

CARE MANAGER TRAINING: OPWDD EMPLOYMENT & VOCATIONAL SERVICES

INNOVATIONS IN EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS



585-340-2051

WHAT WILL WE TALK ABOUT FOR THE NEXT 2 DAYS?

- Employment First
- What does it take to be Employed?
- Key Ingredients for Competitive Employment
- Introduction to OPWDD Employment Services
- Career Specific Vocational Training (CSVV)
- Who may want to work?
- Benefits of Employment
- Authorization and Enrollment
- Navigating the Service System



Employment First

Executive Order 40

- Signed by Governor Hochul on September 31, 2024.
- Committing New York to be an employment first state to increase competitive integrated employment for New Yorkers with disabilities.
- Based on the belief that all individuals, including those with the most significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) and community life.
- CIE is considered the first option and preferred outcome in the planning and delivery of services and supports.
- Employment is not the only option or a forced option.

Executive Order 40

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STATE RECORDS

SEP 30 2024

DEPARTMENT OF STATE



No. 40

EXECUTIVE ORDER

COMMITTING NEW YORK TO BE AN EMPLOYMENT FIRST STATE TO INCREASE COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT FOR NEW YORKERS WITH DISABILITIES

WHEREAS, the State of New York has a vested interest in eliminating barriers to employment and recognizes that economic stability including gainful employment is a social determinant of health and an individual's employment results in tangible and intangible benefits, including the enhancement of independence and economic self-sufficiency, as well as purpose, dignity, self-esteem, and a sense of accomplishment and pride; and

WHEREAS, the State of New York recognizes intermediate steps and services, such as career planning, training, career exploration, internships, community experiences, soft skills development, career-specific training, and general workforce preparation activities, may be needed to assist persons with disabilities along the path to their desired employment outcome or to honor the choices and goals of the individual;

WHEREAS, the State of New York supports the expectation that working-aged people with disabilities will

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/executive-order/no40-committing-new-york-be-employment-first-state-increase-competitive-integrated>

Employment First Principles

1. Disability in no way diminishes the rights of people to live independently in their communities.
2. Dignified workforce participation is a fundamental aspect of life for people with or without disabilities.
3. People with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, can obtain CIE within the general workforce.
4. CIE is the intended and expected outcome for all working age New Yorkers with disabilities.
5. All students with disabilities should receive the education, training, and services necessary to achieve CIE as adults.

Employment First Principles

6. Person-centered planning and valuing of individual voice are priorities and should be incorporated into policy, program design, implementation and service delivery.
7. The workforce should reflect the diverse makeup of the community in which it resides.
8. Public awareness of the values of employing people with disabilities should be increased, including engagement of the NY business community.
9. Informed choices, respect for privacy and confidentiality, availability of assistive technology, and the inclusion of evidence-based practices in the pursuit of CIE are essential.
10. People with disabilities receiving public benefits should be supportive in efforts to work toward financial independence.

Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)

- Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) is work that is performed on a full or part-time basis for which an individual is:
 - Compensated at or above minimum wage and comparable to the customary rate paid by the employer to employees without disabilities performing similar duties and with similar training and experience;
 - Receiving the same level of benefits provided to other employees without disabilities in similar positions;
 - At a location where the employee works alongside other employees without disabilities; and
 - Presented opportunities for advancement similar to other employees without disabilities in similar positions.

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/cie>



**What Does It
Take To Be
Employed?**



What does it take to be successful in
community employment?
Group Brainstorming

Skills:

Attitudes/Mindset:

Supports:

Environment:

A dark purple, curved, rectangular shape on the left side of the slide, with a slight gradient and a thin white border on its right edge.

Key Ingredients for Competitive Employment

Which Services Fit the Person's Skills, Experience and Support Needs?

OPWDD Employment and Vocational Service Options



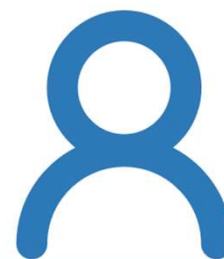
**No Community or
Work Experience
No Discovery**

Pathway to Employment
Community Prevocational



**Limited Community
or Work Experience
No Discovery**

Pathway to Employment
Employment Training Program



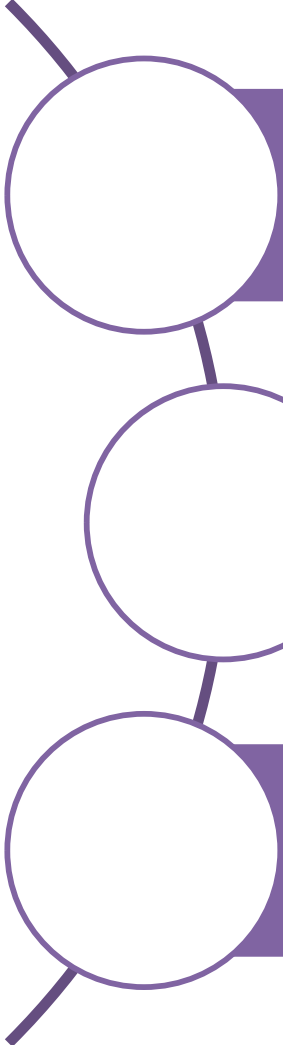
**Has Community and
Work Experience
Discovery Completed**

Employment Training Program
ACCES-VR
Supported Employment



**Office for People With
Developmental Disabilities**

Key Ingredients for Success in Competitive Integrated Employment



Discovery (career planning & experiential learning)

Developing Good Job Matches

Job Coaching & Building Competency

Key Ingredients for Success in Competitive Employment

Discovery - Learning all we can about the person

- Community Based Prevocational Services
- Pathway to Employment
- Employment Training Program (ETP)

Developing Good Job Matches - Fitting the person's skills and personality to the employer's needs and culture

- Employment Training Program (ETP)
- Supported Employment (SEMP)

Job Coaching Support - Supporting the person as they learn new tasks, supporting the employer and building up natural supports

- Supported Employment (SEMP)



What is Discovery?

- Person-centered career planning
- Learning about a person (current activities, past experiences, interests, social skills, learning style, history, family culture, etc.)
- Learning about a person's community work experiences (unpaid or paid)
- Learning about their work-related skills
- Doing career development/exploration activities
- Making a Discovery/Employment Plan to develop next steps and job match criteria (if job development is recommended)

The Es of Discovery





Why Discovery?

- Employment success and retention
- Improved coaching supports and strategies
- Stronger job development and placement
- Learning about their work-related skills
- Get to know the person

Which Services Include Discovery?

- **Community Based Prevocational Services:** on-going, as services are needed. Discovery process includes ongoing community work experiences (volunteer or paid).
- **Pathway to Employment:** Time-limited, wrap around service.
- **Employment Training Program (ETP):** up to 90 hours Intensive OPWDD SEMP. Discovery process includes at least 2 community work experiences.

Comparing Discovery Services

	ETP Discovery	Pathway to Employment	Community Based Prevocational
Who	Individuals have some work/volunteer experiences, job retention challenges, no prior Discovery, <u>or</u> want a new career	Individuals have limited work/volunteer experiences but no Discovery	Individuals have higher support needs, limited work/volunteer experiences, need to build work skills
What	Planning, Discovery, job-readiness skills, 2 work experiences, ETP Discovery Packet	Planning, Discovery, job-readiness skills, 3 work experiences, travel training, benefits planning, community/vocational Plan	Work-related skills training, Discovery, community volunteer opportunities, health/safety skills, travel training, benefits planning, annual assessment
Where	All services are in the community except observations	Primarily in the community (no workshop/day hab sites)	Primarily in the community, may use a hub site on limited basis
Why	Complete Discovery to guide job development if recommended	Create a career/vocational plan with a goal of employment in the shorter-term future, if recommended	Develop skills and experiences to gain or retain employment which may take more than 1 year
When	Typically, 10-12 hours a week up to 90 hours within 3 months to complete Discovery	Typically, 5-10 hours a week and wraps around current services.	Up to 30 hours a week, on-going as supported by annual assessment

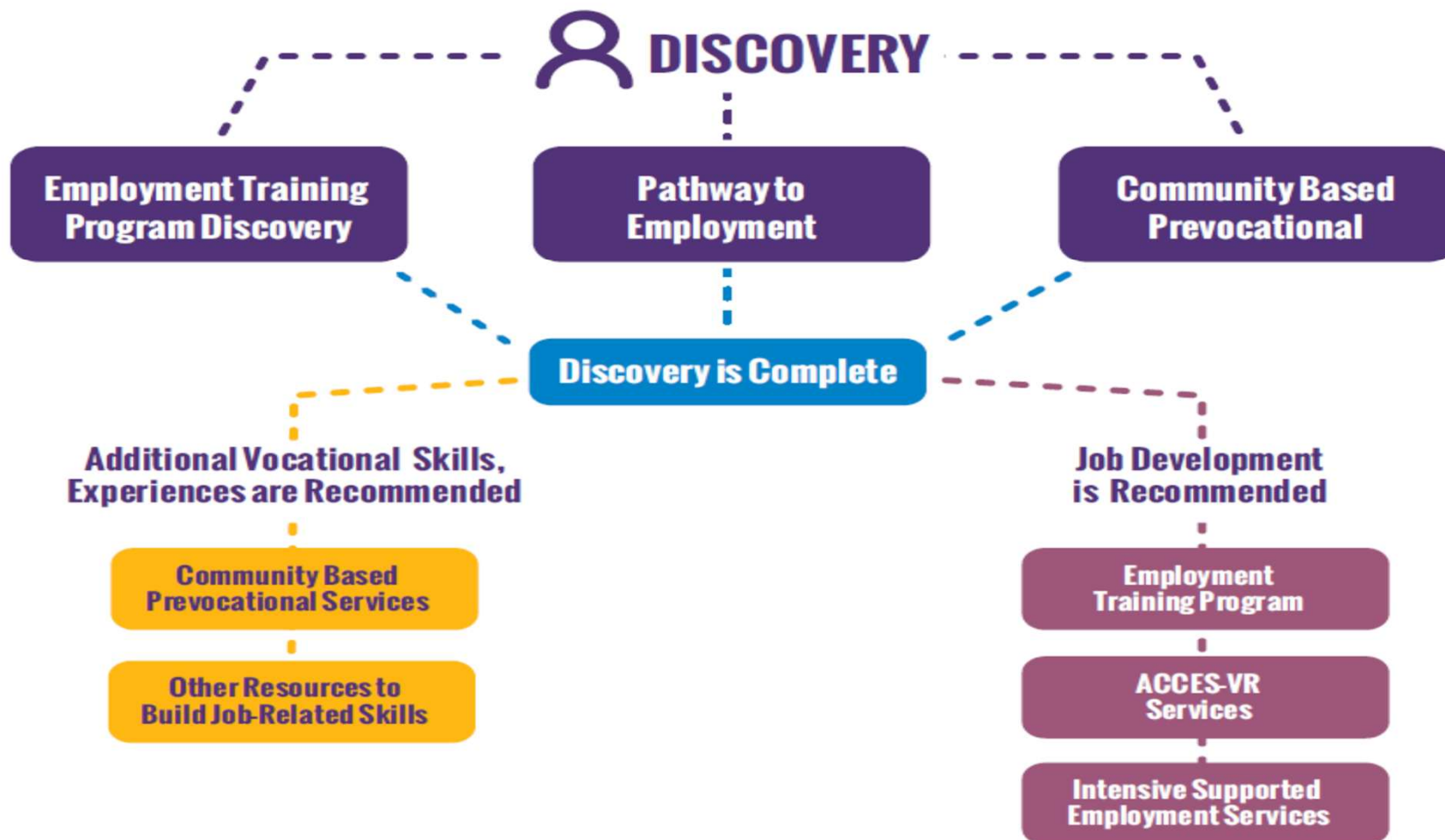
Job Development or Vocational Plan?

The Discovery will have the answers to the following questions. Based on the answers, determine if the individual should:

- **Seek Competitive Employment**
 - **Pursue Vocational Services to prepare for Competitive Employment**
-
- ✓ Can the person be alone in the community safely?
 - ✓ Does the person have the skills to match their job interest?
 - ✓ Does the person have transportation to a job?
 - ✓ Did the person follow through with tasks and work experiences?
 - ✓ Is the person willing to accept constructive criticism from job coaches and employers?



