

# Guide to Supported Employment



**Supported  
Employment**  
**It is for  
YOU!!**

Developed by the Statewide Quality Improvement Council in collaboration with the  
Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities

# Guide to Supported Employment

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## 1. Introduction

### Work Matters

Generally, people of working age who are employed are happier, healthier and have more friends than people who are not working. This is true for people with and without disabilities. Supported Employment is one of the ways to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities find a job and keep a job.

### People in Georgia Want to Work

In Georgia, as well as across the country, people with disabilities are speaking up because they want to work. Some people want full time work, some want part time, others want a better job or a better place to work.

When given the choice, most people with I/DD want to work.

Nearly half of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities receiving services in Georgia, who do not have a job, indicate they want to work in the community (47 percent). However, only 15 percent of people receiving services have integrated employment as a goal in his/her service plan. Some people who are working indicate they want to work somewhere else (24 percent). [National Core Indicators Georgia 2010-11 data] However, people are often not aware of the choices available to them or what is possible. Nationally, when given a real choice, nearly all indicate they want a job, but only 22-28% of people with I/DD are working in paid integrated community jobs.<sup>1</sup>

### Why We Created the Guide to Supported Employment

This Guide to Supported Employment was prepared by the Georgia Division of Developmental Disabilities Statewide Quality Improvement Council. It is intended to:

- Explain why employment is important
- Illustrate through real examples the difference work makes in people's lives
- Answer common questions about pay and health benefits when you work and have an intellectual and/or developmental disability, and
- Provide information and resources on Supported Employment programs in Georgia

## 2. Benefits to Employment

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<sup>1</sup> ICI, Butterworth study

There are many benefits to employment: health, social, and economic. As noted above, people with disabilities want to work but unfortunately are often not offered the choice. An individual's health is better when the individual works. People who work have a reason. Work can offer meaning to one's life, engagement with others for a shared purpose. Work can also create structure and it creates order as well. There is an economic bonus to the individual who works and potentially to the employer. The worker becomes a tax payer contributing to society. A person who works has an increased social network and more friends. Preliminary data show that individuals receiving Supported Employment have better outcomes in their lives (Delmarva 2012).

**Benefits to having a job:**

- health
- social
- economic

There are different options and resources out there for people to take advantage of, and the following sections describe each one of those options. People who need some supports and services to help get or maintain a job should be aware of resources available for them so they can choose which will best fit their needs. This Guide provides information about different resources and how employment supports and services can be received. For example, there are services which can be accessed through the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), and some services through other government agencies, like the Social Security Administration and Vocational Rehabilitation. There are different options and resources of which people can take advantage and the following sections describe each of those options.

### ***Matt's Employment Story***

*Matt is a Credit Support Specialist in the Credit Operations Department of SunTrust bank. He has an intellectual disability, a hearing impairment and a visual impairment, but these disabilities do not slow him down.*

*Matt absolutely LOVES to scan documents. He never smiles as big as when he has a large stack of records to be scanned. Matt is responsible for making sure documents are imaged in the database to be viewed online by*

*Portfolio Managers and Senior Credit Officers. He is a team player. Matt makes sure that documents received from Credit Analysts are prepared for filing and identified with a shelf number and date stamped. He also works on special projects, such as organizing credit files and creating inventory lists for the Retention Department.*



*Through partnership with SunTrust, a need for scanning documents was identified. In April 2004, Matt was hired for that role as a temporary worker through a staffing service. He withstood many layoffs at the bank and eventually became a SunTrust temporary employee. Now Matt is a permanent part-time employee and is thrilled with his position. His employer stated, "Matt exemplifies a teammate who truly loves his job, and is dedicated to providing excellent support to his teammates. He is diligent, accommodating and observant when it comes to his work at SunTrust."*

### **3. Overview of DBHDD and Home and Community Based Services**

#### **What is the Role of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD)?**

DBHDD provides treatment and support services to people with mental illnesses, addictive diseases, and to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. DBHDD serves people of all ages with more severe and likely to be long-term conditions, including people with forensic issues.

Services are provided across the state through contracts with 25 community service boards, boards of health, private service providers, and through state-operated regional hospitals.

DBHDD provides and funds a variety of community-based services, including:

- Treatment through providers such as with Community Service Boards
- Mobile Crisis services for adults, children and adolescents
- Services funded through Medicaid waivers for people with developmental & intellectual disabilities
- Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams that can visit those with persistent mental illness, on a daily basis if needed
- Group homes
- Crisis Stabilization Programs, and
- Many other services for all three of the major populations we serve.

#### **Vision**

Every person who participates in our services leads a satisfying, independent life with dignity and respect.

#### **Mission**

Provide and promote local accessibility and choice of services and programs for individuals, families and communities through partnerships, in order to create a sustainable, self-sufficient and resilient life in the community.

