



# OVERVIEW OF THE DISCOVERY PROCESS FOR TRANSITIONING YOUTH TO EMPLOYMENT

a presentation by  
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On July 22, 2014 the President signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2104, (H.R. 803) thus amending the Rehab Act of 1973.

This new act provides a federal definition of Customized Employment and it provides a strong focus on employment for all, especially transitioning youth.

*According to the 2014 Amendments to the Rehab Act (H.R. 803 Section 7 (7) (29 U.S.C. 705)*

“Customized Employment means competitive integrated employment, for an individual with a significant disability, that is based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs, and interests of the individual with a significant disability, is designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual with a significant disability and the business needs of the employer,…”

# Critical Component of WIOA

- The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) amends the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and now requires vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies to set aside at least 15% of their federal funds to provide "pre-employment transition services" to "Students with Disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services ." WINTAC

# The Importance of CE

- Customized employment avoids many of the barriers imposed in traditional employment, such as set hours and days of work, a non-negotiated job description, competitive interview process and a prescribed “production rate”.
- While the traditional employment option may work well for many students with mild impact of disability, it has not worked well for students with significant impact of disability.

# Customized Employment begins with Discovery

- Before a job can be customized for a jobseeker, we must determine the jobseeker's conditions for success, interests and contributions.
- *The process of Discovery determines* these components for individuals that is then used to *customize* a position with an employer.

# James

- James' high school teacher knew James could be employed as did his family. His teacher helped James apply for a traditional job opening at a Burger King. His job description required James to wash dishes and keep ice dispensers full. James started missing school on the days he was scheduled to work. Dad was not surprised because James doesn't like getting his hands wet. His teacher realized she had not considered James' conditions for success, and his interests or his contributions. She facilitated Discovery with James.

## Discovery showed us...

- The Discovery process revealed James loves watching live action police TV programs.
- Discovery also revealed that James has an interest in organizing papers---he frequently would go to his teacher's desk and organize her papers.



# Translating James' Skills

- His teacher translated James' love for police programs to a potential interest in police work.
- She also translated his skill in organizing her papers on her desk to a potential office skill of organizing files or papers.

# Customizing a Job for James

- His teacher toured a local Sheriff's office for potential tasks James could perform, based on the Discovery findings. She discovered a closet filled with boxes of unfiled papers, tickets, citations, etc. No one had the time to file these documents.
- The teacher negotiated a job for James at this sheriff's office filing documents.

# James organizing forms for filing at the Sheriff's office



## Where he is working today

- James has been working for the Jackson County Sheriff's department since 1998 as a file clerk. He works 8 hours a day 4 days a week. His salary is above minimum wage and he has benefits. He has increased his computer skills to match the new filing requirements at work. James negotiated working only 4 days a week.

# Meet Andrew in High School

Andy was a typical young person with a significant impact of disability.



# Andrew

- Andrew's parents expected him to work as an adult. His teachers said he would never work—his disabilities were too severe. A traditional vocational assessment supported the teacher's position. Andrew's parents requested Discovery to determine his conditions for success, interests and contributions.

# Discovery and Translation

- Discovery revealed Andrew has great memory for locations of offices and departments within buildings.
- Andrew had a strong interest in learning to drive.
- His job coach translated those into potential tasks a business might need.

- His job coach was touring a hospital for a potential customized job opportunity for Andrew. She observed nurses delivering files, x-rays and reports to various floors of the hospital. This particular hospital had 17 floors and three towers. The job coach negotiated a job for Andrew as a courier for the hospital. This large hospital had no courier service.






- Andrew drives his own scooter to all floors of the hospital delivering important documents. Andrew never gets lost in this hospital.

## Still working...

Andy is still working today, over thirty-one years later. He works 35 hours per week and his wage in 2014 was \$24.50 per hour. He is a member of the union that organizes the transport workers at his hospital and he owns his home.



# Discovery leads to Careers

A horizontal bar with a yellow-to-orange gradient on the left and a purple-to-blue gradient on the right.

James and Andrew have established career jobs spanning several years as a result of customized employment.

Facilitated Discovery opened employment possibilities and adhering to their conditions for success, interests and contributions in developing customized jobs for them has lead to career path jobs.