Beyond Discovery?



What is the Job Match Process?

- Employment staff assess the job seeker's choices, strengths, interpersonal skills, work skills, work experiences, environmental preferences, supervisory needs, stamina, and transportation options
- The person and their support team are involved in job match development
- Alternative job possibilities are identified
- Job development activities consistently follow the job match criteria
- Job developers seek to understand business needs in order to develop successful job matches

What are Job Coaching Supports?

- Training for the person on their job
- Developing clear instructional strategies and assisting the person to meet job performance and interpersonal standards
- Focusing on building independence and slowly fading supports as person progresses
- Assisting the person to build positive relationships at work
- Assisting the person to understand specific work policies and procedures
- Meeting regularly with work supervisors to evaluate the employee's performance and job coach services
- Communicating and planning regularly with the person and their support team to build external job supports



Introduction to OPWDD Employment Services

Community Based Prevocational Services

Provides work-related skill training to prepare people for employment or meaningful activities

Includes Discovery, community-based work experiences, volunteer opportunities, training to use available transportation options and career planning

Skill development is reviewed annually to determine when the person is prepared to move to an employment service.

Provides primarily unpaid volunteer opportunities and short-term work experiences according to DOL requirements. Subminimum wages may be paid only in approved integrated work settings.

What are the Benefits of Community Based Prevocational Services?

- Employment planning and real work experiences that provide information for targeted job development and provide a better job match
- Community work experiences that allow for informed choice
- Services to improve social and vocational skills
- Public benefits and financial planning to prepare individuals before obtaining employment
- Hourly services that may wrap around or blend with other services (up to 6 hours of all services per day)
- Assessment of readiness for Competitive Community Employment

Knowledge Check:

True or False: Community Based Prevocational Services may include volunteer work, transportation training & unpaid work experiences as part of their skill development.

X True: These services include discovery, volunteer experiences & transportation training to support employment readiness.

True or False: Skill development under Community Based Prevocational Services is reviewed only at the time a person is prepared to move to an employment service.

X False: Skill Development is reviewed **annually** to determine if the person is prepared to move to an employment service.

Pathway to Employment Services

A career planning service designed to help people identify vocational skills, interests and strengths.

Time-limited service refer to Regulation and ADM.

Includes person-centered planning, Discovery, community based vocational experiences, job readiness training and career planning.

Includes a Career, Vocational and Transition Plan which includes the next steps for achieving employment.

What are the Benefits of Pathway to Employment?

- Provides exposure to the world of work especially for individuals who need career planning and have limited work experiences in the community
- Wraps around current schedule
- Explores strengths, skills, interests and experiences
- Results in a comprehensive Career, Vocational and Transition Plan with recommendations for next steps to employment and/or transition to other services

Knowledge Check:

True or False: The Pathway to Employment program does not allow for scheduling flexibility must replace existing services.

X False: This service *wraps around the current schedule*, offering flexibility & integration with other services

True or False: Pathway to Employment Services is a time-limited service that includes job readiness training & person-centered planning.

X True: This service is time-limited & includes person-centered planning, Discovery, vocational experiences & job readiness training.

Employment Training Program (ETP)

Funded by SEMP

Paid internships in businesses that lead to competitive, integrated employment if the person's performance meets business standards.

Internships vary in length. People receive job supports from SEMP.

Includes Discovery, targeted job development and placement in a time-limited internship that is overseen by an ETP Supervisor.

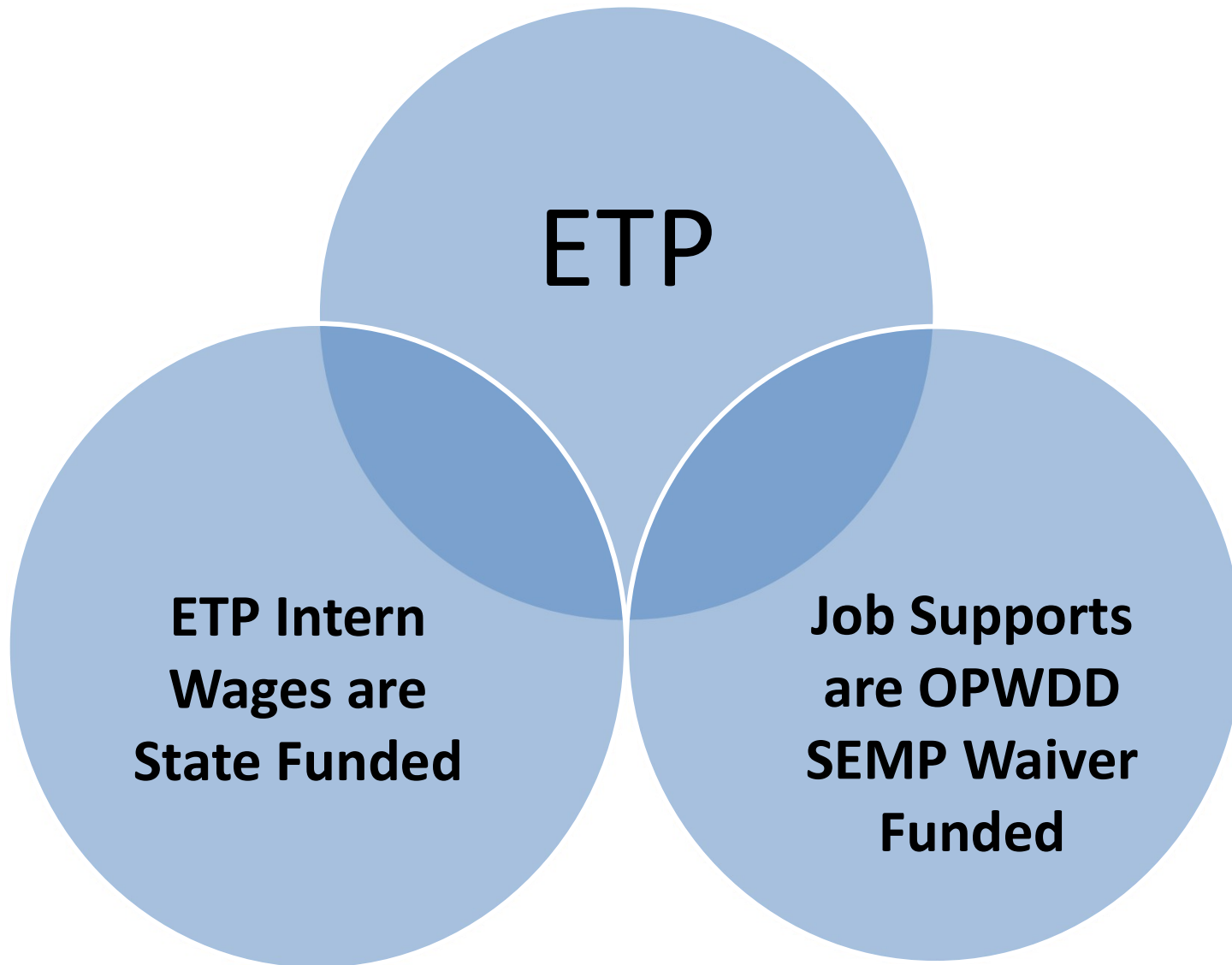
Wages are paid by OPWDD during the internship and assumed by the business if the person is hired.

OPWDD also partners with schools to offer ETP traineeships for students in High School.

What are the Benefits of the Employment Training Program?

- Completed ETP Discovery with vocational recommendation
- Job placement is matched to the individual based on Discovery
- OPWDD can pay the wages during the training period
- Intern builds work experience
- ETP Supervisor provides technical assistance and approvals through each step of the process
- Employers agree to hire if the individual meets the business performance and job requirements

How is ETP Funded?



Employment Training Program or Pathway to Employment

Employment Training Program (ETP)

- Application to ETP and enrollment in OPWDD Intensive SEMP
- Individual has some positive work or community experiences
- Discovery is up to 90 hours and activities are done in 3-5 months
- Focus is on proving the good job match and the internship to provide a longer period of intensive coaching supports.

or

Pathway to Employment

- Time limited waiver service that wraps around the individual's current activities
- Individual has limited or no work experiences in the community
- Individual requires a longer period to assess readiness for competitive employment
- Focus is on Career, Vocational and Transition Plan

Knowledge Check:

True or False: ETP provides paid internships that can lead to competitive, integrated employment.

X True: Once the person has a completed Discovery, a Job Development Plan, and able to meet the OPWDD employment requirements (background/fingerprints); a paid internship can be pursued.

True or False: The focus of ETP is on long-term coaching supports & not on job match success.

X False: ETP focuses on job match and reducing intensive coaching.

Supported Employment (SEMP)

Job development requires networking and building relationships with businesses in the community. Jobs are skillfully matched to the person's skills and interests.

Provides job coaching, interpersonal skill training, and career advancement services. On-going supports and services are provided, as needed.

The outcome is community-based, competitive, integrated employment.

Employee is paid by business at minimum wage or higher.

What are the Benefits of Supported Employment?

- Job coaching is tailored to the person's learning style. Training is regularly evaluated and adjusted to meet the person's needs
- Individuals are matched to jobs that fit their interests, abilities and support needs
- Natural supports are refined and job coaching slowly fades as the individual becomes competent on the job
- Staff assist with relationship building with supervisors, coworkers, customers and vendors, as needed
- Staff provide intermittent, periodic supports to assist with job retention
- Career planning is periodically implemented to assist the person to pursue a long-term and short-term career goals

Knowledge Check:

True or False: Supported Employment (SEMP) jobs are unpaid volunteer positions designed to build work habits before competitive employment.

X False: SEM jobs are **paid**, community based, competitive & integrated-
at minimum wage or higher.

True or False: Once placed in a job through SEM, individuals no longer receive any support services.

X False: Ongoing supports, including **intermittent job coaching & career planning**, are available as needed to help with job retention & growth.

Office for People With Developmental Disabilities

Steps to Employment



Steps to Employment Overview

On this page

Steps to Employment Overview

Step 1: Goals

Step 2: Identify Your Skills

Step 3: Choosing the Right Work for You

Step 4: Benefits & Financial Planning to Help You Work

Step 5: Getting a New Job and Learning New Tasks

Discuss Your Steps

If you're ready to work or build a career, there are some things to think about as you set out to find the right job for you. These steps to employment are intended to help you think about your job goals, what skills and experience you have, whether you could benefit from an internship or apprenticeship, and how to go about finding and learning a new job.

If you think you could benefit from any of the programs and services mentioned in the steps below, be sure to contact your Care Manager to discuss the next steps. Your Care Manager will know which programs and services you can choose from in your area.

Step 1: Goals

Before you get started, ask yourself what you are looking for in a job and what is most important to you.

- Why do you want to work?
- Are you able and willing to travel and how will you get there?
- How will you get there?
- Are you looking for specific days and times?
- Do you want to work most days or just a few days?
- How much money do you need or want to earn?
- Do you prefer to work by yourself or with other people?
- Do you like to work inside or outside?
- Are there any places you've been or jobs you've seen others doing that you think you would like

[Steps to Employment | Office for People With Developmental Disabilities](#)

Why Combine Services for Employment Success?

Combining services helps people develop the marketable skills to obtain, maintain and advance their employment goals, for example:

- Address barriers to employment
- Build social and community relationships outside of work
- Build stamina and healthy habits
- Develop transportation skills
- Build independence and safety skills
- Gain experience in new career paths
- Career planning and prepare for next job

Which OPWDD Services May Be Combined?

- **Community Based Prevocational Services (CBPV)*** – up to 4 hours a day may be combined with ½ unit of day habilitation or ½ unit of site based prevocational programs. No limits on SEMP/ETP and Pathway.
- **Pathway to Employment** – Is a wraparound service (425 hours in one year) and may be combined with other OPWDD services, except OPWDD Intensive SEMP/ETP. If a person is receiving job development services from ACCES-VR, they should not be enrolled in Pathway to Employment.
- **Employment Training Program (ETP)** – may be combined with other OPWDD services. ETP services are typically 5 hours/week during Discovery/Job Development and 10-12 hours/week when working in the internship.
- **Supported Employment (SEMP)** – may be combined with other OPWDD services. When employed, other services should wrap around the job, which is the priority.