### **What is a Medicaid waiver?**

The Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver program is authorized in §1915(c) of the Social Security Act. This program allows the State of Georgia (through its qualified providers) to deliver an array of home and community-based services. These services make it easier for Medicaid beneficiaries to live in their communities and receive assistance such as finding and keeping a job. Georgia's DBHDD operates two Medicaid waiver programs known as the NOW and COMP waiver programs. These are described in more detail below.

### **What are the NOW/COMP waivers?**

The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) administers two Medicaid Home and Community Based (HCBS) waiver programs called NOW and COMP.

The NOW waiver (New Options Waiver) provides supports to people with developmental disabilities who live in their own home or with family members and require services with costs of \$25,000 or less a year.

The COMP waiver (Comprehensive Supports Waiver) provides supports to people who need a full range of intensive in-home or out-of-home services with costs over \$25,000 a year.

Some of the services under the NOW/COMP waivers include:

Community Access	Community Living Support
Community Residential Alternative	Respite
Environmental Accessibility Adaptations	Supported Employment
Specialized Medical Supplies & Equipment	

## **4. Qualifying for DBHDD Services is the First Step**

### **Qualifying for NOW/COMP Services:**

People must be Medicaid eligible to apply for NOW/COMP waiver services. If you receive SSI, you automatically have Medicaid. If you receive SSDI and Medicare rather than Medicaid, it is possible to become Medicaid eligible through a "Medical Assistance Only (MAO)" process. The Intake and Evaluation Team at your DBHDD Regional Office can help you begin this process. (See page 9 for Regional Office information.)

The NOW/COMP waiver program is for individuals who have intellectual disabilities and/or developmental disabilities. Children and adults with developmental disabilities such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, or neurological impairments must have severe impairments to be eligible for NOW/COMP waiver services. Both children and adults may receive services from these programs.

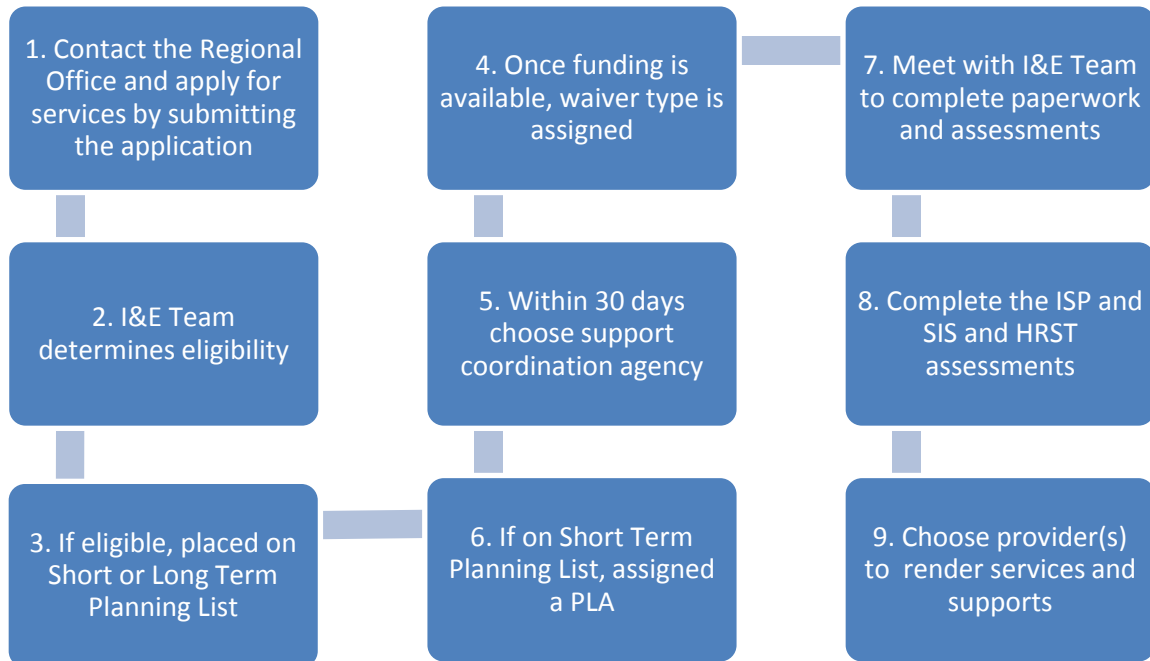
There are many people in Georgia who need services and the waiting list is long. Families and individuals should not wait until they need services to apply. Think ahead and apply now. This is especially true for students graduating from high school. Receiving NOW/COMP waiver services and utilizing the Supported Employment services can assist a young adult to be employed after high school.

If a person is not enrolled in NOW/COMP programs but would like to access Supported Employment through a Medicaid Waiver, the person needs to apply for a waiver. NOW/COMP waivers are administered by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. The six regional offices are responsible for the following:

- Intake and evaluation
- Preauthorization of services
- Utilization management
- Crisis resolution, and
- Quality management.

Individuals access the NOW/COMP waivers through the DBHDD Regional Offices. (See page 9 for Regional Office information.)

