to employer in terms of work skills, motivation, and behavior without violating individual's privacy, exaggerating labels, or minimizing expectations.

Employer supervisory duties have been negotiated early and clearly.

Consultant roles are clearly communicated, especially his/her anticipated reduced on site presence.

Employee's expected level of productivity is discussed, and communicated to relevant others.

Employee training period and methods are specified and agreed upon by all participants.

Contingencies for training and production extensions are agreed upon by relevant parties.

Supported employee production is regularly monitored and discussed until it reaches acceptable levels.

Supported employee's relationships with co-workers are facilitated.

Co-worker supports and supervision have stabilized and/or lessened.

Consultant assistance has been available when needed.

# APPENDIX B

# EXAMPLE OF A PASS PLAN PROPOSAL

The following is an example of a PASS proposal written for Jacki. The plan was approved because the expenses were deemed necessary for her to work.

PLAN FOR ACHIEVING SELF-SUPPORT
JACKI SMITH
123 ANY STREET
ANY TOWN, ANY STATE

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER: ANY NUMBER

SUBMITTED: ANY DATE

DISABILITY:

Jacki is an individual with two disabilities: blindness and cerebral palsy.

CURRENT INCOME:

1. Jacki receives monthly SSDI PAYMENTS OF $652. These payments will continue through her trial work period ending January of 1993. Therefore, her Unearned Income Exclusion totals $3,912. We intend to exclude the total SSDI monthly payments.

2. Jacki is employed at Any Corporation. She works 20 hours per week at $7.50 per hour. Her monthly net pay is $479. After deducting the standard income exclusion of $85, Jacki's monthly earned income is $388. Over an 18-month period, the Earned Income Exclusion totals $6,984. She will include her total net earned wages. The Income Exclusion (earned and unearned) totals $10,896.

OCCUPATIONAL OBJECTIVE:

Jacki will be employed as a full-time receptionist.

FUNDING NEEDED:

1. Vocational assistant: Will provide transportation to and from work and assist Jacki with her on-the-job personal needs. The vocational assistant's cost is approximately $170 per month, totalling $3,060 over 18 months.

2. Vehicle: Jacki will purchase a van for her to be driven to and from work. The Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped will pay for vehicle modifications. Jacki intends to set aside $435.33 per month toward the purchase of a van. This amount totals $7,836 over 18 months.*

GOALS:

1. 40 hour work week.
2. Pay for vocational assistant.
3. Obtain a vehicle for transportation to and from work.

In order for Jacki to reach her goals she will need a PASS. Jacki will be setting aside a separate bank account for the excluded income at_____bank. Bank account number is

Applicant Date

Representative Date

Calculating SSI/SSDI Work Incentives

Both the BWE and the PASS are calculated in the same fashion. The IRWE is deducted differently, causing it to be less advantageous to the employee. Following are examples which contrast the calculations of the IRWE with the BWE/PASS. These are based on the Federal Benefit Rate (FBR) for SSI, and assume that the individual receives SSI and wages only. This simple three step process can be replicated for any individual receiving SSI only and earning wages in any amount.

**Step 1: Calculate the countable income which will be deducted from the SSI check.**

| **IRWE** | **BWE/PASS** |
|---|---|
| $585 (Earned Income) | $585 (Earned Income) |
| -20 (Gen. Income Exclusion) | _^Q (Gen. Income Exclusion) |
| $565 | $565 |
| -65 (Earned Income Exclusion) | -65 (Earned Income Excl.) |
| $500 | $500 |
| -200 (IRWE) _-2 | (1/2 of remaining inc.) $300 |
| $250 | |
| -2 (1/2 of remaining income) | -200 (BWE or PASS) |
| **$150 (Countable Income)** | **$ 50 (Countable Income)** |

**Step 2: Calculate new SSI check amount**

| IRWE | BWE/PASS |
|---|---|
| $407 (1991 Federal Benefit Rate) | $407 (1991 FBR) |
| -150 (Countable income) | - 50 (Countable income) |
| **$257 (SSI check amount)** | **$357 (SSI check amount)** |

**Step 3: Calculate monthly income**

| With IRWE | With PASS/BWE |
|---|---|
| $257 (SSI check amount) | $357 (SSI check amount) |
| +585 (Wages) | + 585 (Wages) |
| **$842 (Monthly income)** | **$942 (Monthly income)** |

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project from which this manual was produced was a collaborative effort between the Rehabilitation Counseling Program and the Center on Human Policy at Syracuse University, and Pioneer, Inc., of Syracuse, New York.

Besides the primary authors, the following people from Pioneer, Inc., also contributed to the writing of this document:

| | |
|---|---|
| Domenico Caviauolo | Executive Director |
| Bernadette Delaney | Employment Consultant |
| Christine DiTrinco | Employment Consultant |
| Mary Held | Employment Consultant |
| Valerie McNickol | Senior Employment Consultant |
| Christine Santimaw | Employment Consultant |

* * * *

The authors would also like to thank members of the project's two advisory groups, and acknowledge the many contributions these individuals made to the progress, process, products, and overall success of the project. Members of these groups are listed below.

Employer Advisory Board

Mr. James Bagley
Pizza Hut, Inc.

Ms. Mary Ellen Brzozowski
Syracuse University - University College

Ms. Melissa Hall
Bart-Rich Enterprises

Mr. Charles Keller
Syracuse University - Audio Visual

Mr. Richard Lisbon
Syracuse University - School of Engineering

Mr. Kenneth Stillwell
Ryder Truck Rental, Inc.

Ms. Lori Wilson
Marriot Corporation