Quick Reference

Pathway to Employment (PE) is a time limited service to develop a career plan through Discovery. Pathway is a great option for graduating students, people in day habilitation or those who have not completed a comprehensive career plan yet.

Community-Based Prevocational (CBPV) services provide work-related skill training and vocational experiences. CBPV can help people who are new to employment, need to improve skills, have a job and need to reinforce skills for job retention, or have a job but want to develop new skills to get a better job.

Employment Training Program (ETP) offers paid internships in the community that lead to employment. All people new to employment need to utilize with ETP's or ACCES-VR's intensive SEMP services at least once. Services include matching people to internships/jobs and job coaching. ETP is funded by Supported Employment (SEMP).

Supported Employment (SEMP) services help people who have work goals and experience, gain and retain jobs in their chosen careers. SEMP services include job development, job coaching and job retention services.



Career Specific Vocational Training (CSVt)

CSVT Project Design



Length of class series – no more than 5 months

Hours per class series – minimum 75 | maximum 100

Participants per class series – minimum 50 | maximum 75

Goal

- People receiving career specific vocational training are required to participate in community vocational experiences to supplement their classroom training.
- This required combination is intended to:
 - Increase the marketable skills of people enrolled in HCBS Waiver services
 - Provide job-specific skill training
 - Increase the number of people in competitive integrated employment
- People who complete the classes and community vocational experiences will be fast-tracked to OPWDD's Employment Training Program which offers paid internships that lead to jobs.

Candidate Selection

Ideal Candidates	Potential Candidates
Enrolled in SEMP	In group employment, seeking individual employment
Unemployed	Employed in agency operated integrated business, seeking employment elsewhere
Stated interest in CSVT topic	Seeking career advancement
Completed Discovery	Seeking career change
Written career and vocational plan	History of employment, seeking return to workforce
Enrolled in Community Based Prevocational or Pathway to Employment	Students leaving high school

Service Planning Considerations

Person must have employment-related goals and valued outcomes in their Life Plan

Person must have documented interest in the training topic

Person and team understand that participation in CSVT will temporarily alter the person's weekly schedule

Person and team understand and agree to support competitive integrated employment following completion of CSVT

Person must be enrolled in a HCBS Waiver-funded employment and vocational service prior to starting CSVT classes to fund their involvement in community vocational experiences

Care Manager Role

Inform person and their team about CSVT and participation requirements

Verify that person's authorized service amounts and schedule allow for participation

Submit service amendments, if applicable

Ensure that person has a current CAS/CANS

Consider referral to a Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC) to obtain credentialed benefits advisement <https://dol.ny.gov/career-services/career-services-for-persons-with-disabilities>

Referral to CSVT, provide input/complete CSVT Candidate Selection Form

Monitor participation and assist with ETP application

Review person's CSVT Transition Plan

Facilitate service linkage upon transition from CSVT

Questions for CSVT Agencies

- What do you need from potential candidates and their Care Managers for screening and selection?
- Which industries, businesses, educational partners and/or agencies do you partner with?
- Where are classes held – business space or agency space?
- What is the class schedule?
- How is transportation handled?
- How do you coordinate with other agencies to ensure CSVT participants complete Community Vocational Experiences?
- Can I receive the CSVT Transition Plan to support service planning for CSVT participants?
- What will CSVT participants exit the program with – certificate, industry-recognized credential, portfolio, resume, etc.?
- How many CSVT participants have aligned with ETP and/or secured employment post-graduation?

CSVT Project Overview

Region	Training Topic(s)	Lead Agency/Agencies
1	Hospitality Janitorial Retail	Community Services for Every1
2	Janitorial Food Service Retail Hospitality	Access CNY Upstate Caring Partners (UCP)
3	Retail Janitorial	Jawonio
4	Janitorial Food Service	AHRC NYC
5	Office Skills Custodial Food Service	FREE

CSV T Agency Contacts

Agency	Contact Person(s)	Email
Community Services for Every1 www.csevery1.com	Arnecia Delk	ADelk@csevery1.com
Access CNY www.accesscny.org Career Skills Training - AccessCNY	Russ Gentile Dave Devendorf	Russ.Gentile@accesscny.org Dave.Devendorf@accesscny.org
Upstate Caring Partners (UCP) www.upstatecp.org Career Skills Training - AccessCNY	Dawn Gentile Patsy Johnson	Dawn.Gentile@upstatecp.org Patsy.Johnson@upstatecp.org

CSVT Agency Contacts

Agency	Contact Person(s)	Email
Jawonio <u>Vocational Services New City Jawonio</u>	Courtney Burnham	<u>Courtney.Burnham@jawonio.org</u>

CSV Agency Contacts

Agency	Contact Person(s)	Email
AHRC NYC www.ahrcnyc.org	Francklin Morose Edie Weber Wilson Perrin	Francklin.Morose@ahrcnyc.org Edie.Weber@ahrcnyc.org WPerrin@goodwillny.org JanitorialTraining@GoodwillNY.org
FREE www.familyres.org	John Gallagher	Jgallagher@familyres.org CommunityServicesIntake@FamilyRes.org

Life Plan Section V

Includes OPWDD state-paid services, other Medicaid services not authorized by OPWDD, health care providers, natural supports, and community resources.

Examples related to employment services:

- ACCES-VR services (Supported Employment, Assessments, Benefits Advisement, Assistive Technology, Driver Rehabilitation, Post-Secondary Education Coaching, etc.)
- ETP Wages are 100% OPWDD state-funded. (ETP services are funded by HCBS Waiver OPWDD SEMP and must be listed in Life Plan Section IV)

Telehealth and Employment

(SEMP, Prevocational, and Pathway to Employment)

The requirements of [21-ADM-03R](#) apply when a person (or provider on behalf of a person) notifies the Care Manager they would like to use remote technology for teaching or training habilitative services delivered directly to them.

- The Care Manager evaluates the use of technology to assure that remote delivery of services for the person is appropriate and collaboration with the provider has occurred.
- Care Managers will update the Life Plan accordingly.
- Service providers will reference remote service delivery as needed in the Staff Action Plan.

➤ [End of the Appendix K Coverage and ADM Revisions Presentation Q & A | Office for People With Developmental Disabilities \(ny.gov\)](#)

What Service is Best for Thomas?

Thomas just finished Pathway to Employment and his Discovery Report/Employment Plan recommends that Thomas pursue employment working in outdoors lawn/maintenance work. ACCES-VR recommended that Thomas' pursue employment funded by OPWDD, because he has higher support needs and limited work experience.

What would be the next steps?

- 1) Complete an ***Employment Training Program (ETP)*** application.
- 2) If the ETP application is approved, Care Manager would submit a SART for ***OPWDD Intensive SEMP***. Once approved, the provider agency can enroll Thomas in SEMP.
- 3) Once ETP and SEMP services have started, make sure that the job developer is utilizing the Discovery/Job Development Plan to direct the job development.

What Service is Best for Kara?

Kara has attended Site Based Prevoc (previously Workshop) for 15 years. She recently stated that she wants to work but only wants to cook in a restaurant. She has a lot of experience helping her mom cook but has not had paid work experience outside of production work.

What would be the next steps?

1. Discuss both ***Community Based Prevocational Services and Pathway to Employment*** and explain that there are various types and environments in food service and restaurants.
2. Kara can visit, explore and research food services possibilities, as well as other career options she may not have considered yet. Upon Kara's approval, staff would enroll Kara in the appropriate service.

What Service is Best for Astrid?

Astrid was employed as a laundromat attendant for 12 years 3 blocks from her home. The laundromat recently closed, and Astrid needed to pursue new employment. She needs to continue working to pay for her apartment and daughter's daycare, and Astrid wanted to work in retail either stocking or customer service.

Astrid was accepted by ACCES-VR and began working at Staples earning minimum wage stocking shelves and various customer service duties. Astrid has stabilized through ACCES-VR services and is currently enrolled in the OPWDD Waiver.

What would be the next steps?

- 1) The Care Manager can submit the SART for **OPWDD Extended SEMP** because Astrid has a job earning minimum wage in an integrated setting.
- 2) Astrid can be enrolled in OPWDD SEMP services 90 days after her ACCES-VR stabilization date.



Who May Want to Work?

Examples of Who May Want to Work?

- Tim has been enrolled in community based prevocational services for three years and has experienced many different community vocational experiences. He has excelled in food service and is interested in pursuing a part time job at his community diner.
- Lisa is graduating from school in June and had a variety of work-based learning opportunities while in school. She is motivated to work but does not go into the community independently. Her mother feels she needs someone with her at all times. Lisa is very nice and according to her teacher has good work habits and everyone loves her.
- Anthony has been attending community based prevocational services for one year. He keeps telling his care manager he wants a job with animals. He has very little experience in this field. His support staff feel he needs to continue to improve his social interactions when in the community.
- Heidi has held two previous jobs. She worked at a movie theater for over a year until it closed. She then held a job at her local grocery store stocking shelves and cleaning for three years until she had surgery last year. After her surgery, she was enrolled in community based prevocational services three days/week and volunteered the other two days/week with support from her community habilitation staff. She feels ready to get back out into the work force.

Spot the Spark

Instructions:

Identify when someone is oriented toward employment, recognize signs & discuss the appropriate next-steps to support the person.





**Example: Someone asks
“Do volunteers get paid?”
What stage are they in?**

- A. Exploring Interest (curious or considering work)
- B. Building Skills (enrolled in Prevocational services and/or Community Habilitation)
- C. Ready for paid Employment (or currently working)
- D. Facing barriers (lost job, struggling to find work)



Example: Someone is volunteering 3 days per week and asks about getting paid. What stage are they in?

- A. Exploring Interest (curious or considering work)
- B. Building Skills (enrolled in Prevocational services and/or Community Habilitation)
- C. Ready for paid Employment (or currently working)
- D. Facing barriers (lost job, struggling to find work)



Question 1: Someone in high school just completed a career exploration class and informs their Care Manager that they “want to work with animals”. They’re unsure what to do next. What stage are they in?

- A. Exploring Interest (curious or considering work)
- B. Building Skills (enrolled in Prevocational services and/or Community Habilitation)
- C. Ready for paid Employment (or currently working)
- D. Facing barriers (lost job, struggling to find work)



Answer 1: Someone in high school just completed a career exploration class and informs their Care Manager that they “want to work with animals”. They’re unsure what to do next. What stage are they in?

- A. Exploring Interest (curious or considering work)**
- B. Building Skills (enrolled in Prevoc or community readiness)**
- C. Ready for paid Employment (or currently working)**
- D. Facing barriers (lost job, struggling to find work)**



Question 2: Someone attends Day Hab, loves helping staff organize supplies and asks if they could get their own “work badge” like their cousin What stage are they in?

- A. Exploring Interest (curious or considering work)
- B. Building Skills (enrolled in Prevocational services and/or Community Habilitation)
- C. Ready for paid Employment (or currently working)
- D. Facing barriers (lost job, struggling to find work)



Answer 2: Someone attends Day Hab, loves helping staff organize supplies and asks if they could get their own “work badge” like their cousin What stage are they in?

- A. Exploring Interest (curious or considering work)**
- B. Building Skills (enrolled in Prevocational services and/or Community Habilitation)**
- C. Ready for paid Employment (or currently working)**
- D. Facing barriers (lost job, struggling to find work)**



**Question 3: Someone volunteers at the food pantry weekly. They show up on time, follow directions, and ask “Can I get paid for this instead?”
What stage are they in?**

- A. Exploring Interest (curious or considering work)
- B. Building Skills (enrolled in Prevocational services and/or Community Habilitation)
- C. Ready for paid employment (or currently working)
- D. Facing barriers (lost job, struggling to find work)



**Answer 3: Someone volunteers at the food pantry weekly. They show up on time, follow directions, and ask “Can I get paid for this instead?”
What stage are they in?**

- A. Exploring Interest (curious or considering work)
- B. Building Skills (enrolled in Prevocational services and/or Community Habilitation)
- C. Ready for paid employment (or currently working)**
- D. Facing barriers (lost job, struggling to find work)



Question 4: Someone just finished a year of Community Prevocational services where they practiced customer service skills. They still enjoy it but get overwhelmed in busy places and need prompting. What stage are they in?

