**The Supported Employment (SE) Core Features Checklist**

This document is intended to assist VR agencies in evaluating SE services that are being provided by VR staff and/or contracted service providers. Audience: service providers and VR staff that oversee SE services.

It is based on ***“Core Features of Quality Supported Employment Services”*** developed by the WINTAC. The full “Core Features” document provides definitions and explanations of these quality features and is available [here.](http://www.wintac.org/topic-areas/resources-and-strategies-competitive-integrated-employment/resources)

A companion document, “Essential Questions for Supported Employment Design,” assists VR agencies in setting up the internal framework for and effectively supporting quality supported employment services. Audience: VR program managers.

Please note that the items in each section are numbered for convenience of discussion and do not imply relative importance or a sequence of completion.

# **Defining Features of Quality Supported Employment**

1. Individuals are supported in finding and negotiating jobs of choice that match interests, skills, and employment preferences
2. Services are delivered in collaboration with individuals with disabilities, family members, and others who support them
3. The individual with a disability 1) is an employee of the business, 2) earns at least minimum/commensurate wages to other employees without disabilities, 3) receives benefits that are provided to other employees, and 4) is physically and socially integrated in the workplace
4. As needed, supported employment services are integrated with mental health or other services
5. Workers with disabilities have access to the same orientation, training, supervision, and ongoing supports offered to all employees in the business
6. Employment specialists work to facilitate social inclusion in the workplace
7. Person-centered career planning helps identify skills, interests, and employment preferences
8. Extended services or ongoing supports are provided as needed, at or away from the job. These supports are provided for a flexible time period based on the needs of the individual.
9. The needs of the worker are considered while developing supports, including natural supports, to facilitate independent work performance. Supported employment services augment natural supports and are not provided as a substitute for the support available to all employees.

# **Features of Quality Career Planning**

1. Career planning is done in collaboration with job seekers, family members, and other supporters selected by the job seeker.
2. Person-centered career plans focus on what job seekers can do and not what they can’t do. Limitations or work challenges are defined as training and supports that may be needed after employment.
3. Person-centered career plans are developed in collaboration with the job seeker, professionals funding the services, and the person’s support network, including mental health or other support professionals where helpful**.**
4. Career planning activities are individualized according to the interests and needs of each job seeker.
5. Existing reports and evaluations are reviewed for positive information on the job seeker’s support needs, interests, and preferences as well as conditions needed for employment success.
6. Informal conversations with job seekers, including family members and other people in their lives, are used to select career planning activities and clarify transportation options, work schedule, hours, benefits, wages, workplace characteristics, impact of work on disability benefits, etc.
7. Employment specialists spend time with job seekers during familiar daily activities to learn more about their interests and skills.
8. A variety of community-based experiences (e.g. job shadowing, volunteer work experiences, and work-based assessments) may be conducted to assist in career planning.
9. If used, job shadowing experiences focus on gathering information on interests and preferences for employment.
10. Volunteer work experiences, also referred to as service-based learning, may assist job seekers in identifying their work interests and preferences. Volunteer work should not be a pre-requisite to employment, and individuals must offer their services freely and without coercion.

Work assessments, sometimes referred to as situational assessments, use the settings, materials, employees, and tasks at a business to assess an individual’s skills, interests, and employment preferences. Work assessments for the purpose of supported employment services are not conducted in facility-based programs or other agencies that are specifically for individuals with disabilities.

1. Activities comply with U.S. Department of Labor’s guidelines for non-paid work, including volunteer work, as described in Chapters 10 and 64 of the Wage and Hour’s Field Operations Handbook.
2. Employment specialists negotiate with businesses where work-based assessments occur to select tasks/job duties that match the individual’s interests.
3. Employment specialists observe job seekers during work-based assessments to determine their current skills as well as to identify how they learn new skills.
4. Employment specialists observe job seekers to identify the impact that the characteristics of a setting may have on the individual’s success (e.g., noise, clutter, organization, items, people, available support, etc.). They use this information to match the person’s support needs to the characteristics of a potential workplace.
5. Career plan information is presented in descriptive terms without value judgments. This career plan guides job development specific to each job seeker’s work preferences.
6. A formal meeting is held that includes the job seeker, the VR counselor, the employment specialist, agency staff, mental health professionals, and other individuals who participated in career planning.

# **Features of Quality Marketing and Job Development**

1. Employment specialists develop business connections to learn about the local labor market and develop a pool of businesses that are interested in the services offered by the supported employment agency.
2. Supported employment agencies present a business image and have an employment presence in their communities.
3. Employment specialists have business cards and promotional materials (e.g., brochures, audio-visual materials, website, social media accounts, etc.) that present their business services.
4. All materials, including websites and social media, use language and images that highlight skills, abilities, and interests of the job seekers.
5. Employment specialists conduct business interviews to learn more about a business’ products and/or services, and observe workplaces to better understand business culture and workflow.
6. Contact information, current and future hiring needs, description of the products and services, and other business details are organized in a database for future reference.
7. Supported employment agencies network with community business organizations (e.g., Disability: IN, Chambers of Commerce, SHRM, etc.), and make presentations to local civic organizations, business organizations, and employers to market their agency as a resource for business personnel needs.
8. Job development activities are conducted specifically for individual job seekers, using the person-centered career plan to guide the job search and assist a job seeker in developing a job search plan.
9. Employment specialists are able to assist job seekers in developing portfolios, resumes, visual resumes, cover letters, letters of introduction, references, audio-video materials, and other job application documents in various media formats, including electronic, digital, and print.
10. Employment specialists provide information on disclosure to job seekers and assist them in deciding what, when, and how to disclose disability information to businesses.
11. To the extent possible, job seekers are involved in making business contacts based on their preferences and needs.
12. Employment specialists complete informational interviews, tours, and workplace observations to evaluate the business culture, with the job seeker whenever possible.
13. Employment specialists are familiar with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and ADA resources to support accommodations negotiations in the workplace
14. To the extent possible, the job seeker negotiates their own accommodations and job duties with assistance as needed. This includes negotiating hours, wages, work areas, type of supervision, breaks, coworker supports, training, and so forth.
15. Employment specialists support job seekers in representing themselves to businesses (e.g. interviews, applications, resumes) based on the preferences and support needs of each individual.