**How to apply for NOW/COMP waiver services (including supported employment):**



The steps to access any waiver services including Supported Employment are:

1. Contact the Intake and Evaluation Team (“I&E Team”) at the Regional Office to apply for services. The individual and family submit an application to the Regional I&E Team. Attaching a psychological evaluation along with the application can help speed the process. The person must also show proof of citizenship (birth certificate, passport, or permanent resident card.)
2. The I&E Team will evaluate the application to determine if the person is eligible for services.
3. If eligible, I&E staff will place the person on either a Long Term or a Short Term Planning List.

SHORT TERM PLANNING LIST	LONG TERM PLANNING LIST
The short term planning list is designed for people who need waiver services immediately or in the near future.	The long term planning list is designed for people needing waiver services at some point in the future.

- If the person is on the short term planning list, then a planning list administrator (“PLA”) will be assigned. The PLA will check in with the person and his/her family periodically to see if there are any changes in the person’s situation and also help the person look for other supports.
4. When funding becomes available, the Regional Office staff will send a letter stating the person has been approved for a Medicaid Waiver.

5. The person then has 30 days to choose which support coordination agency<sup>2</sup> he/she wants to work with. If the person does not make a selection, one will be assigned.
6. The I&E team meets with the person to complete the paperwork for the waiver. This includes completing the following:
  - a. a social history,
  - b. a psychological update,
  - c. a nursing assessment, and
  - d. other Medicaid required documents.

Ask to review these documents and make sure they thoroughly describe what assistance is needed.

7. The PLA will also complete the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS)<sup>3</sup> and the Health Risk Assessment Tool (HRST)<sup>4</sup> which will be used in determining the amount of funding the person can use for services.
8. Next, the PLA will assist a person with completing an Individual Support Plan ("ISP"). An ISP is the agreement between the person and DBHDD noting what services will be provided. The ISP must include what the person thinks is most important to happen in their life and how services will help the person make progress toward, or achieve, those important life experiences.
9. After completing the Individual Support Plan and the funding amount available to the person to use for services, the PLA will give the person and his/her family information about provider agencies licensed to provide assistance. The PLA will know all the service providers who offer Supported Employment services. Some providers have information about the assistance they provide posted to a website managed by DBHDD. Families and individuals can search this website to find a provider in their area: [www.georgiaddproviders.org](http://www.georgiaddproviders.org).

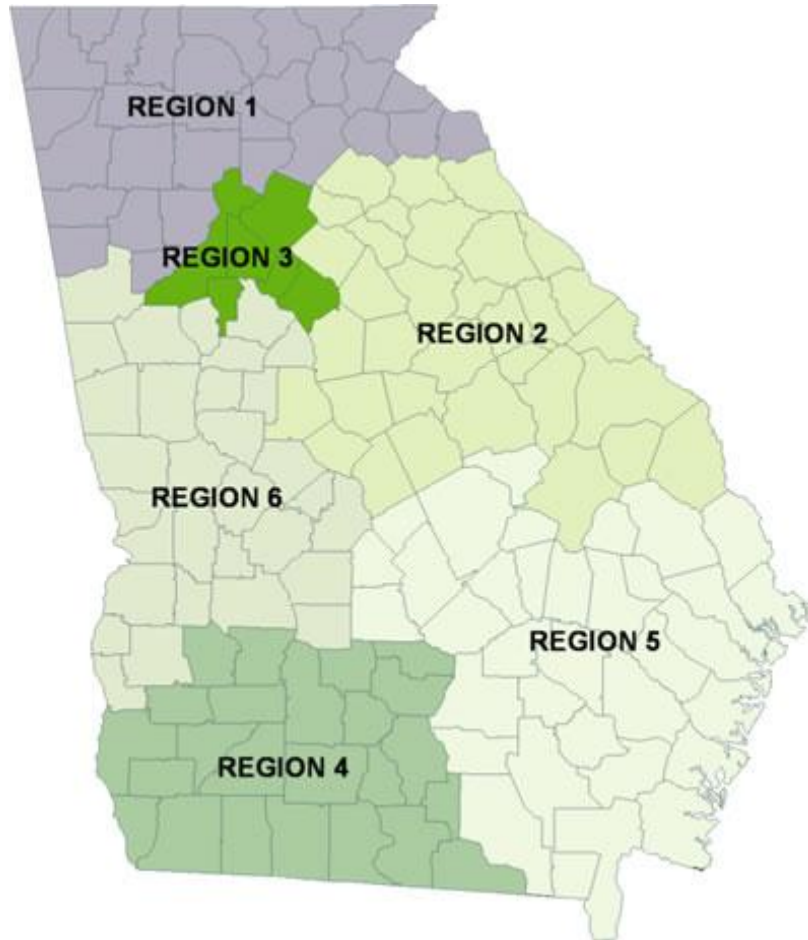
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<sup>2</sup> For more information related to Support Coordination, please go to website <http://dbhdd.georgia.gov/available-services>

<sup>3</sup> For more information related to the Supports Intensity Scale go to the website <http://www.siswebsite.org/>

<sup>4</sup> For more information related to the Health Risk Screening Tool, go to the website <http://www.mcgowanconsultants.com/index.php>