- A. Exploring Interest (curious or considering work)
- B. Building Skills (enrolled in Prevocational services and/or Community Habilitation)
- C. Ready for paid employment (or currently working)
- D. Facing barriers (lost job, struggling to find work)



Answer 4: Someone just finished a year of Community Prevocational services where they practiced customer service skills. They still enjoy it but get overwhelmed in busy places and need prompting. What stage are they in?

- A. Exploring Interest (curious or considering work)
- B. Building Skills (enrolled in Prevocational services and/or Community Habilitation)**
- C. Ready for paid employment (or currently working)
- D. Facing barriers (lost job, struggling to find work)



Question 5: Someone is working in a restaurant through SEMP but was let go due to multiple absences. They want to try again but are unsure how. What stage are they in?

- A. Exploring Interest (curious or considering work)
- B. Building Skills (enrolled in Prevocational services and/or Community Habilitation)
- C. Ready for paid employment (or currently working)
- D. Facing barriers (lost job, struggling to find work)



Answer 5: Someone is working in a restaurant through SEMP but was let go due to multiple absences. They want to try again but are unsure how. What stage are they in?

- A. Exploring Interest (curious or considering work)
- B. Building Skills (enrolled in Prevocational services and/or Community Habilitation)
- C. Ready for paid employment (or currently working)
- D. Facing barriers (lost job, struggling to find work)**

Spot the Spark

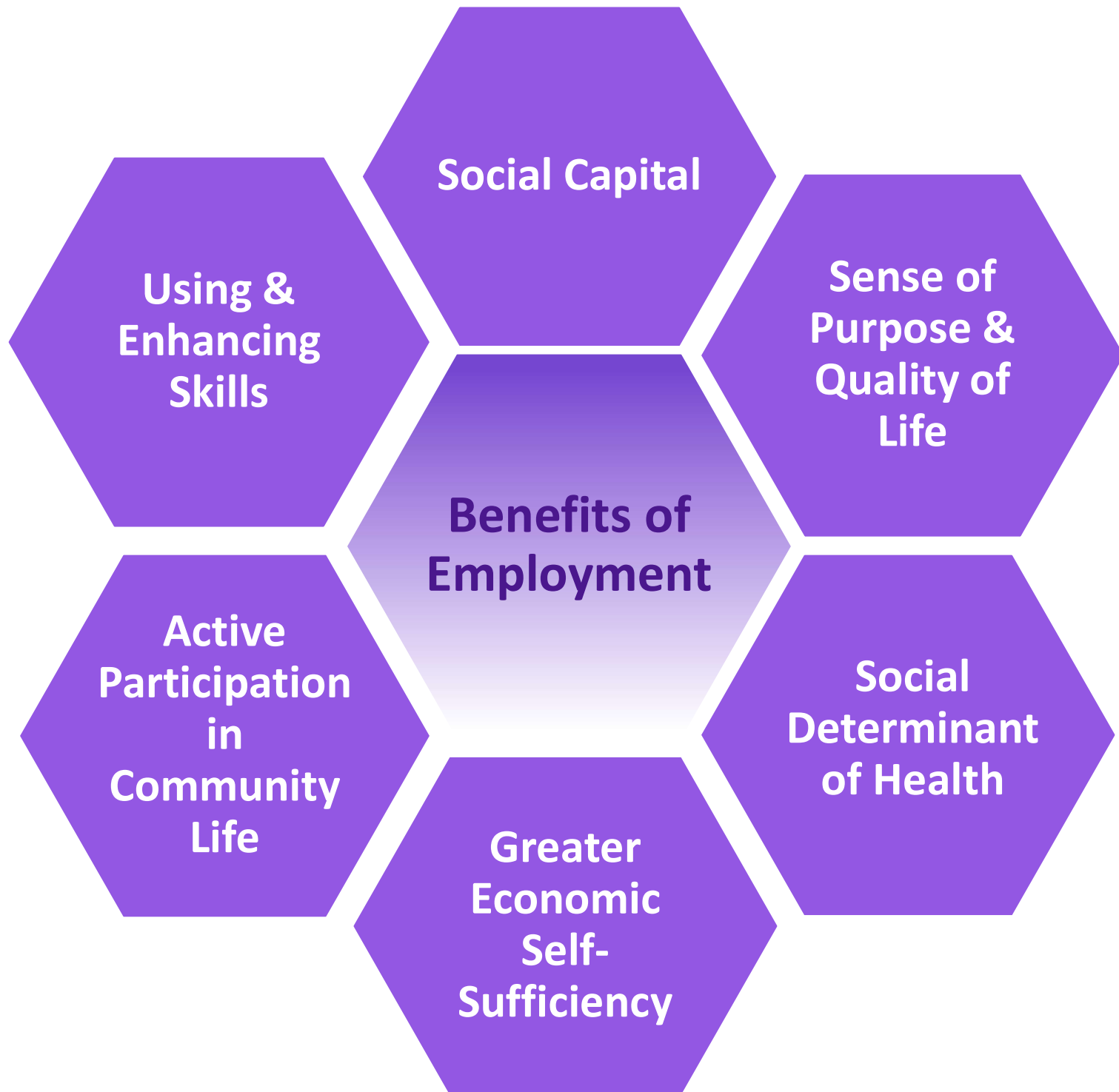
**Great! You have
spotted a lot of
sparks!**

In this next section we
will explore what
supports and services
are available to fan
those sparks into
employment flames!





Benefits of Employment





Authorization and Enrollment

Request for Services (RSA/SART)

Considerations

- Identify service needs with person and their team
- Determine if person requires a Front Door Authorization (RSA). If not, submit SART.
*(SEMP- If person has already been authorized to receive SEMP services AND there is record of the authorization, then it is not necessary to submit a SART).
- Submit RSA/SART properly along with justification and explain WHY person needs the support/service.
- A Life Plan or In-Process Life Plan submitted with the RSA/SART:
 - Describe the person's skills, abilities and reasonable accommodations as they relate to their home, work, relationships, health and educational profile.
 - Have at least one valued outcome/goal for each waiver service associated with the requested service(s).
 - Include safeguards and/or supports the person will need while receiving the requested service(s).
 - If provider is known, they should be indicated. If the provider is unknown, then indicate pending.

Request for Services (RSA/SART)

Considerations

- Front Door Facilitator (FDF) or Waiver Service Liaison (WSL) will return requests that are incomplete or require correction.
- Requests that are complete/correct will be presented to the Quality Review Team (QRT).
- Based on the outcome:
 - If authorized, Care Manager needs to inform provider (share NOD-09 and Life Plan/ Life Plan Addendum) and secure the service
 - If not authorized, Care Manager needs to discuss/pursue alternative service(s) recommended by QRT
 - Provide additional information if requested

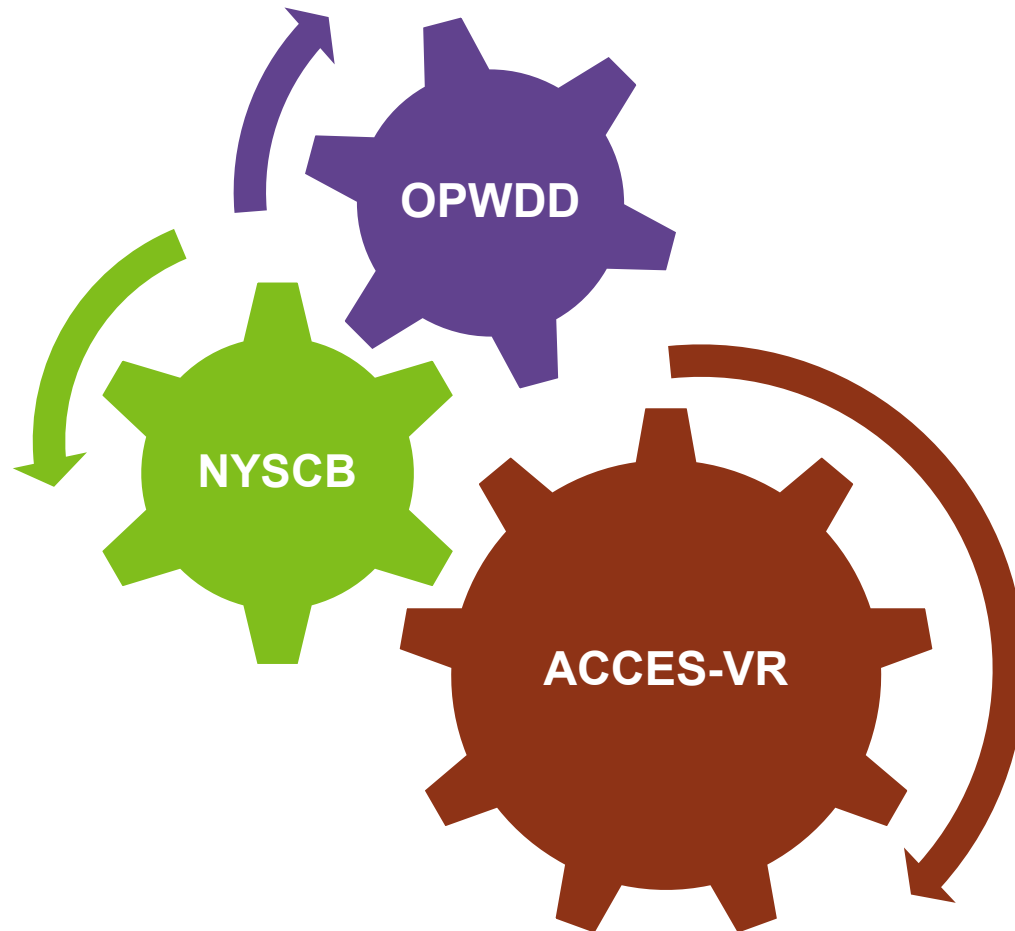
Service Amendment Request Tool (SART) and Central Office Approvals

- For the following services, the Care Manager will obtain the approval number from the provider agency to complete the SART:
 - Pathway to Employment extension, only when the person needs to be re-enrolled after one year or requires additional hours
 - Intensive SEMP services when the person is NOT employed or accepted into ETP



Navigating Service Systems

⁰² NYS Interagency Partnership to Coordinate Services and Leverage Resources



Adult Continuing Career and Education Services–Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR)

- ACCES-VR is another state agency that assists people with disabilities to achieve and maintain employment and to support independent living through training, education, rehabilitation and career development.
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors guide individuals through service programs they need to reach their employment goal.
- ACCES-VR services are time-limited and may be requested at any time.
- You do not need a denial from ACCES-VR to request pathway to employment, CBPV or ETP on behalf of a person seeking these intensive pre-employment services.

New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB)

- Is a State Agency dedicated to assisting NYS residents of all ages who are legally blind or deaf-blind.
- Among their service offerings is Vocational Rehabilitation Program which offers guidance & counseling to assist legally blind individuals in finding and retaining employment.
- To qualify for these services, you must be a NYS resident who is legally blind (defined as visual acuity 20/200 or less in the better eye with best correction or a field of vision 20 degrees or less in the better eye).
- Services available include Assessment & Planning, Training & Education, Job Placement Assistance, Adaptive Tech & Employer Engagement. There are also specialized services available for youth aged 14-22.

Coordinating Services and Leveraging Resources

- To date, most ACCES-VR or NYSCB and OPWDD services have been provided/funded in sequential order. However, based on recent federal guidance, some services may be provided/funded concurrently.
- Concurrent services must be complementary, projected to improve or enhance the person's employment outcome, and do not duplicate the primary activity of the service being provided by the other state agency.
- In situations where a service could be provided by multiple agencies, ACCES-VR or NYSCB and OPWDD will review requests for regulatory conformity.