# Features of Customized Employment

- Based on discovery of the job seeker more than on evaluative/comparative processes
- Driven by a customized plan developed by the job seeker's strengths, needs and interests
- Focuses on tasks rather than job titles to negotiate essential responsibilities

# Features of Customized Employment

- Specific job duties are negotiated with employers, voluntarily, to customize the job
- Occurs in regular community workplaces or in self-owned businesses
- Involves pay of at least the minimum wage up to prevailing wage

# Features of Customized Employment

- Applicable to all users of workforce system
- Includes on-going supports and reasonable accommodations, as appropriate
- Starts with the individual as the source of information and direction to labor force

# The Employment Matrix

	<b><i>Competitive Employment</i></b>	<b><i>Customized Employment</i></b>
<b><i>Natural Supports and Reasonable Accommodation only</i></b>	<i>There are job seekers who will not need either SE or CE to become employed and to stay employed</i>	<i>There are job seekers who will need CE to become employed but will not need SE to stay employed</i>
<b><i>Supported Employment and Natural Supports</i></b>	<i>There are job seekers who will not need CE to become employed but who will need SE to stay employed</i>	<i>There are job seekers who will need both CE to become employed and SE to stay employed</i>

# Start with Discovery

The role of Discovery is to determine, in a non-comparative, non-competitive manner the “strengths, needs and interests” of the individual. Who is this person?

In discovery we refer to these aspects as *conditions for success, interests towards aspects of the job market and potential contributions.*



# Conditions for Success

- **Conditions** are characteristics of *any* job developed for the individual. Conditions refer to issues such as days of work, pay, benefits, location of the job, inside/outside work, time of day, hours per week, etc. For transition age students, what conditions increase success? working alone, using noise blocking headphones, a calm teacher, quiet space, morning classes better than afternoon classes, using assistive technology, etc.

# Interests

- ***Interests*** are characteristics of an ideal job that gives direction toward a certain area of work interest. These should be stated in the broadest possible manner, allowable by the jobseeker. Interests might include: working around boats, music, computers or watching live action cop shows on TV. Do not confuse work preferences with preferentially-stated conditions. ***Avoid using job titles.***

# Contributions

**Contributions** refer to the individual's characteristics that will be offered to employers. These might include:

*Personality characteristics : sense of humor,*

*Skills: Organization skills, computer skills, phone skills, selecting Netflix shows on tv/computer;*

*Experiences: walking and feeding pets, lawn care, selecting clothing, camping, fishing*

# Discovery Process

The process of Discovery identifies the job seeker's conditions for success, interests and potential contributions through an array of activities and interactions with the individual and his/her family, friends and others. Discovery focuses on a number of broad domains of the job seeker's life to understand these three critical features: individual's living situation, educational experiences, employment related experiences, the activities of life in which he/she participates, best skills used in all these areas and connections through family and community relationships with others.

# Discovery Process

- Facilitating a thorough Discovery process of observations, interviews, participation in activities and records review takes approximately 4-6 weeks with a range of 20-40 hours for this time period. We find it takes quality time to do targeted observations to “discover” who a person really is.

# Transition and Discovery

- Discovery with transition age youth is a work in progress. As we are exposed to work experiences, hobbies, extracurricular activities, friends, community experiences, home responsibilities, our conditions for success, our interests and our contributions continue to become clearer and more focused.

- An employment career is a possibility for all our students. Rather than “getting ready” for employment, we want to start targeting conditions for success, interests and contributions.
- Thinking in terms of “getting ready” infers that a person has to meet some arbitrary set of standards to be employed.

- Describing a student's current conditions for success, their current interests and contributions and then translating those into potential work experiences are much more meaningful.
- Work experiences during school become a better match for the student, elective classes can be better matched to a student's interests (art class or technology class) and conditions for success.



- By implementing discovery, we try to **identify the real complexities** faced by the individual and attempt to negotiate and match employment that fits, rather than putting the burden of resolving complexities solely on the individual.
- The profile strategy seeks to **empower and involve applicants, their families and friends** rather than to exclude them. Natural, common sense approaches to employment are given priority over strategies which rely solely on professional judgment and service.