## Find and Contact Your Regional Office



REGION 1	
Contact Information	Counties
705 North Division Street Building 104 Rome, GA 30165 Phone: 706-802-5275 Toll free: 1-800-646-7721	Banks, Bartow, Catoosa, Chattooga, Cherokee, Cobb, Dade, Dawson, Douglas, Fanin, Floyd, Forsyth, Franklin, Gilmer, Gordon, Habersham, Hall, Haralson, Hart, Lumpkin, Murray, Paulding, Pickens, Polk, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, Walker, White, and Whitfield
REGION 2	
Contact Information	Counties
3405 Mike Padgett Highway Building 3 Augusta, GA 30906	Baldwin, Barrow, Bibb, Burke, Clarke, Columbia, Elbert, Emanuel, Glascock, Greene, Hancock, Jackson, Jasper,

Phone: 706-792-7733 Toll Free: 1-866-380-4835	Jefferson, Jenkins, Jones, Lincoln, Madison, McDuffie, Monroe, Morgan, Oconee, Oglethorpe, Putnam, Richmond, Screven, Taliaferro, Twiggs, Walton, Warren, Washington, Wilkes, and Wilkinson
<b>REGION 3</b>	
Contact Information	Counties
100 Crescent Centre Parkway Suite 900 Tucker, GA 30084 Phone: 770-414-3052	Clayton, DeKalb, Fulton, Gwinnett, Newton and Rockdale
<b>REGION 4</b>	
Contact Information	Counties
P.O. Box 1378/400 S. Pinetree Boulevard Thomasville, GA 31299/3792 Phone: 229-225-5099 Toll Free: 1-877-683-8557	Baker, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brooks, Calhoun, Colquitt, Cook, Decatur, Dougherty, Early, Echols, Grady, Irwin, Lanier, Lee, Lowndes, Miller, Mitchell, Seminole, Terrell, Thomas, Tift, Turner, and Worth
<b>REGION 5</b>	
Contact Information	Counties
1915 Eisenhower Drive Building 2 Savannah, GA 31406 Phone: 912-303-1670 Toll Free: 1-800-348-3503	Appling, Atkinson, Bacon, Bleckley, Brantley, Bryan, Bulloch, Camden, Candler, Charlton, Chatham, Clinch, Coffee, Dodge, Effingham, Evans, Glynn, Jeff Davis, Johnson, Laurens, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Montgomery, Pierce, Pulaski, Tattnall, Telfair, Toombs, Treutlen, Ware, Wayne, Wheeler and Wilcox
<b>REGION 6</b>	
Contact Information	Counties
P.O. Box 12435/3000 Schatulga Road Building 4 Columbus, GA 31907	Butts, Carroll, Chattahoochee, Clay, Coweta, Crawford, Crisp, Dooly, Fayette, Harris, Heard, Henry, Houston, Lamar,

Phone: 706-565-7835

Macon, Marion, Meriwether, Muscogee,  
Peach, Pike, Quitman, Randolph, Schley,  
Spalding, Stewart, Sumter, Talbot, Taylor,  
Troup, Upson and Webster

## 5. What is Supported Employment and How Does it Work?

### What is Supported Employment?

Supported Employment is a service that assists a person to obtain competitive work performed in an integrated work setting. Individuals are matched to jobs consistent with their strengths, resources, abilities, capabilities, and interests.

**Job Matching** = A job that meets the needs of the person and the employer



Individualized supports are provided to the person to learn and keep his/her job.

### What is Supported Employment within the NOW/COMP Waivers?

Supported Employment is a service to help people find a job in the community and maintain their employment at or above minimum wage. It can include:

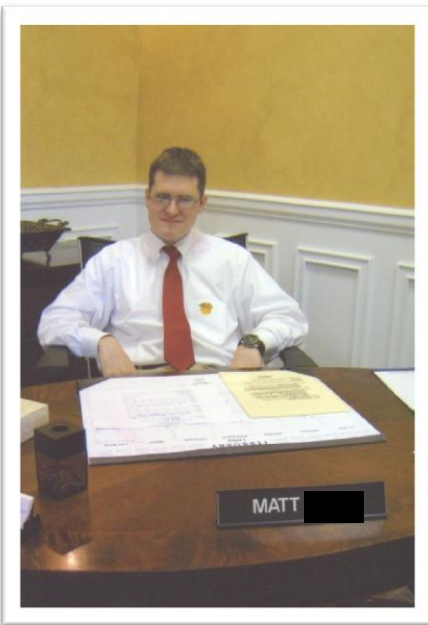
- Discovering Interests - Figuring out what kind of work you are interested in and what talents you have.
- Job Development – Creating or modifying a job to your interests and talents.
- Job Coaching – Initial help and guidance to do your job until the individual and employer are satisfied with assigned duties/work.
- Long Term Supports – Continuing help and guidance to keep your job even when you have had your job for a while.

- Career Development - Help to get the job you want or to plan advancing to a new position or next level of job.