NYS Interagency Partnership Goals



Increase coordinated efforts between our agencies to customize services and resources for successful employment outcomes and to build careers.



Improve transitions between agencies.



Implement best practices and new projects.

When Can You Request SEMP on Behalf of the Person?

(These scenarios do not include the Employment Training Program):

- After the individual has completed ACCES-VR and is employed, they may transition to OPWDD's Extended SEMP services 90 days after agreed upon stabilization date.
- If the individual already has a job and is requesting OPWDD SEMP, they can be enrolled into OPWDD Extended SEMP. ACCES-VR does not provide Extended services (Follow Along services) to OPWDD eligible individuals.
- If the individual does not have a job and is not enrolled in SEMP:
 - The SEMP agency requests an approval number for Intensive SEMP from OPWDD Central Office. This may or may not be approved based on criteria.
 - The provider agency shares the approval number with the Care Manager for the SART.

How Can Community Habilitation Help People Attain their Career Goals?

Community Habilitation may include activities such as:

- Relationship building and socially appropriate behaviors
- Exploring and participating in volunteer activities
- Community inclusion
- Learning about different jobs, visiting job sites and other experiences that are not long-term vocational commitments
- Enhancing communication and social skills
- Improving personal care and health through experiences focused on well being
- Facilitate and promote independence

Community Habilitation for People that are Employed

Once a person is employed, Community Habilitation activities on the job may include:

- Facilitate and promote independence
- Community Inclusion
- Relationship building and socially appropriate behaviors.

Important Reminders

- Community Habilitation services cannot be used for job coaching or job development related activities and cannot be provided at the same time as supported employment services (SEMP).
- It is important that staff and management are familiar with the allowable services and requirements for both Supported Employment and Community Habilitation in order to differentiate between service types and to assure staff meet the requirements of each service.

Access to Services

People cannot receive service unless the service is approved by the Regional Field Office and the provider agency has accepted and enrolled the person in their agency's program.

- Submit SART/RSA prior to service starting.
- Ensure CAS has been completed within 2 years. If not, request CAS prior to SART submission.
- If SART is returned, complete corrections and resubmit timely.
- Provide NOD-09 to provider agency upon approval of the service.

When in Doubt... Reach Out

Contact OPWDD if you have questions or require assistance.

Central Office

Employment and Meaningful Communities Activities (EMCA) Directory:

https://eleversity.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/ETP-EMCA-AT-A-GLANCE-EXTERNAL-9.25_adj.pdf

Technical Assistance Mailbox:

employment.vocational.services@opwdd.ny.gov

Regional Field Office

Waiver Lead, Waiver Service Liaison or Employment Coordinator

Self-Direction

- Determine whether the person is selecting Direct Provider Purchased SEMP or Self-Hired SEMP.
- Once the type of SEMP and provider is identified, ensure the person's budget is sufficient to purchase SEMP.
- Ask how long it will take to amend the person's budget and plan accordingly.
- The person's budget needs to be established before they can begin receiving SEMP.

Public Benefits Considerations

- Does the person receive SSI/SSDI, Medicaid, Medicare and/or other public benefits?
- What other income or assets does the person have?
- What would be the impact of wages on public benefits?
- What employment-related, financial incentives may be available (e.g. Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE), Plan for Achieving Self Sufficiency (PASS), subsidies, etc.)?
- Who will notify the public agencies about wages, submit pay stubs (as required) and coordinate overall finances with the person?
- What resources are available for advice and information?

New York State Toll-Free Work Incentives Hotline Numbers

1 (888) 224-3272 Voice and 1 (877) 671-6844 TDD

SSA Publication 2023 Red Book, [The Red Book](#) / [What's New in 2025](#)

SLMS TRAINING

BENEFITS AND ENTITLEMENT

- OPWDD's Revenue Support Field Operations and Offices offer Benefits and Entitlements and Personal Allowance trainings. All courses are offered via WebEx and available for registration in SLMS. Benefits and Entitlements is comprised of four separate modules: Medicaid, Medicare, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security.
- Benefits and Entitlements SLMS Trainings; Care Coordination Training:
 - BE – Medicaid: search OPWDD-BE-MA.
 - BE – Medicare: search OPWDD-BE-MCR.
 - BE – Supplemental Security Income: search OPWDD-BE-SSI.
 - BE – Social Security: search OPWDD-BE-SS.

Disability Resource Coordinators

DRCs are specialized staff that work to change local workforce systems to better serve people with disabilities.

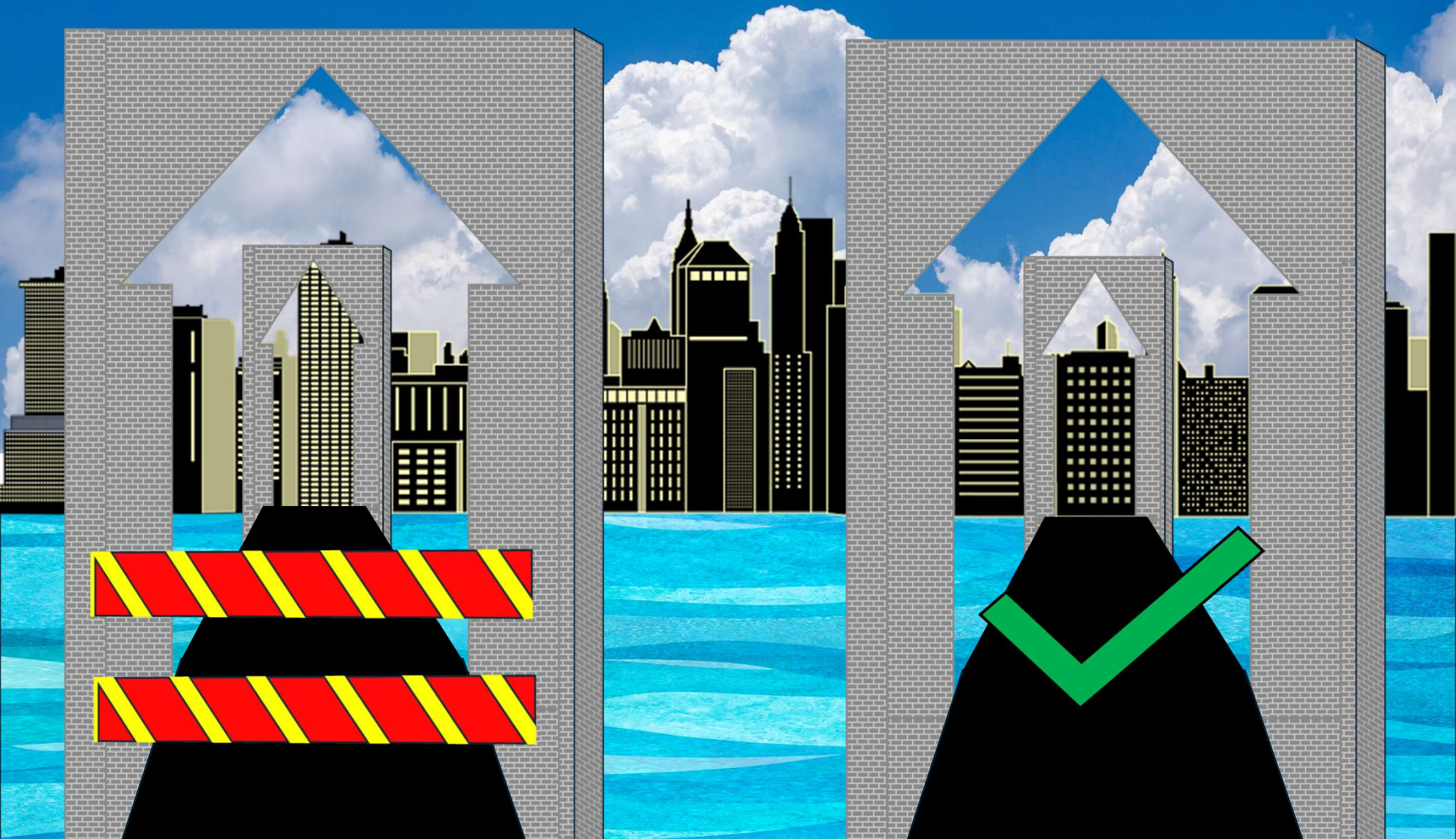
Among other things, DRCs:

- Obtain and maintain a credential to provide benefits advisement and work incentive counseling
- Facilitate an effective approach to leverage resources needed for individuals with disabilities to fully participate in existing career pathway programs and to achieve their employment and/or training goal(s).

For a list of DRCs working across NYS, visit:

[Career Services for Persons with Disabilities | Department of Labor](#)

BARRIERS & Bridges

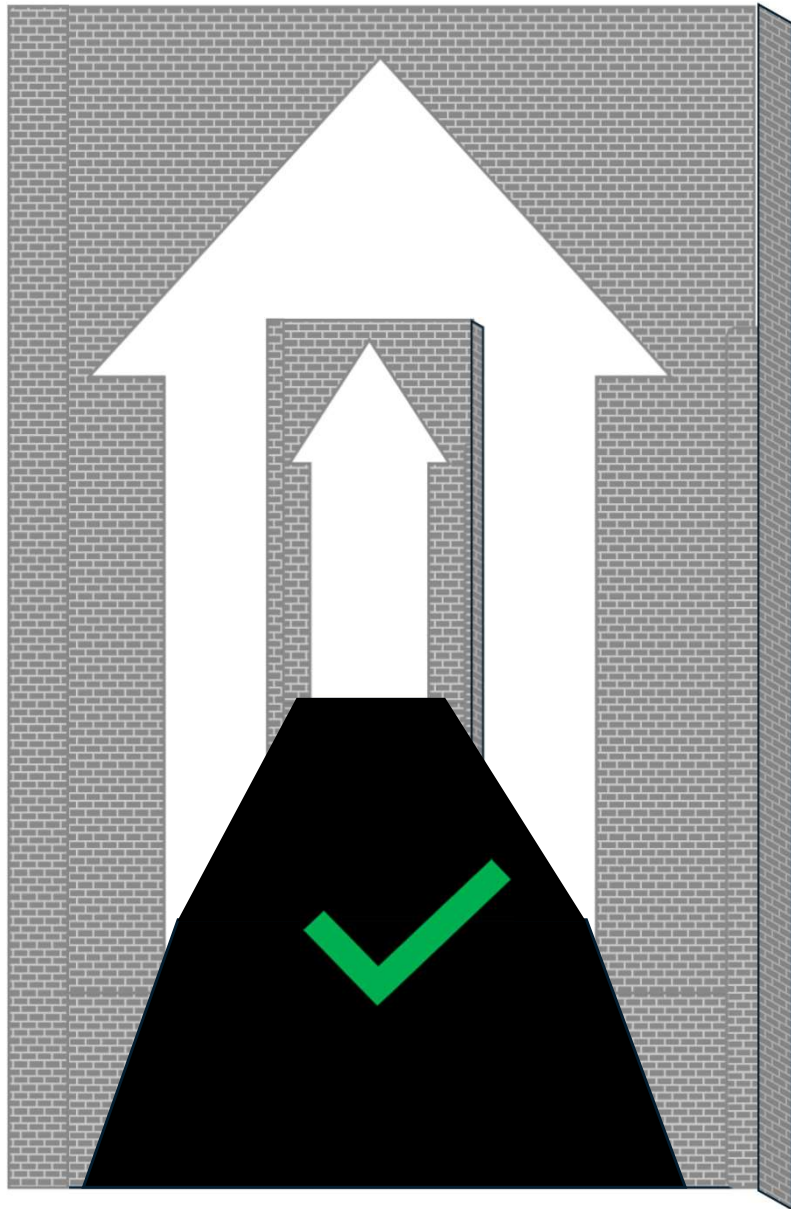




Instructions:

In this activity, we are going to tell you a social story.

Your job is to help identify barriers and foster bridges to employment outcomes.



A person you're supporting began a paid job several years ago, right out of high school, with support from ACCES-VR. However, they eventually lost interest & have not returned to paid employment since.

With the support of their Community Habilitation worker, they now volunteer weekly at the local animal shelter to stay active & engaged.

