

# Career Counseling Information and Referral Resources in Maryland

This packet has been prepared by \_\_\_\_\_  
in partnership with the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS). We hope  
this information will be useful to you in conversations with your team about your  
employment options.

**Acknowledgement:** This content has been developed, in part, with materials provided by  
the Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Maine Division of Vocational  
Rehabilitation and California Department of Rehabilitation. Thank the Workforce  
Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) for their invaluable assistance in  
developing these materials.

## Table of Contents:

THINK ABOUT... SELF-ADVOCACY, SELF-DETERMINATION, INFORMED CHOICE, AND PEER MENTORING.....	4
What is Self-Advocacy? .....	4
Why is Self-Advocacy Important?.....	4
What is Self-Determination? .....	4
What is Informed Choice? .....	5
What is Peer Mentoring? .....	5
Resources.....	5
THINK ABOUT... ASSESSMENT, PERSON-CENTERED PLANNING, MARKETABLE SKILLS, AND SOFT SKILLS .....	6
What is Assessment?.....	6
What is Person-Centered Planning? .....	6
What are Marketable Skills?.....	6
What are Soft Skills? .....	7
Resources.....	7
THINK ABOUT... JOB EXPLORATION, JOB SHADOWING, and LABOR MARKET INFORMATION .....	8
What is Job Exploration?.....	8
What is Job Shadowing? .....	8
What is Labor Market Information? .....	8
What are Good Labor Market Questions to Ask? .....	9
Resources.....	9
THINK ABOUT... REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY .....	10
What is Reasonable Accommodation?.....	10
What is Assistive Technology? .....	10
Resources.....	11
THINK ABOUT... SUPPORTED AND CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT ....	12
What is Supported Employment? .....	12
What is Customized Employment?.....	12
Resources.....	13
THINK ABOUT... BENEFITS PLANNING .....	14
What is Benefits Planning? .....	14
Resources.....	14
THINK ABOUT... JOB SEARCH BASICS.....	15

What is Networking? .....	15
What Are Support Systems? .....	15
What is a Job Application? .....	16
What is a Résumé? .....	16
What is a Job Interview? .....	16
Resources.....	17

# **THINK ABOUT... SELF-ADVOCACY, SELF-DETERMINATION, INFORMED CHOICE, AND PEER MENTORING**

## **What is Self-Advocacy?**

Self-advocacy is learning how to speak up for yourself, making your own decisions about your own life, learning how to get information so that you can understand things that are important to you, and finding out who will support you in your journey.

## **Why is Self-Advocacy Important?**

Self-advocacy is important so that you have the knowledge needed to succeed and are given the chance to participate in decisions that are being made about your life.

## **What is Self-Determination?**

Self-Determination is the desire, ability, and practice of directing your life.

Some examples of self-determination are:

- Setting long-term and short-term goals
- Achieving goals
- Making informed decisions independently
- Making informed decisions with others
- Knowing when to seek help
- Understanding my strengths and preferences
- Describing my strengths and preferences to others
- Understanding my disability and limitations
- Choosing to disclose (or not disclose) my disability to others
- Describing my disability to others
- Knowing which accommodations are helpful to me

## What is Informed Choice?

Informed choice is the process of choosing from options based on good information. These options are developed by a partnership consisting of you and other individuals that will empower you to make decisions about your life.

When you make an informed choice, you have the chance to look at and understand:

- All options available to you
- Ways to overcome barriers
- Potential risks and benefits of decisions.

## What is Peer Mentoring?

Peer mentoring is when a more experienced person encourages and helps a less experienced person to get better at something they are both interested in. The resulting relationship is good for both people as both have a chance to grow in their own lives. Peers are people who are like you in some way. They could be the same age, share hobbies, interests, etc.

Peer mentors are individuals who have more experience with your shared interest, along with additional training in how to help others to get the skills, knowledge and attitudes to reach their goals.

## Resources

Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council  
199 E. Montgomery Ave., Suite 100  
Rockville, Maryland 20850  
Phone: 240-599-7965  
Email: [MarylandSILC@gmail.com](mailto:MarylandSILC@gmail.com)  
[www.msilc.org](http://www.msilc.org)

---

---

---

---

---

---

# **THINK ABOUT... ASSESSMENT, PERSON-CENTERED PLANNING, MARKETABLE SKILLS, AND SOFT SKILLS**

## **What is Assessment?**

To reach your employment goal, you may be asked during the process to participate in an assessment which can provide valuable information on to help you make informed choices. Important information an assessment can provide includes:

- Strengths
- Interests
- Abilities
- Capabilities
- Resources
- Priorities
- Concerns
- Informed Choice

## **What is Person-Centered Planning?**

Person-centered planning says that people with disabilities are people first. Person centered planning looks at the entire person; not just a person's disability. Person centered-planning is used to help make decisions based on informed choice, available services, and natural supports and is driven by the person's capabilities, interests, needs, and values.