# Discovery is...

- A way to identify the unique contributions offered by those who might not compete as well as others
- Enhanced when we get to know people in settings *where they are most who they are*
- Not a plan, but the foundation of employment planning, that seeks to customize outcomes
- Compatible with self-determination and customer choice

# Discovery during the school day

- Targeted, strategic observations that focus on a student's conditions for success, interests and contributions—no comparisons and no evaluative language. Spend time making these observations.
- Get detailed home routines from families. What does the student do at home and in the community? Who is this person when she is not in school?

# How to get started with Discovery?

- Unless school districts have transition specialists who facilitate thorough Discovery, most teachers will not have time or permission to observe their students in all non-school settings. However, teachers can still begin Discovery and start collecting valuable information.

# General Interactions

Discovery is also possible during general, non-focused time spent with a targeted individual. This is often done as part of a non-related, group activity such as during classroom activities for teachers or unscheduled time for adult staff or family members.

Facilitators need strategies to do this approach effectively. We recommend using the concepts of *remarkable moments* and *intentional moments*.

# Remarkable moments

*Remarkable moments* refer to the strategy of focusing on those aspects of the individual of concern's performance/behavior that are felt to be of sufficient significance to merit our descriptive remarks.

In this way, facilitators who do not have dedicated time for discovery can find these moments of time to write up the description of the behavior/performance.

# Intentional moments

*Intentional moments* refer to the strategy of planning for a specific time in the near future for a focus on discovery and descriptive writing, regardless of whether the performance is “remarkable”.

We recommend that a 2 – 4 minute focus period be planned for discovery purposes. Facilitators should plan for this observation during times when the individual is likely to be engaged in performance activity.

# Participation

- Participate with a student in an activity he is interested in.
- What is he doing? How frequently does he do this? Who taught him how to do the activity? Does he respond to cues? What are his challenges? What supports work for him? What doesn't work for him?



# Observations and spending time together

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- Use a small notebook to jot down descriptions of what you observe. Use this notebook to transfer information later.
- Focus on one student at a time to get detailed descriptive information. Use video to capture details.

# Discovery Beyond the School Day

- Facilitated Discovery requires us to observe and participate with our students in home responsibilities and in community activities to get the full picture of “Who is this person?” ....She is more than who she is in school.

# Discovery = Translation

The finesse of discovery is to identify typical aspects of life and to translate those activities into *Conditions* for success, *Interests* toward employment and potential *Contributions* to be offered to employers.

Discovery is essentially an activity of *translation*.

# Successful life conditions lead to successful work conditions

***Successful life conditions*** During Discovery facilitators look for the conditions that are present in successful performance of life activities.

***Successful working conditions*** The conditions for successful performance of life activities are translated into the conditions that should be present in any employment situation.

# Examples of Conditions for Success

- Wants to work 3 days a week for 4 hours each day;
- Needs only one person telling him what to do;
- Cursing in the work environment is acceptable;
- 15 mile radius from home is ideal.

# Personal interests lead to areas of work interests

***Intrinsic personal interests*** refer to activities that individuals do without being expected or reinforced to do by others.

***Areas of work interest*** refer to general types of work that have been translated from the individual's intrinsic personal interests.

# Skills of Life Translated into Potential Work Tasks

***Current Skills of Life*** refer to any performance activity that the individual currently performs without support or with support, as described in notes.

***Potential Work Tasks*** refer to current skills of life, *translated* into employer language, that the person can reasonably be expected to perform at work, with training, supports and accommodations as necessary.

## Descriptiveness ► Competence

By focusing on a description of the performance of the individual, without the evaluative lens of ourselves and others, we have a chance to begin to see possibilities for competence and skills that might be offered to employers.

This is made possible due to the fact that descriptiveness gets at the concrete actions of the individual. These actions have a direct connection to tasks needed by employer.



# The Profile

- It is critical to document all your observations into a document.
- [www.marcgold.com](http://www.marcgold.com)
- This document is a work in progress for transition age youth.
- Add to this each year—we suggest using different ink for each year.

# Think of your students or your son or daughter

- Begin to observe them and frame your observations into:
- Conditions for success: What conditions need to be present for him to assist in feeding his pets, for example.
- Interests: What activities does she gravitate toward?
- Contributions: Does she organize, clean her room, deliver messages to teachers?

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