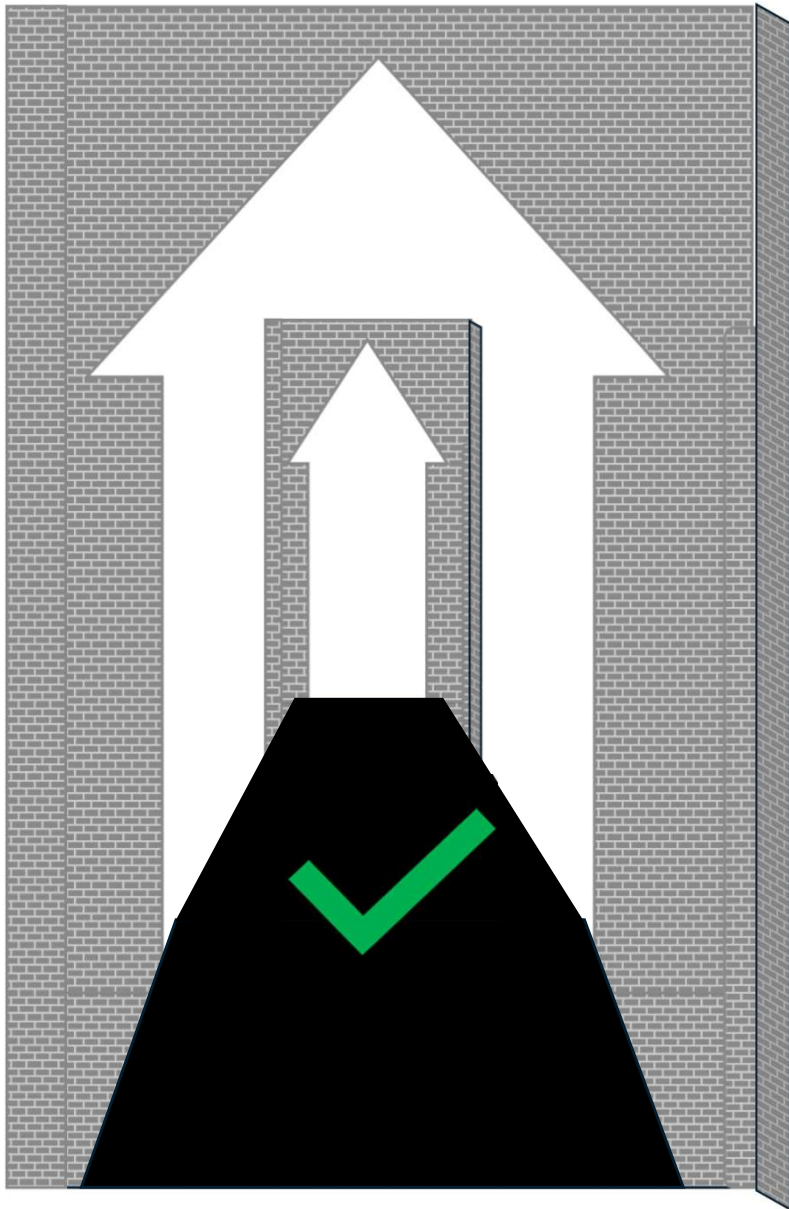
Exciting news, a paid position just opened at the shelter! The Shelter Coordinator reached out to you to ask whether the person you support is interested. You're so excited you call the person right away.



The person didn't seem as excited as you thought. They said they were worried about losing their benefits.

You've have encountered a Roadblock!

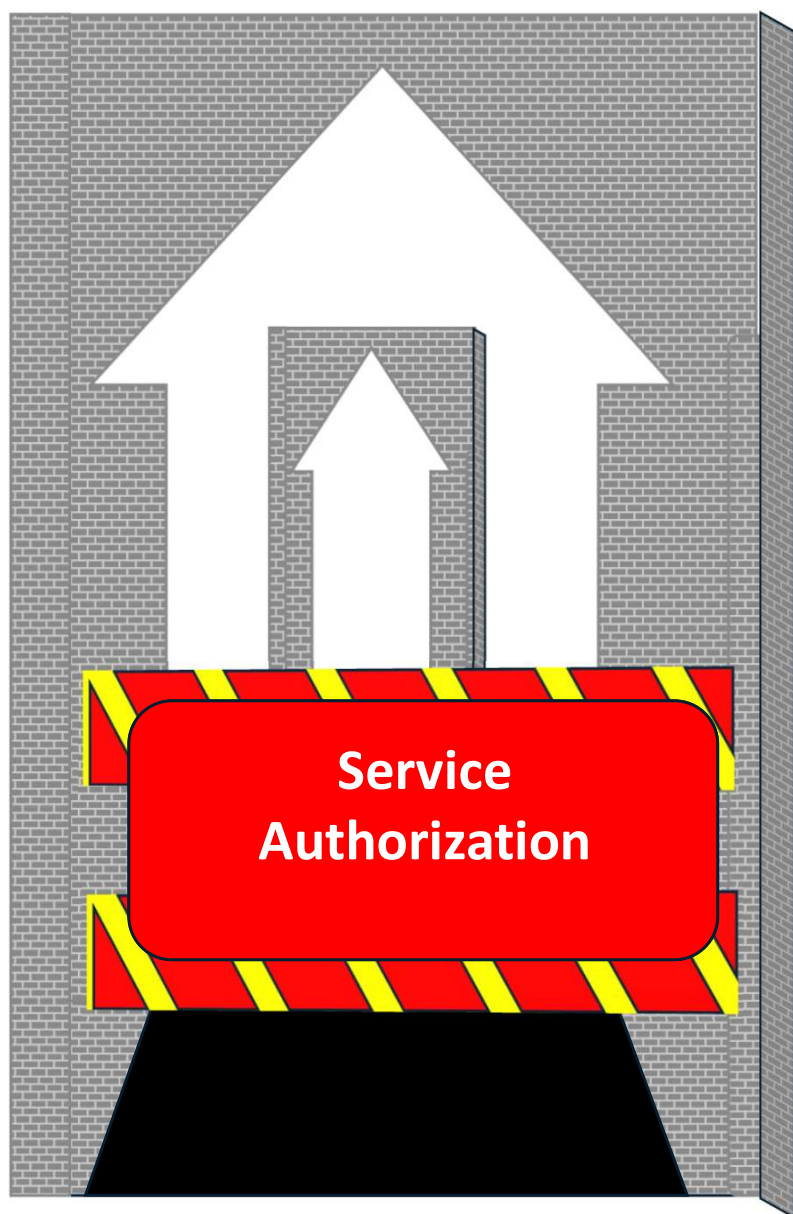
What should you do?



Review their current benefits & discuss potential impact to:

- Supplemental Security Income
- Housing Subsidies
- Medicaid (do they have any eligible spend-down expenses)
- IRWE/BWE Related Expenses

Okay, looks like you're getting somewhere....

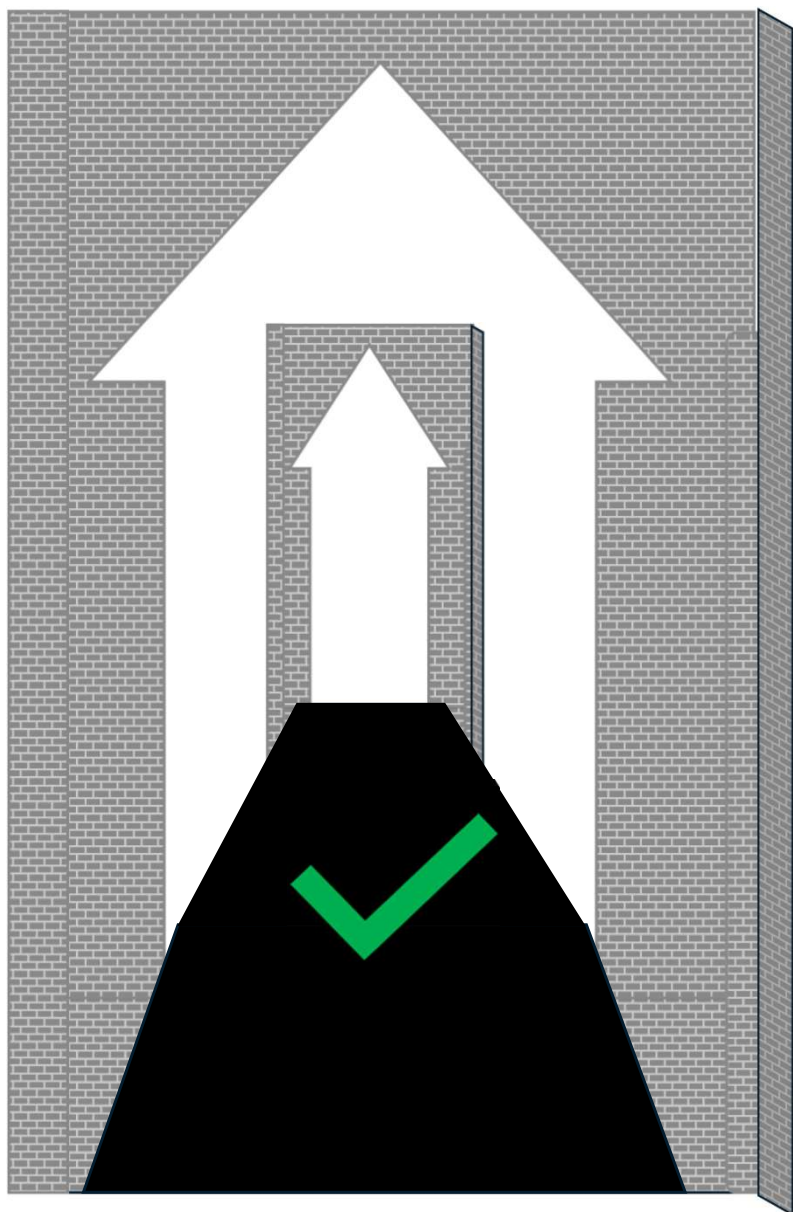


Now that you've explained how this could impact the person's finances, they are concerned they will need additional job-related supports.

They ask if Community Habilitation can help, but this isn't an appropriate solution.

Another Roadblock!

What should you do?



Request Authorization for SEMP Services:

Since the person already receives Community Habilitation, they are Waiver Enrolled.

You Check the CAS and it has been completed in the past 2 years.

You receive a potential “start date” from the employer for the SART justification.

You complete and submit a SART for SEMP Extended Services

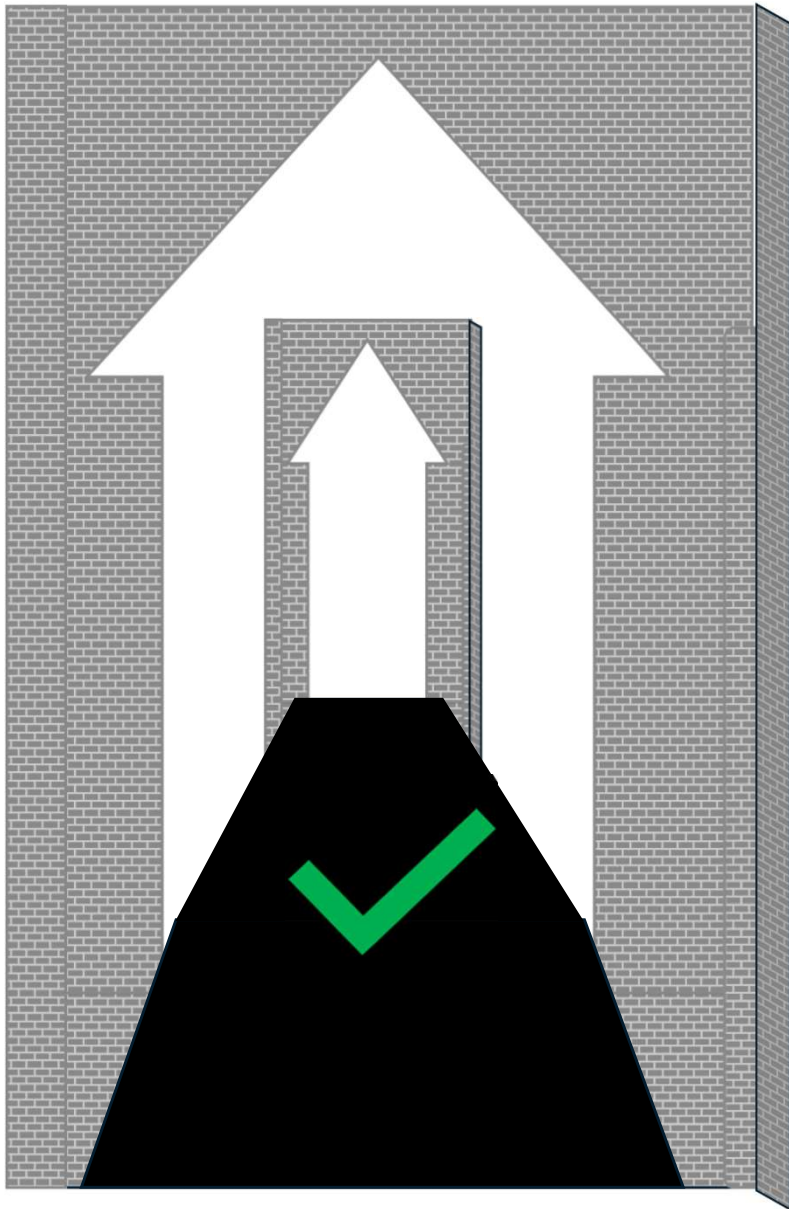
Okay, now you’re gaining momentum....