Person-centered planning is a process used to find out what is important to a person and what skills they possess. It recognizes that every individual has unique capabilities and skills. It focuses on what a person can do instead of what a person cannot do.

## **What are Marketable Skills?**

Marketable skills are those skills that are in high demand for the workforce; they are valuable to employers and needed to get and keep a job. Marketable skills can change over time with the needs of the job market.



# **THINK ABOUT... JOB EXPLORATION, JOB SHADOWING, and LABOR MARKET INFORMATION**

## **What is Job Exploration?**

In order to make informed career decisions, you may have an opportunity to participate in job exploration activities. Job exploration activities are experiences that can help you identify how your interests, values, and skills relate to your jobs of interest.

Job exploration activities can include informational interviews with employers, workplace visits and tours, career-focused mentoring, and job shadowing. Some of the things you might learn from job exploration include:

- Education and experience requirements
- Pay rates
- Work hours
- Job requirements
- Career pathways

## **What is Job Shadowing?**

Job shadowing is an activity where you gather more information by going with a staff member to a work setting that you have an interest in, which will give you an opportunity to see somebody do their job. Job shadowing can provide an opportunity for you to see what tasks are being done, learn what skills and knowledge it takes to do the tasks, and to get a feel for what the work might be like. Job shadowing may be a one-on-one activity or it can be done in a group.

## **What is Labor Market Information?**

Labor market information is facts, data or analysis related to a particular labor market that can be used to make better choices. It can be a way of organizing the world of work into meaningful pieces, such as:



- Economic trends that affect work
- Employment and wage information for jobs in your area
- Job requirements

It is important that job seekers and members of the workforce, including people with disabilities, have access to labor market information in order to make informed choices. Staff that provides guidance to job seekers often gather labor market information to talk about with you on your journey to competitive integrated employment.

## What are Good Labor Market Questions to Ask?

- What jobs are available that fit well with my skills, interests and experience?
- What are the requirements to get a job? What is the job like?
- What are the wages, benefits, hours, and potential for promotions for particular jobs?
- Which jobs are employers having the most difficult time finding people for?
- What are the business trends that will have an impact on the labor market?
- Where can I obtain needed education, training and workforce services?

## Resources

O\*NET OnLine:

<https://www.onetonline.org/>

Maryland Workforce Exchange:

<https://mwejobs.maryland.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>

Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR):

<http://www.dllr.state.md.us/>

---

---

---

---

# **THINK ABOUT... REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY**

## **What is Reasonable Accommodation?**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines reasonable accommodation as “any change in the work environment or the way things are usually done that gives an individual with a disability an equal employment opportunity.” Under the ADA, a reasonable accommodation includes modifications or adjustments that enable employees with disabilities to perform the essential functions of their job.

Reasonable accommodations could include:

- Assistive technology
- Changes to work schedules
- Providing readers or interpreters
- Extra time to take a test

Reasonable accommodations DO NOT include:

- Removing a key job responsibility
- Lowering production standards that are applied to all employees
- Providing personal use items, such as prosthetic limbs, wheelchairs, eyeglasses, hearing aids, etc.
- Anything that would be considered to be an undue hardship to the employer

## **What is Assistive Technology?**

Assistive Technology (AT) is one way to help meet the needs of employees with disabilities so that they can reach their full potential and increase their independence.

Assistive technology is a type of job accommodation that helps a person with a disability perform an activity or improve their job performance. Examples of assistive technology could include a customized workstation, specialized software, or another type of technology.

Assistive technology is defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act as, “Any item, piece of equipment, or system ...that is commonly used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.”

Assistive technology can accommodate a wide range of disabilities, including but not limited to:

- Deafness and hearing loss
- Speech and language impairments
- Mobility limitations
- Learning difficulties
- Mental health impairments
- Neurological disorders

There are many types of AT devices ranging from the very simple to the complex. The first step with AT is to recognize the barrier or problem, determine if assistive technology is right for you, and identify the device that will work best for you.

