



# **Empowering Transitions: Essential Steps for Community Service Providers Facilitating Competitive Integrated Employment**

The initial step in guiding individuals and their families toward competitive and integrated employment (CIE) is to recognize the potential benefits of community employment for all individuals. Throughout the process of assisting interested individuals and families, maintaining a person-centered approach is paramount. This ensures that strategies employed are tailored to meet the unique needs of each individual and their family.

Transitioning individuals from sheltered employment to CIE should proceed with the understanding that all people with disabilities possess inherent capabilities for learning and working, as well as marketable skills. Recognizing this, it becomes essential to provide appropriate support to enable everyone to contribute meaningfully to the workforce.

Once individuals and families express readiness for CIE, it is crucial for agency staff to follow these recommended essential steps and processes. These steps are designed to guide and facilitate a successful transition.

## **1. Initiate the Transition**

- Assist the individual and their family with completion of an Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) referral.
- Assist the individual and their family with completion of the VR application.
- Educate the individual and their family about available employment service providers.

## **2. Increase Financial Awareness**

- Educate the individual and their family about the advantages of benefits counseling services and their importance in making decisions about working.
- Connect the individual and their family to Social Security informational webinars about the impact of earned income.
- Watch this informational [webinar about benefits and earned income](#).

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- Assist in referring the individual and their family to VR to request meeting with a Benefits Information Network (BIN) professional.

### 3. Explore Medicaid Supports

- Connect individuals without a Medicaid waiver to the [Bureau of Disability Services \(BDS\) waiver services entry point](#).
- Educate the individual and their family about the range of services available through the Medicaid Home and Community Based Services waivers, especially those that can provide support for CIE.
- Explain the waiver application process and schedule dedicated time to assist the individual and their family with the application.

### 4. Empower Through Employment Knowledge

- Educate the individual and their family about competitive integrated employment through [Family Employment Awareness Training \(FEAT\) sessions](#), where they can learn about:
  - creative ways to customize competitive employment; and
  - available state, federal, and community resources that support employment.
- Help the individual and their family register for FEAT.
- Attend FEAT yourself for professional development.

### 5. Strategize with Case Managers

- Assist the individual, family, and their stakeholder team to create a person-centered plan in collaboration with the BDS case manager.
- Assist in identifying individual goals within the employment section, including skills and preferences with the individual and their support team.
- Assist in identifying and supporting the description and development of an individualized meaningful week/month plan (social groups, volunteering, day habilitation) based on descriptive feedback from the individual/family.

### 6. Create Meaningful Plans

- Work with the individual and their family to develop an individualized meaningful week/month plan, incorporating social groups, volunteering, and day habilitation.
- Use the LifeCourse Framework as a guide in this planning.
- Learn about the LifeCourse Framework Key Principles using [these free and available resources](#).

### 7. Develop Your Competencies with Essential Training

- Develop the foundational competencies required to support individuals to attain and maintain competitive integrated employment.
- Complete the [Employment Consultant Training](#) focused on customized employment. The course curriculum is approved by ACRE (Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators).
- In addition, complete the [Discovery course](#) focused on foundational person-centered employment exploration. Both ECT and Discovery courses will introduce you to job coaching fundamentals.
- Engage with job development training materials and videos from experts, see for example:
  - [Denise Bissonnette Cultivating True Livelihood Curriculum](#)
- Become familiar with [Indiana's VR Vendor Service Manual](#), especially the Discovery sections. Complete the Indiana Discovery profile (scroll to Employment Services Forms) for at least one potential employee.
- Engage and collaborate with community employers. This might include:
  - regularly connecting with community employment groups, such as Chamber of Commerce events or employment fairs.
  - networking with the businesses in the community groups and events to create partnerships.
  - conducting broad informational interviews with employers to learn about their business needs.
  - building person-centered job development skills:
    - Identify and research three businesses near the potential employee's home.

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- Describe how a specific potential employee might contribute (tasks) to that business.
- Complete an informational interview with the three employers previously identified (or other businesses in the community).
- Initiate contact to request a meeting time.
- Identify three businesses near the selected sheltered employee's home.
  - Contact each to request a meeting time.
  - Prepare and deliver a concise and targeted introduction of your agency, your role, and your goals.
- Negotiate or facilitate the hiring of a new employee, who is now an active VR participant, into competitive integrated employment, aligning with findings from the Discovery process.

### 8. Identify Transportation Options

- Assist in exploring transportation options based on individual preferences and meaningful activities.
- Provide individualized, community-based, transportation training that facilitates the individual's description of a meaningful week/month.
- Collaborate with assigned case managers to develop natural support systems and other options for transportation and non-specialized options.

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Funded by the **Indiana Division on Disability and Rehabilitative Services**.