If a person already has NOW/COMP waiver services, he/she can speak with the Support Coordinator about accessing Supported Employment through the waiver. The person can choose a Supported Employment waiver provider to explore job opportunities. The waiver funding under NOW/COMP provides supports to the person to seek employment in the community.

People currently using waiver services for Pre-Vocational services can instead use Supported Employment services. The same waiver that funds services in a day program or sheltered workshop can support a person to work at or above minimum wage.

### ***Matt P's Employment Story***



*Matt P. teamed up with a supported employment provider to help him find work at his Alma Mater. He was given a job in the lunchroom but after one day Matt and his career specialist knew this was not the job for him. Matt did complete the two- week trial period that he had been asked to do with the school.*

*Together they looked for work in the banking industry and created a job for Matt at a local bank. At the bank, Matt wears business attire, has his own desk, name tag and business cards. Some of his duties are greeting the customers, shredding, mail, and keeping copiers and fax machines filled with paper.*

*Matt has been with the bank for four years and has truly become a valuable employee. He has attended company trips, participated in parades and lunches with co-workers and is a member of the local Optimist Club. Matt continues to learn new tasks when the need arises. Through relationships at the bank, a group of guys meet twice a month for Guys Night Out at their homes. The local bank was bought by Certus and they continue to support Matt on the job site, and he just received his second raise. The day he got the job Matt said: "My dad has a banker for a son."*

### **Adding Supported Employment Services**

Individuals who participate in the New Options Waiver (NOW) or Comprehensive Waiver (COMP) can select supported employment services at any time. The process is simple and easy.

1. The person will meet with his/her support coordinator to discuss the details of supported employment services.
2. The person will request supported employment services be added to the Individual Support Plan (ISP), including the appropriate funding.
3. The person will choose a supported employment provider in his/her area or may choose to self-direct the service (please see participant-directed services in the waiver manuals)<sup>5</sup>.
4. Supported employment services are person-centered. Person-centered means that the supported employment service is specific and different for every person.

## **6. Transition from School to Work**

For individuals with disabilities, successful transitioning from school to adult life is possible with the thoughtful planning of the Individual Education Program (IEP) Team. Students with disabilities and their families are an integral part of that team. Other potential members of an IEP Team can be a Vocational Rehabilitation specialist, Supported Employment providers and a representative from your DBHDD Regional Office. The IEP Team should have a vision of employment for the student that is comparable to students of the same age who do not have a disability.

Setting goals that lead to successful outcomes in the area of employment is an important part of the IEP Team's job. Goals that lead to independence, self-advocacy and discovering interests can be important in a successful transition from school to employment and adult life.

### **What is Transition Planning?**

Transition planning includes preparing a student for life after high school. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 04) specifies that students' IEPs address transition services that students may need in order to move from school to post-school opportunities. In Georgia, students, with their IEP team members, formally begin planning for their transition before 9th grade or at the age of 16, whichever comes first. However, it is never too early to start planning. The team should create realistic goals, specific timelines and clear responsibilities for all members of the team.

### **Who Participates in Transition Planning?**

The student is the most important member of the IEP team. Other members could include:

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<sup>5</sup> Waiver manuals can be accessed using the following web address <http://dbhdd.org/files/Provider-Manual-DD.pdf>

- Family members including parent or guardian
- The school principal or designee
- The student's teachers
- Career/Vocational teachers
- Other school staff, such as guidance counselor, psychologist
- Adult service agency representatives such as those below:

Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist

Supported Employment Provider

A representative from the DBHDD Regional Office

The student is the most important member of the IEP team.

### **What is the Transition Plan?**

The Transition Plan is part of the student's IEP and may include the following:

- Post-Secondary Goals after graduation in the areas of Education and Training, Employment, and Daily Living
- Interests, strengths, and career goal (Transition Assessment)
- Yearly Transition IEP Goals to enable the student to reach Post-Secondary Outcome Goals
- Activities to help reach Transition IEP goals
- School and post-school services that can help the student reach goals
- Notice of rights a year before reaching age 18 (Age of Majority)

### **How Can Students Prepare for their Transition?**

- Attend and speak up at their IEP meetings
- Share their dreams and goals
- Understand and be able to share their strengths and weaknesses
- Work to achieve their goals by using the resources available.

### **Resources for School to Work Transition Planning**

Georgia Department of Education - The Georgia Department of Education, Special Education Services and Supports has a Transition Tool Box that includes a transition manual. This resource can be accessed through the GaDOE website –

[www.doe.k12.ga.us](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us) (in search box type “transition manual”). This manual contains information such as:

- Transition Timelines
- Post School Employment Options
- Transition Planning (includes a checklist)
- Family Resources
- Appendix

Parent Training Institute - Parent to Parent of Georgia (is our state’s Parent Training Institute. Visit the website at: [www.p2pga.org](http://www.p2pga.org)). Parent to Parent’s Roadmap to Success is an interactive map that allows you to navigate through key topics stops on your journey through life, such as. Topics include Education, Early Childhood, Parent & Family Support and Transitions. Each stop on this map will provide you with useful information.