# **Features of Quality Job Site Training and Support**

1. The worker’s preferences and conditions for success are taken into consideration when designing the training and support plan, including the selection of workplace support strategies as well as how coworkers will be involved in in providing instruction and supports.
2. A job duty analysis is developed and refined prior to the first day of employment in collaboration with the worker’s supervisor and/or coworkers by conducting interview(s) to ensure that the job duty analysis meets the business needs while identifying efficient ways the job can be adapted to the worker’s support and training needs.
3. Job duty analyses should:
   1. Be developed with and approved by the worker’s supervisor, especially if changes in the way duties are typically completed are to be negotiated as a reasonable accommodation.
   2. Provide a sequence of job duties, including the location and time each occurs.
   3. Describe the skills, natural cues, and supplies/tools associated with each job duty.
   4. Provide information on orientation and mobility requirements as well as safety concerns to be addressed.
   5. Provide information on supervisor/coworker availability to provide natural supports.
   6. Include relevant information about workplace culture
4. The workplace is analyzed for available natural supports prior to the first day of employment and during the job training phase.
5. Employment specialists involve supervisors and coworkers from the first day of employment in providing supports to the worker. They also evaluate their own behaviors to ensure that they are not preventing the supervisor and coworkers from providing natural supports to the worker with disabilities.
6. If needed, task analyses are identified or developed for the skills in the job duty analysis.
7. Each task is analyzed for natural cues that will be available to the new employee, beginning the first day of employment.
8. Thewell-planned job site training and support plan includes how data will be collected on the job site to evaluate the need for instruction and the worker’s initial level of independence. Data is used to make modifications to the job site training and support plan, such as changing instruction, adding compensatory strategies, and adding cues. Data is also used to determine when the worker is independent on the job.
9. Ongoing dialogue is maintained with the supervisor on the worker’s performance and progress.
10. Job site training strategies are identified based on the employee’s support needs, and a plan for who will provide the training and support is in place beginning the first day of employment.
11. The design of any instructional program includes a training objective; data collection procedures; prompting procedures; reinforcement; and natural cues, natural supports, and compensatory strategies.
12. Employment specialists use the least intrusive prompts based on the needs of the worker with disabilities to ensure that the worker performs the task correctly.
13. Employment specialists identify possible compensatory strategies and discuss them with the worker with disabilities and the supervisor/coworkers to facilitate job acquisition. Materials are “age-appropriate,” do not stigmatize the worker with disabilities, are approved by the business, and if possible consist of the typical materials that workers without disabilities use.
14. Employment specialists consider how workplace accommodations, information technology (IT) and assistive technology (AT) may facilitate skill acquisition, fading of supports, and workplace inclusion.
15. Employment specialists assist workers with disabilities in learning to self-manage their work performance. This usually includes supporting the worker with disabilities to learn how to use natural cues, external cues and prompts, compensatory strategies, and universally available technology, such as smart phones and tablets.
16. Employment specialists assist workers with disabilities in developing relationships and social networks that facilitate the person’s inclusion in the workplace**.**
17. Employment specialists support the worker in developing a plan to learn and manage work-related activities such as accessing and using transportation services, scheduling appointments, managing medication, maintaining personal hygiene, obtaining and caring for work attire, etc.
18. Ongoing evaluation of the employer’s satisfaction with the worker’s performance is scheduled and completed.
19. Employment specialists fade their supports and training in the workplace, making fading decisions based on data on the employee’s performance in collaboration with the supervisor and coworkers.

# **Features of Quality Ongoing Supports**

1. The employment specialist develops an ongoing support plan in collaboration with the supervisor, coworkers, and worker with disabilities, specifying 1) the natural supports available in the workplace, including how, when, and who will provide the supports, and 2) the role of the supported employment agency, including the frequency and nature of contacts with the business and the worker.
2. An employment specialist maintains regular contacts with the worker who is receiving supported employment services, via 1) video conferencing, 2) email, 3) telephone, 4) text, and/or 5) face-to-face meetings at or away from the job, depending on the preferences and needs of the worker with disabilities.
3. Follow up discussions may include job satisfaction, wages and benefits, career advancement, job site support needs, training on new job duties, changes in coworker supports and so forth.
4. Employment specialists assigned to provide ongoing supports to workers with disabilities schedule regular contacts with the business, specifying how the contacts will be made with supervisors and coworkers, except where the worker with disabilities has not disclosed their disability to the business.
5. A feedback system is established between the supported employment agency, the worker, and the business to proactively respond to any workplace issues such as the need to train new coworkers/supervisors, identifying natural supports, and/or train the worker on new job duties that have been added to their responsibilities.
6. In-person meetings occur on-the-job at the request of the worker and/or the business. On-the-job observations can help identify any on-going support needs, preventing job dissatisfaction by the worker as well as the business.