

Pathways to Employment Tool

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) collaborated with the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) to develop this *Pathways to Employment Tool*. This version of the tool is specific to Pennsylvania’s adult autism programs.

The purpose of this tool is to provide guidance to Supports Coordinators (SCs) for engaging in conversations with participants, and their teams, in an effort to help the person become competitively employed. The tool includes helpful conversation starters for SCs to use when planning with a participant, their family and teams about employment.

Although this tool is not mandatory, it should be used to facilitate conversations regarding competitive employment. It can be used during the initial or annual ISP meeting, a monitoring visit, or any other time the team meets.

Please note that these questions are not intended to be used sequentially; they are designed to be conversation starters to help facilitate conversation, based on which of the four employment pathways described within this tool is appropriate for the participant’s situation.

**Note: AAW employment services mentioned in this document may only be accessed by following the proper procedures outlined in the joint ODP-OVR Employment Services bulletin.*

Pathways to Employment Tool

Let's Have the Conversation...

What Employment Pathway am I on?



Achieving employment and community inclusive outcomes are cornerstones of ODP-BSASP policies and practices. Achieving these outcomes requires participants to be engaged with community resources on an ongoing and consistent basis. Employment practices must ensure participants receive information about feasible employment opportunities, and services like Supported Employment should focus on skill building and independence to maintain work. In addition, Day Habilitation, Community Support, and Transitional Work Services should promote progress towards the participant's desired pathway to employment.

The following represents ODP-BSASP principles concerning employment for people being supported by ODP-BSASP:

- All working age people with disabilities can and should work.
- Competitive employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred post-education outcome.
- Paid work is an essential part of having control over the life you want.
- Everyone deserves to establish career goals and aspirations, earn a living wage and be valued for their contributions.
- Employment leads to new competencies, and opens doors to new relationships and social opportunities.
- Achieving employment and community inclusive outcomes are cornerstones of ODP-BAS policies, principles and practices.

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Participant is not working but expresses an interest in working.

What can we talk about to gather information that could be helpful to finding the right job match?

1. What activities are you really good at or enjoy doing?
2. Did you know they could possibly lead to a job or business for you?
3. How are you most comfortable meeting new people?
4. What makes you feel most proud or important?
5. Are there things you would like to do that you are not doing now?
6. Did you know you can often keep some of your benefits even if you work? Let me tell you why...
7. If you volunteer, have you thought about how this could become a paid position?

NEXT STEPS: SC/TEAM

- Use “important to and important for” sections in ISP to highlight employment interests.
- Network with family, friends, neighbors and other contacts to seek out job opportunities in field of interest.
- Identify any barriers to be addressed and develop an action plan.
- Determine if a job assessment is warranted.

NEXT STEPS: PARTICIPANT

- ◇ Use transitional work services on a time-limited basis.
- ◇ Utilize OVR services to assist in finding and securing employment.
- ◇ Access one stop career centers (Career link).
- ◇ Take classes to gain skills, education and training in field of interest.
- ◇ Consider having a provider do a job assessment.



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Participant is not working but expresses that they do not want to work.

What do we do? What can we talk about to really understand why the participant feels this way?

1. Tell me bit about why you are not interested in finding a job and earning money.
2. Is there anything about getting a job that worries you?
3. Did you know you can often keep some of your benefits even if you work? Let me tell you why...
4. Have you had the chance to explore work or volunteering opportunities to help identify your skills and interests? Would you like to?
5. How do you spend your day?
6. What do you like most/least about your day?
7. If you could change or improve something in your daily life what would it be?
8. What activities are you not doing now that you would like to do?
9. Do you have enough money to do the things you would like to do?
10. What were your experiences the last time you tried something new?
11. What needs to change in order for you to try something new?
12. What would need to happen in order for you to consider finding a job in the future?
13. How are you most comfortable meeting new people?
14. What makes you feel most proud or important?



NEXT STEPS: SC/TEAM

- Use “important to and important for” sections of the ISP to highlight possible interests.
- Identify any barriers to be addressed and develop an action plan.
- Help the participant discover their talents through volunteer work.
- Encourage the idea of work (use success stories).
- Help the participant build community and personal networks.
- Address the supports the participant may need while not working.
- Discuss the available services and supports designed to help the participant find and keep a job.
- Explain there are also job coaches that can help coach and support them during work.
- Help the participant explore information about various jobs and careers.
- Provide information on how to access benefits counseling.
- If the participant is resistant to employment but not to volunteering, work to understand what their concerns are and help to alleviate their concerns.

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Participant is not working and there is team member resistance to work.

What do we talk about to help determine why there is resistance?

1. Talk through each concern the team has related to the person obtaining employment.
2. Identify ways to overcome barriers by talking about possible solutions.
3. Remind the participant and the team about the expectation that everyone can and should work competitively in the general workforce and be a contributing member of their local community.
4. Discuss the possibility of employment by using the conversation starters for when a participant is not working.
5. Help the participant and/or their family to understand the possibilities by addressing concerns and potential barriers (for example, losing benefits) and explaining available employment supports.
6. Help the participant and family understand their options and the results of not pursuing employment so they can make an informed choice.
7. Remember, shifting employment expectations associated with people with autism takes time. There are many reasons why the participant and/or their family may show some resistance to conversations about employment. SCs often need to meet participants and/or their families where they are, and have an understanding in order to help raise expectations. SCs play a critical role in improving employment outcomes for people with autism. Keep having these conversations regularly, they will build trust and understanding resulting in participants and/or their families excited to explore employment as an option.

NEXT STEPS: SC/TEAM

- Use “important to and important for” sections in the ISP to highlight employment interests.
- Identify any barriers to be addressed and develop an action plan.
- Help the participant discover their interests and talents.
- Encourage the idea of work (use success stories).
- Help the participant build community and personal networks.
- Address the supports the participant may need while not working.
- Provide information on how to access benefits counseling.



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Participant is working.

What should we ask to determine if the participant is truly satisfied in their current position?

1. What's the best part of your job?
2. Do you enjoy working with your co-workers? Your supervisor?
3. Have you considered working additional hours?
4. Are you making enough money to meet your living expenses and have enough "pocket money" for recreation, etc.?
5. If you earned more money, how would you change your everyday life?
6. Are there new tasks or responsibilities you would like to try in your current job?
7. What do you do at work that makes you feel proud or important?
8. Have you thought about applying for other types of jobs? Tell me about your interests.
9. If you have considered other jobs, we could discuss ways for you learn about those positions.
10. Working additional hours would mean making more money. What are your thoughts on working more hours?
11. Are there things that you would like to do if you earned more money?
12. What new tasks would you like to try in your current job?
13. Have you thought about other types of jobs? Tell me what you have been considering.
14. Often there are job shadowing or work assessment opportunities to help someone learn about a particular type of job in an actual work environment. Would that interest you?



NEXT STEPS: SC/TEAM

- If the participant indicates general satisfaction with current job, focus on opportunities for progress such as increases in wages and/or hours, expanded job duties, opportunities for new or improved relationships at work, and increased independence if receiving paid supports.
- If the participant indicates a desire to change jobs focus on updating information on employment related competencies and gifts, focus on a new position or job that will increase the employee's satisfaction, identify a new employment goal and a new referral to OVR.
- If OVR services have been exhausted or OVR has deemed the participant ineligible, consider a job assessment to find a different job.
- If OVR services have been exhausted or OVR has deemed the participant ineligible and the participant has work experience and a clear understanding of what type of employment is desired, consider Job Finding service.