### ***Chris’s Employment Story***

*Chris C. is a very social young man with Down Syndrome who graduated in 2007 from Roswell’s Centennial High School. Through high school Chris was active with his peers participating in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes Club, the Homecoming Court and other typical high school offerings. Because of these opportunities, Christopher developed many of the same goals as his peers, including wanting to go on to college and then work.*

*During his annual IEP, Chris’ transition plan included goals that would lead to working upon transitioning from high school. Chris and his family asked that the supported employment provider attend his transition meeting to be introduced to Chris’ interests and strengths. As part of his transition plan, Chris’ mother applied for a Medicaid waiver and he was put on the waiting list.*

*Upon returning home from his college experience, Chris and his mother began making decisions on next steps. Because Chris’ mother works out of the home, she advocated for a day support program with very limited work because that way Chris would be out of the home for a longer day. But she quickly realized that although Chris was safe, he was not happy! After a few months, Chris and his mother changed to a supported employment provider. After searching for a while, Chris got his first job with Lowes! The job coach helped to make the necessary accommodations and supports for a successful experience. The pride he showed when he received his first pay check was priceless!*

## 7. Supported Employment- Myths/Facts

Employment helps people to build their self-esteem and pride, helps them become a more integral part of the community, helps people become more self-sufficient and helps the economy.

MYTH	FACT
<p>If someone with disabilities goes to work, he/she will lose his/her SSI check.</p> <p>If I work will I lose my medical benefits? It can feel devastating to be willing and ready to work but have to choose between work and medical care.</p> <p>If a worker's SSA checks stop while working then he or she will have to reapply for benefits all over again. It will take forever to be approved for benefits. As a result, people should not try to work.</p>	<p>The truth is an individual with a disability can begin and continue working and maintain benefits. Everyone's benefits are different and in order to determine how or if your benefits will be affected, contact the Social Security Work Incentives Planning and Assistance program that serves your county in Georgia. These programs are staffed by Community Work Incentive Coordinators who can come to your community to work with you and other stakeholders to provide training and education on how social security work incentives can provide a safety net as you consider employment options. (See Section 10 in this guide for more information on this program.)</p>
<p>Employees with disabilities are more likely to have accidents on the job than employees without disabilities.</p>	<p>Safety records from DuPont study "Equal to the Task," (Second Du Pont Survey, 1981) showed both groups were identical.</p>
<p>Employees with disabilities are unreliable.</p>	<p>Employees with disabilities do <u>not</u> have a higher absentee rate than employees without disabilities. Studies completed by DuPont show employees with disabilities are not absent any more than employees without disabilities.</p>
<p>Hiring employees with disabilities increases workers compensation insurance rates.</p>	<p>Insurance rates are based on the relative hazards of the business accident experience, not on whether workers have disabilities.</p>

Most workers with disabilities require no special accommodations. Costs for those who do are minimal or much lower than many employers believe. Studies show that 15%

cost nothing, 51% cost between \$1-\$500, 12% cost \$501-\$1000, and 22% cost more than \$1000.

## **8. Customized Employment**

Customized Employment is a supported employment strategy used by job developers that provides people with disabilities, and other applicants with difficulty securing employment, with an alternative to traditional, competitive jobs. According to a new definition used by the U.S. Department of Labor, Customized Employment means:

*Individualizing the employment relationship between employees and employers in ways that meet the needs of both. It is based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs, and interests of the person with a disability, and is also designed to meet the specific needs of the employer. (Federal Register, June 26, 2002, Vol. 67. No. 123 pp. 43154 - 43149)*

Customized Employment relies on a negotiated, rather than competitive, approach with an employer. Job developers assist people with disabilities to develop proposals for employers that meet the unmet needs of the employer and play to the strengths of the job seeker.

This approach to employment offers the promise of welcoming all persons with disabilities who wish to work into the workforce, and into a job that fits their needs and interests. It also defines the critical role of vocational rehabilitation services to support both the individual with a disability and the workforce to make employment a viable option for persons once thought to be unemployable.

The following are steps used to ensure successful customized employment for a person.

### **Discovery**

The discovery process is used as a guide for customizing an employment relationship for an applicant with an employer. This process takes into account the applicant's entire life experiences rather than single instances of performance. In this way, life experience substitutes for testing or other formal assessments. Discovery is a two-step process:

- Step one begins with a provider representative who meets with the applicant and other key decision makers important to the person. The meeting (or meetings) gives information to the person and any involved decision makers information about their powerful role in the process of job seeking. It also is time for the provider to gather important information to map out the job creation process.

- The provider then schedules time to spend with the person during activities that comprise typical days, as well as on planned community activities. This interaction allows the provider to get to know the person so that the provider can identify preferences and conditions for employment and potential contributions and skills the person could offer an employer.



### **Narrative or Visual Profile Document: Capturing the information of discovery**

Next, information collected during meetings and activities with the person is put into a written description by the provider. For students, the written description of the person's preferences and capacities becomes a work in progress during the transition years of the student's school career passed on from teacher to teacher until graduation.