The person doesn't remember
when their ACCES-VR case closed &
it's not clear in their file.

Another Roadblock!

What should you do?

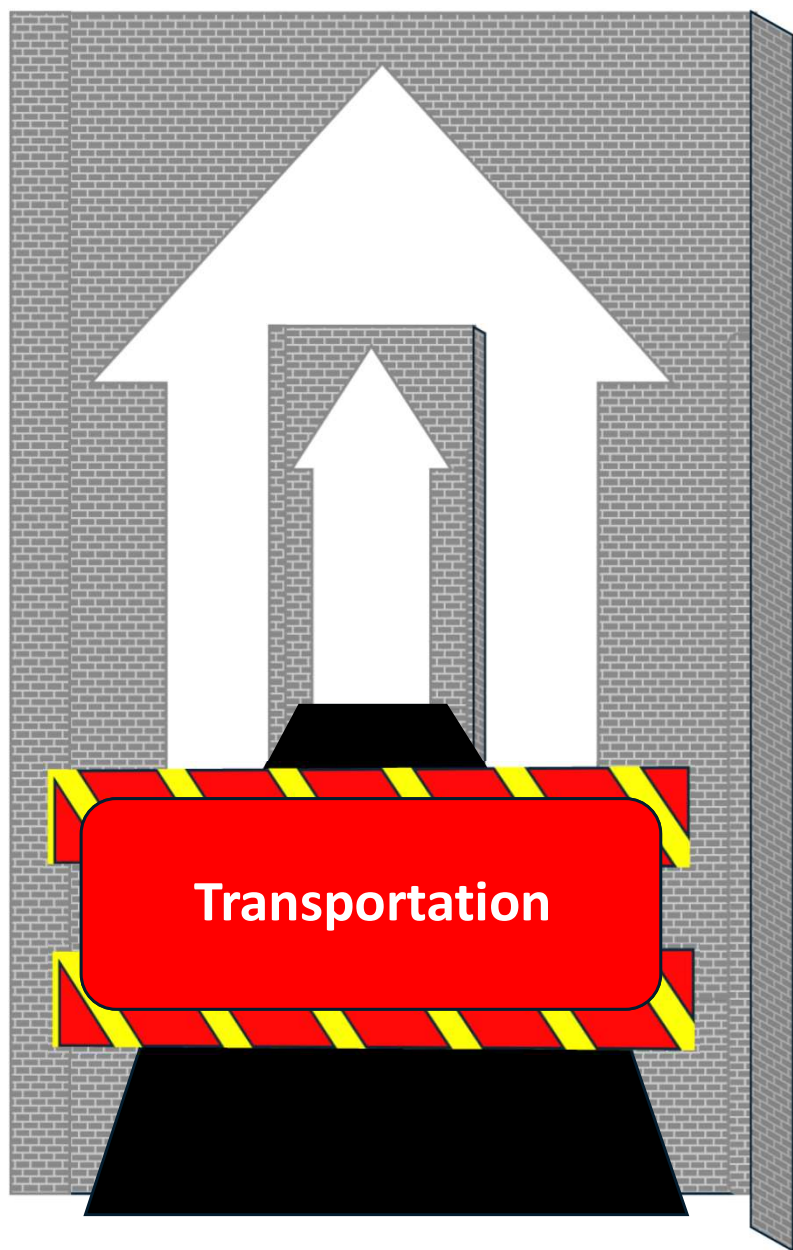


Follow up:

Check documentation on file for information regarding transition planning or people involved in that process.

***You do not need a denial from ACCES-VR to obtain OPWDD Extended SEMP.** They have a job, so are eligible for SEMP Extended through OPWDD.

Another step in the right direction....

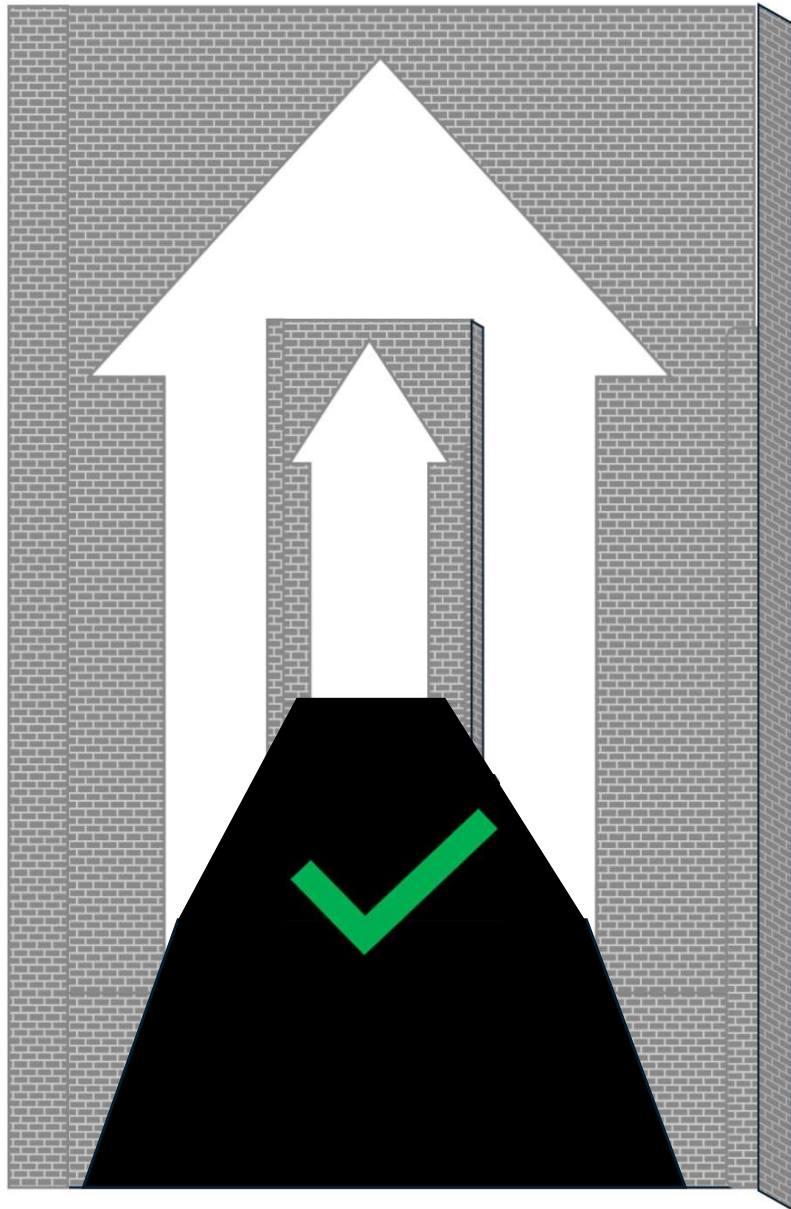


The person shares that they rely on Community Habilitation staff to get them to and from the shelter to volunteer. With Supported Employment (SEMP) they won't have that support.

Transportation is a concern

Another Roadblock!

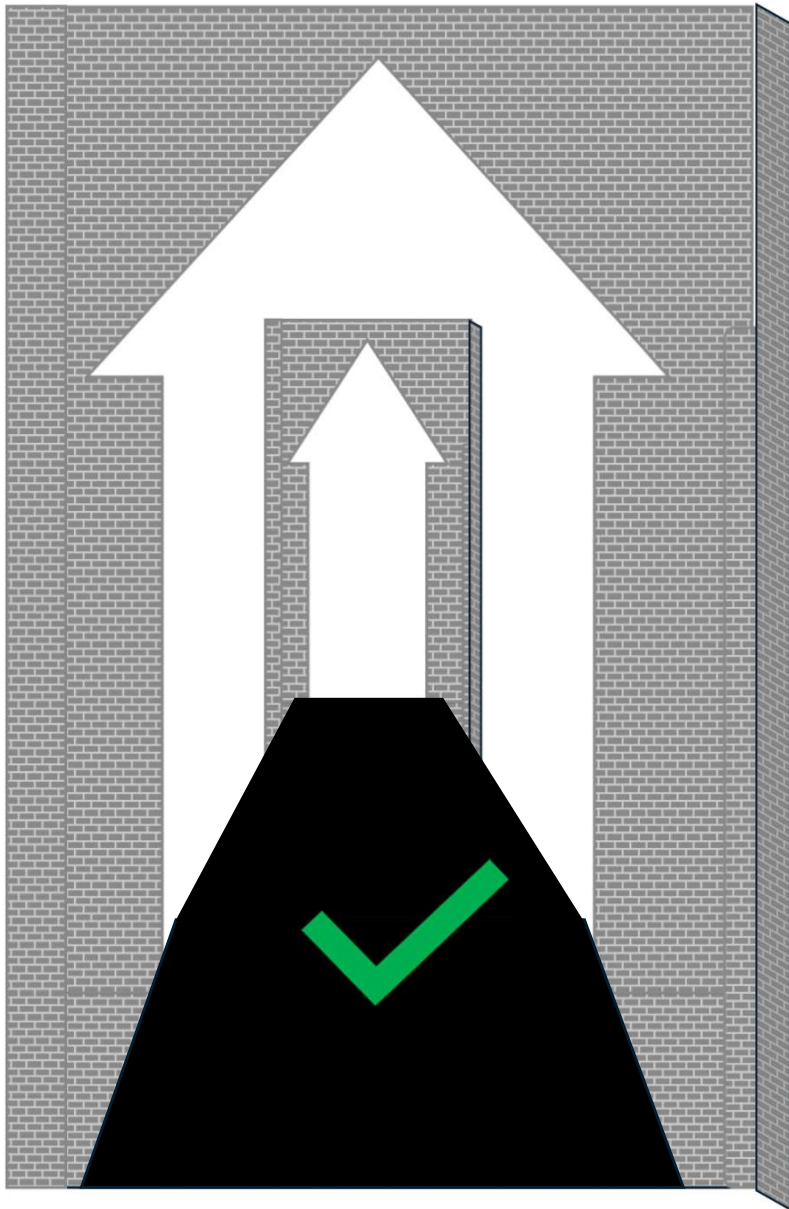
What should you do?



Adjust goals & work with available providers:

You offer transportation related resources to the person and their Community Habilitation worker.

Now that you've problem solved all that, the person is excited for this opportunity. You have broken down barriers, built bridges & are well on your way to turning an employment spark into a full-blown employment flame!



The person you're supporting has been working in competitive integrated employment for several years. His parents wonder how he will ever afford to live independently.