## Resources

Job Accommodation Network (JAN):

<http://askjan.org/links/>

(800) 526-7234 (Voice)

(877) 781-9403 (TTY)

Maryland Technology Assistance Program:

<http://mdod.maryland.gov/mdtap/pages/mdtap-home.aspx>

Mid-Atlantic ADA Center:

<http://www.adainfo.org/>

---

---

---

---

---

---

# **THINK ABOUT... SUPPORTED AND CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT**

## **What is Supported Employment?**

Supported Employment services are aimed at finding competitive work in the community for people with severe disabilities who need ongoing support services to learn and perform the work. Support is usually provided by a job coach who meets regularly with the person on the job to help him or her learn the necessary skills and behaviors to work independently. As the individual gains mastery of the job, the support services gradually fade and may continue as needed.

## **What is Customized Employment?**

Customized employment is a flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job candidate and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both. It is based on an individualized match between the strengths, talents, conditions, and interests of a job candidate and the identified business needs of an employer. Customized Employment utilizes an individualized approach to employment planning and job development — one person at a time . . . one employer at a time.

Customized employment may include:

- **Task reassignment:** Some job tasks of other workers are reassigned to a new employee. This reassignment allows the worker to focus on the critical functions of his/her job (i.e., primary job responsibilities) and complete more of the central work of the job.

Task reassignment typically takes the form of job creation, whereby a new job description is negotiated based on current, unmet workplace needs.

- **Job carving:** A job description is changed — containing one or more, but not all, of the tasks from the original job description.
- **Job sharing:** Two or more people share the tasks and responsibilities of a job based on each other's strengths.



# THINK ABOUT... BENEFITS PLANNING

## What is Benefits Planning?

If you get benefits from Social Security, it is important to understand how a change in work might affect them before you make a choice.

- Many people on SSI are worried about how work will affect their SSI
- There are supports called work incentives that make sure that people on SSI or SSDI will not lose their benefits if they go to work.
- DORS and other agencies can help you and your family or guardian understand more about work incentives if you want.

It is important to talk to a benefits counselor about your situation and how a change in work status may impact your benefits before pursuing competitive integrated employment.

## Resources

For more information on the Ticket to Work Program and Employment Networks:

- Call **1-866-YOURTICKET (1-866-968-7842)** or **TTY/TDD 1-866-833-2967** between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Eastern time Monday through Friday.
- Or visit online at [www.chooseworkttw.net](http://www.chooseworkttw.net) or [www.ssa.gov/work](http://www.ssa.gov/work).

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# THINK ABOUT... JOB SEARCH BASICS

## What is Networking?

Networking is building positive, helpful, relationships, either by making a connection with someone in person or online. While some people have an easier time making new connections than others, it's important to remember that everyone is capable of networking.

A willingness to network and build connections will be the single most useful tool in your job search. Networking is considered to be the most effective way to find a job, but every person will need to build his or her own network differently. While networking increases the options available to you, keep in mind that you already have a network of people who know and support you. This is called your support system.

## What Are Support Systems?

Support systems are an important part of your network. Family and other support systems can be essential in helping people reach their full potential at the job and in independent living.

Support systems are an important part of our lives. These systems include anyone we trust and can go to for help or advice. Your social support system may be made up of your friends and family members or others in your community. For example, your support system could include:

- You, and your direct support staff
- Family members
- Friends
- Health care providers
- Co-workers
- Social workers
- Teachers
- Anyone else you trust

## **What is a Job Application?**

For many employers, asking you to complete a job application providing detailed information about yourself is the first step in the hiring process. Depending on the circumstances, you might complete an application in person, online, or before an interview. Some employers require an application even if you've submitted a resume. Whatever the situation is, if an application is required, it should be taken seriously as an important part of the hiring process.

People who make hiring decisions often must read many applications in order to fill a position. Applications that are not filled out correctly are often rejected. To increase your chances of being considered, follow some basic guidelines.

- Follow directions
- Fill out the application completely
- Be neat
- Be honest

## **What is a Résumé'?**

The purpose of a résumé' is to provide a summary of your skills, abilities and accomplishments. It is a quick advertisement of who you are. It is a "snapshot" of you with the intent of capturing and emphasizing your strengths. It can be a way to get called back for an interview. Since your resume is an important tool in your job search, it needs to be carefully written. Even if you're new to the workforce, a strong resume can help you stand out in the crowd.

## **What is a Job Interview?**

A job interview is a one-on-one interview consisting of a conversation between a job applicant and an employer. It helps the employer to decide whether the applicant should be hired. Interviews are most frequently used to help determine who may be selected for the job. Below are some good habits to consider for an interview:

- Be Prepared
- Look Sharp