The document describing the person's preferences, capacities, interests and need for support is passed to adult employment service personnel. It is used for job development and support. For adults, this descriptive document provides information vital to planning job creation and can substitute for traditional, comparative vocational assessment procedures.

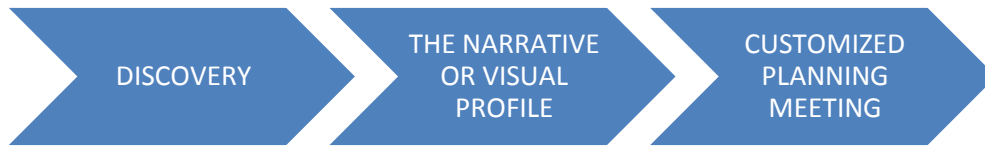


### **Customized Planning Meeting: Developing the employment plan**

The next step is a Customized Planning Meeting to create a job development plan specific to the person. This meeting is with the person, family, friends, advocates, the provider, VR counselors and others chosen by the person. This planning meeting adheres to the values associated with the best of person-directed, person-centered values. The person (with support from family or others, as necessary) decides the information that will be included in the plan. This kind of plan is sometimes described as a job "blueprint." A customized job development plan typically includes:

- Generally speaking, "what works and what doesn't work" for the person;
- The person's preferences, contributions, and conditions for employment;

- The types of job tasks the person feels should comprise the job;
- Specific employment sites where work could be developed for the person; and
- Employment leads and relationships with possible employers.



### **Development of a Representational Portfolio**

The customized process also utilizes a "presentation portfolio." The portfolio is a visual resume that represents the best of the person with a disability. It can be used by either the job developer or the person, as he/she speaks with employers.

The portfolio was test marketed with employers throughout the country and found to be of significant benefit in explaining the unique contributions of job applicants. This new product can be used by people with severe and multiple disabilities, including physical and communication disabilities, and their representatives, as appropriate, in order to assist such individuals in securing employment.



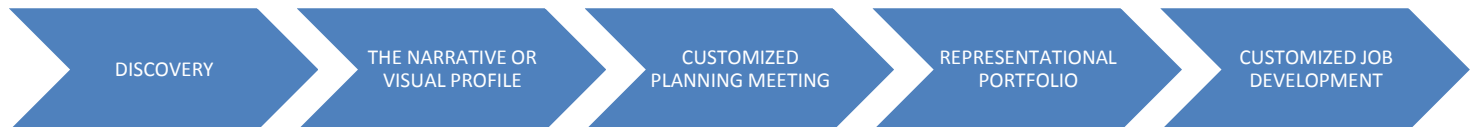
### **Customized Job Development**

While the Customized Planning Meeting clarifies the person's preferences and conditions of employment and specific employment leads. It does not provide the applicant a job. Job finding efforts are initiated based on the "blueprint" developed during the Customized Planning Meeting. It is essential to discover any of the person's relationships, or his or her support circle's relationships, with targeted employers. This helps to make initial contacts with prospective employers. In most cases, conventional job descriptions will not be appropriate for a person with significant disabilities.

Therefore, the provider must look beyond job openings, to identify the unmet needs of an employer. Armed with the knowledge about the person, the provider can then look

for job tasks and work cultures that fulfill the applicant's criteria for a successful job match. Tours of specific employment sites are used to identify the unmet needs of an employer by looking at job tasks, employee routines, and worksite cultures.

For more information on customized employment, please visit the website at [www.EmploymentFirstGeorgia.org](http://www.EmploymentFirstGeorgia.org).<sup>6</sup>



## 9. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

### VR Services for People with Disabilities

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is an eligibility program, not an entitlement program. An individual who receives social security benefits is presumed eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). VR services are provided in the state of Georgia if the following are present:

- The individual has a permanent physical or mental impairment which interferes with the ability to work.
- Vocational Rehabilitation services are necessary for the individual to prepare for, enter, engage in or keep employment.
- The individual with a disability can, will, and wants to go to work.
- The individual is available to participate.

VR services are arranged for and provided based on individual needs.

VR provides a wide range of services to help individuals with disabilities prepare for meaningful work. The services received are arranged for and provided based on individual needs, so the length of time it takes to prepare for employment is different for each person, as are the services provided.

VR is used for initial assessment, job development and short-term supports. NOW/COMP waiver Supported Employment services are used for longer term and/or ongoing supports.

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<sup>6</sup> This information was taken from a pamphlet developed by Employment First of Georgia, titled "Customized Employment"

From application to eligibility determination through assessment, and from work plan development to job placement, VR clients benefit from the expertise of the service delivery team members located in each local office. The team -- vocational rehabilitation counselor, account representative, work preparation technician, assistive work technology staff, program assistant, and employment manager -- works on the local level, utilizing comprehensive knowledge of both the employment community and the services available to the job seeker.