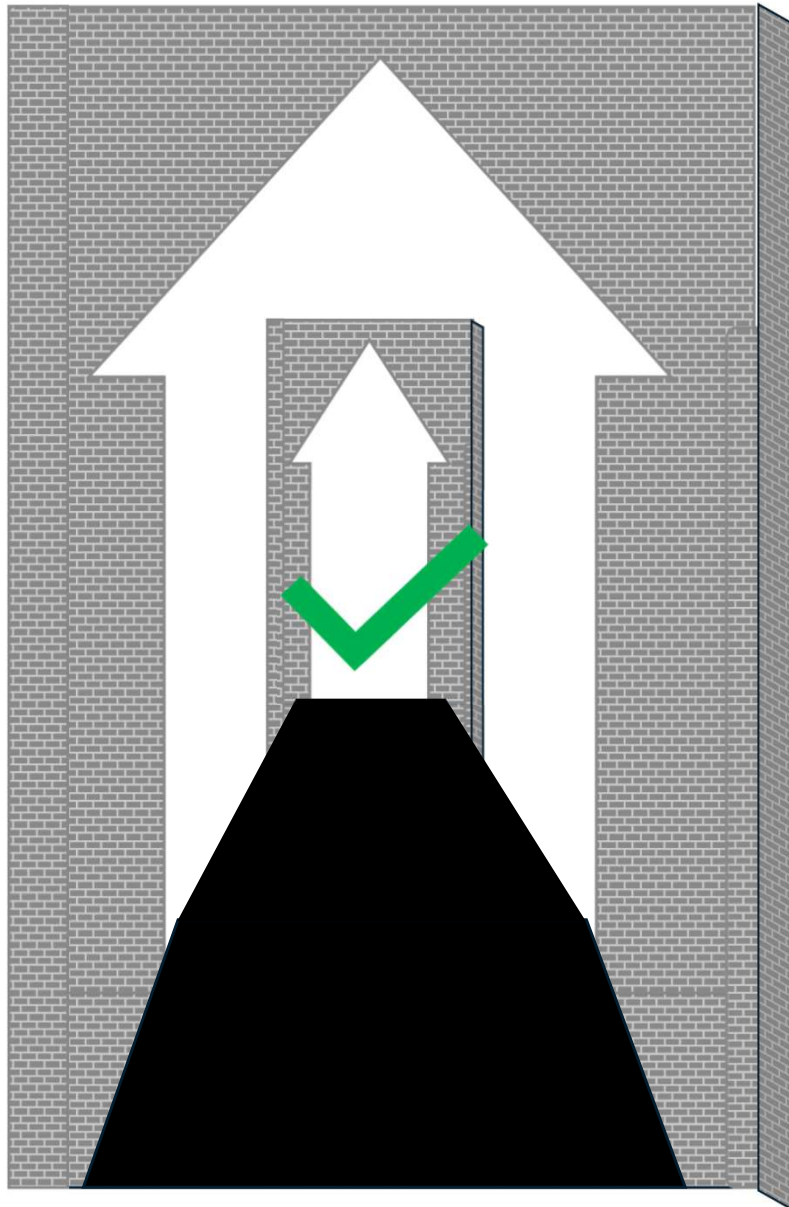
They question how he will ever get ahead financially when higher earnings lead to lower SSI payments. Since his take-home income remains modest & inconsistent, they're unsure if employment is truly in his best interest.



The person and their family are expressing concerns with continued paid employment...

There is a Roadblock on the horizon...

What should you do?



Review their current benefits & discuss potential outcomes:

Explain SSI:

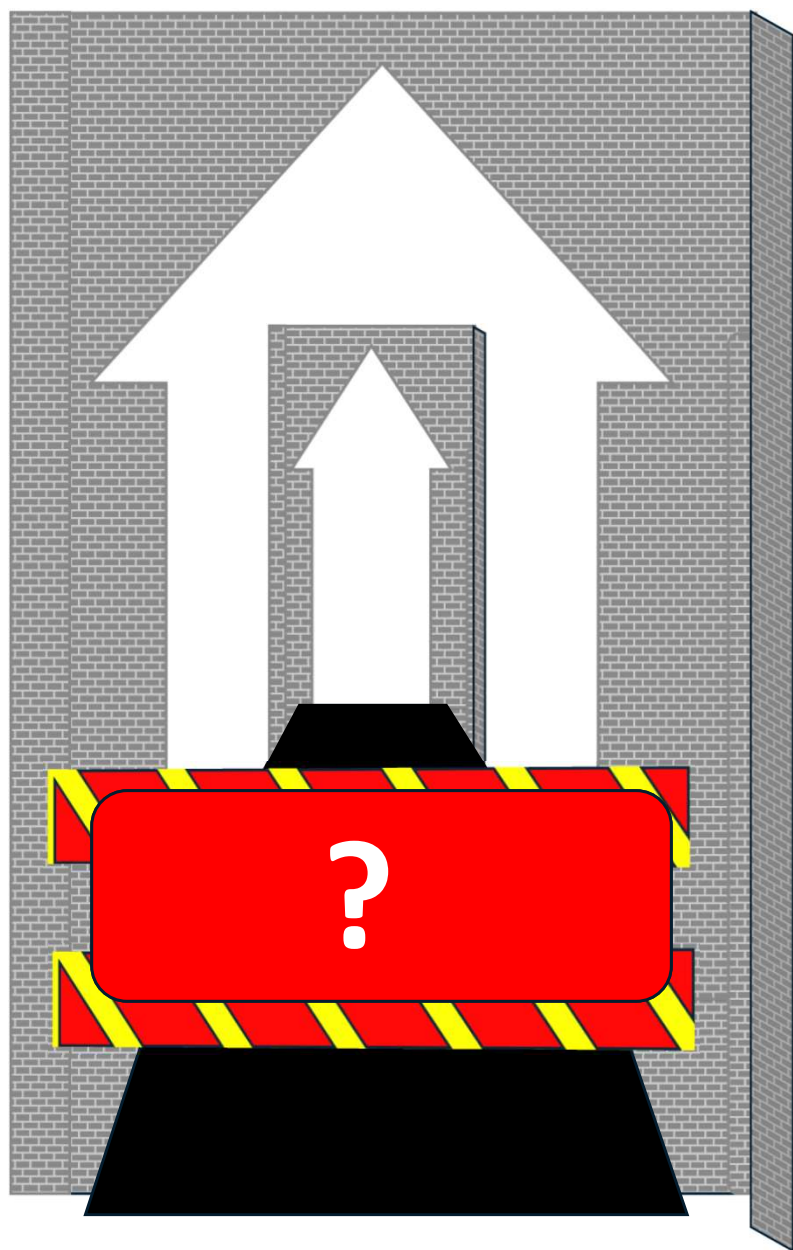
- Supplements up to Federal Poverty Guideline Earned Income Exclusion
- Student Earned Income Exclusion (if under 22 and a student)
- 1619b protections

Discuss Financial Planning Tools/Support Services:

- ABLE Accounts
- Special Needs Trusts
- Housing Subsidies
- HEAP/SNAP
- Certain Self Direction Reimbursements

***** Connect them with the Disability Resource Coordinator or a local Benefits Counselor to review their benefits.

Still employed...



Marion has been enrolled in Community Based Prevocational Services. Marion's group helps manage the mailroom at the provider agency, sorting incoming & outgoing mail, restocking office supplies & assisting with inter-office delivery throughout the campus.

Marion takes a lot of pride in completing familiar tasks & enjoys the structure of this routine.

While Marion enjoys what they do, they have no interest in moving toward paid employment, worrying competitive employment would be "too stressful" or "too fast".

What barrier is Marion experiencing?



Marion may be experiencing motivational or self-esteem barriers.

What questions might we ask to see what is going on?



Let's say the barrier is motivation

Marion is happy and has no desire to make more money or change anything even though they can do so.

What should we do?

Type answers in the chat

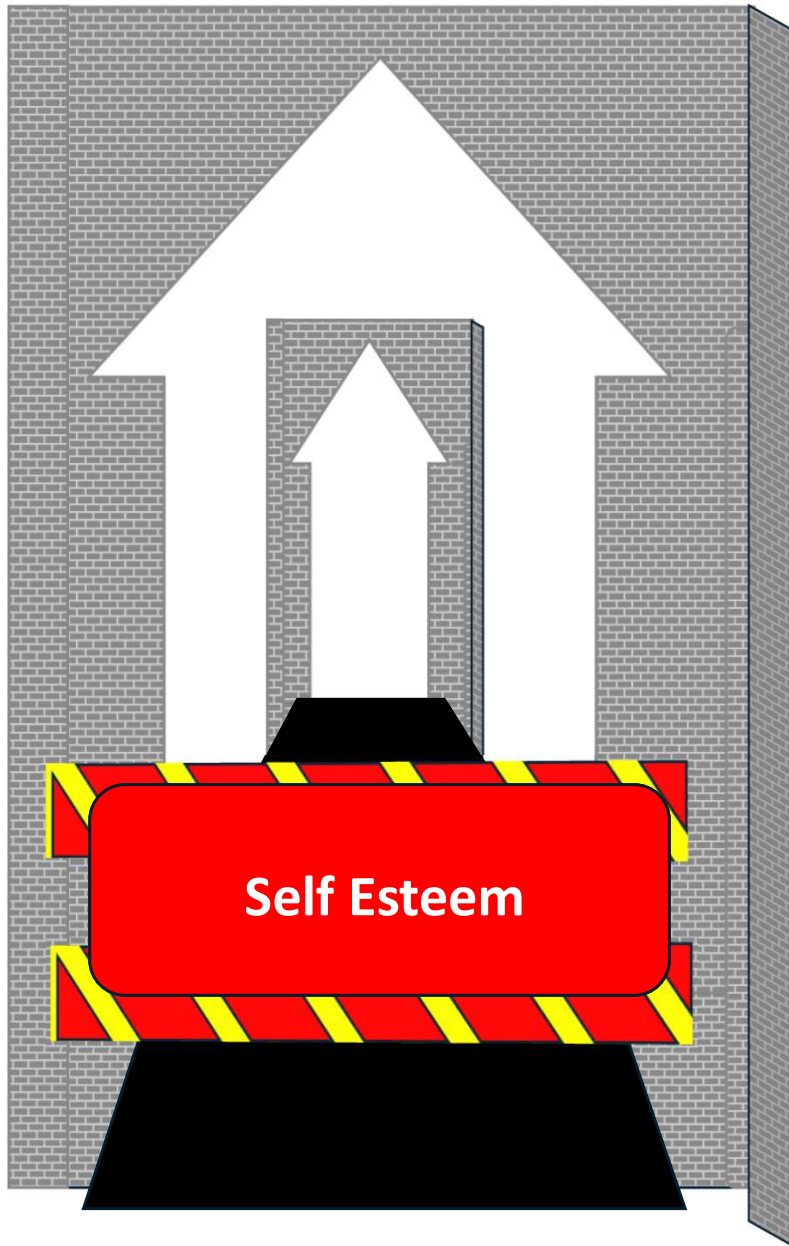
To overcome motivational barriers:

Skills:

Attitudes/Mindset:

Supports:

Environment:



Now let's say the barrier is self esteem

Marion is truly not confident they can keep up in paid employment.

What should we do?

Type answers in the chat

To overcome self-esteem barriers:

Skills:

Attitudes/Mindset:

Supports:

Environment:

Debrief:

It's important to identify barriers (e.g., anxiety, fear of benefit loss, limited confidence) to leverages bridges (e.g. familiar routines, existing strengths, layered services)

Your role is to respect people's choices while still providing opportunities to grow & explore work-readiness by providing the information or "scaffolding" needed to make informed choices.



Resources

OPWDD Website: www.opwdd.ny.gov

EMCA Technical Assistance Mailboxes:

employment.vocational.services@opwdd.ny.gov

day.community.services@opwdd.ny.gov

Eleversity Trainings: www.eleversity.org

CCO Questions: care.coordination@opwdd.ny.gov

Self-Direction Questions: self.direction.redesign@opwdd.ny.gov

EMCA Directory: [ETP-EMCA-AT-A-GLANCE-EXTERNAL-Eleversity-5.26.pdf](#)

Questions?

Thank you!!



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