VR provides services necessary for a qualified client to meet the mutually agreed upon and individualized work goal. Services may include, but are not limited to:

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| • Counseling and Guidance           | • Supported Employment                 |
| • Work Readiness Training           | • School to Work Transition            |
| • Work Adjustment Training          | • Job Coaching                         |
| • Postsecondary Support             | • Deaf, Blind and Deaf/Blind Services  |
| • On-the-Job Training               | • Assistive Work Technology            |
| • Vocational and Technical Training | • Referral to Other Agencies As Needed |



### **Client Assistance Program (CAP)**

CAP provides assistance in informing and advising you of all available benefits under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended requires the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program to submit a State Plan that describes how Georgia will

administer VR services to assist individuals with disabilities achieve independence through employment. This plan includes goals, objectives and priorities; policies and strategies to achieve those goals; and an annual evaluation of progress.

For more information please refer to this site: <http://www.vocrehabga.org/>

## **10. Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA)**

People with disabilities often have questions and concerns about how going to work will affect the benefits they receive and are not sure where to go to find answers. There are two Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) projects in Georgia that can help: the Shepherd Center Benefits Navigator and the Georgia Rehabilitation Outreach Project.

WIPA projects are community-based organizations that receive grants from SSA to provide all Social Security (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability beneficiaries (including transition-to-work aged youth) with free access to work incentives planning and assistance information. Each WIPA project has counselors called Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWIC) that:

- Provide individualized accurate information on Social Security work incentives for beneficiaries with disabilities;
- Conduct outreach efforts for education and training to beneficiaries , their families and service providers
- Work in cooperation with Federal, state, private agencies and nonprofit organizations that serve beneficiaries with disabilities

If you are one of the many Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or SSI disability beneficiaries who want to work, the WIPA project that serves your area can help you understand the employment supports that are available to you and enable you to make informed choices about work.

The map below shows the counties that are served by each WIPA project in Georgia.

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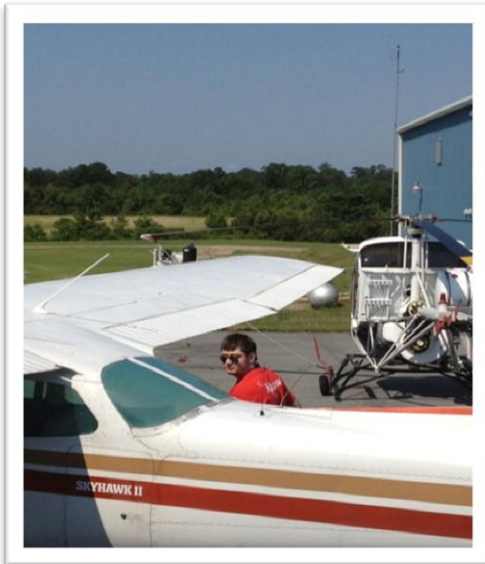
## 11. Other Resources for Supported Employment

### Natural Supports

Natural Supports include family members, friends, neighbors and people in the community where you live and work. Natural Supports can help you to do many things including:

- Learning how to take care of your health and your money
- Learning how to take care of your own personal needs
- Talking and interacting with others
- Accessing and getting involved in community activities

### ***Christopher's Employment Story***



*From the first day Christopher was met by his supported employment job coach, it was clear he had a passion for aircrafts and possessed much knowledge concerning planes. With that interest, a part-time job was carved out for him at a flight-training company, Skyline, next to the Columbus airport. Christopher performs a variety of tasks including washing planes for the pilots and upkeep of the grounds and office. Recently, the business expanded to train pilots for helicopters and Christopher now cleans the helicopter as well. He also works from time to time on the training room computer and is studying the flight manuals.*

*Christopher enjoys hanging out with the pilots. On a couple of occasions, pilots have taken him up for short flights over Columbus. The entire Skyline staff has become natural supports.*

***We hope the information provided in this guide was meaningful and helpful. We welcome your feedback. Please send to the following email address: [SupportedEmployment@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:SupportedEmployment@dhr.state.ga.us)***

***For questions or further information, feel free to access the following resources depending on the information needed:***

**[Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities \(DBHDD\)](#)**

***Support Coordination Agency***

**[DBHDD Regional Offices](#)**

**[Vocational Rehabilitation \(VR\)](#)**

***Below are additional websites included as part of this guide:***

Provider Search Website: [www.georgiaddproviders.org](http://www.georgiaddproviders.org).

Supports Intensity Scale: [www.siswebsite.org](http://www.siswebsite.org)

Health Risk Screening Tool: [www.mcgowanconsultants.com](http://www.mcgowanconsultants.com)

Special Education Services and Supports Transition Tool Box: [www.doe.k12.ga.us](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us)

Parent to Parent of Georgia: [www.p2pga.org](http://www.p2pga.org)

Social Security Work Incentives Planning & Assist.: [www.ssa.gov/work/WIPA.html#a0=-1](http://www.ssa.gov/work/WIPA.html#a0=-1)

Employment First Georgia: [www.EmploymentFirstGeorgia.org](http://www.EmploymentFirstGeorgia.org)