

Choosing Your Employment Organization

Introduction

Choosing an organization to help you get and keep a job is an important decision. Making this decision is made easier if you know what kind of job you want and have information on the organizations that help people find jobs.

First, you need to know the type of job that you want. You may want to think about how much money you want to make, your work experience, your skills and what skills you might want to learn. The more aware you are of what you want, the easier it will be for you to recognize the kind of job that can meet your needs.

Next, you need information about employment service providers to decide which provider can best help you get your job. You have a right to expect quality in the employment services that you receive. But what is quality? The answer to this question is different for every person. Quality can include:

- The services that you can get.
- The type of jobs the organization helps people get.
- The results for people like you who have used the services
- The turnover rate of the direct service staff.

Using The Performance Provider Profile and Report Card

The profile and report card will help you to make your decision about which provider you want to work with. The first part of the report, called the Performance Provider Profile, describes the services that each employment service provides. The second part of the report, called the Performance Report Card, compares the employment service providers on outcome measures. This report provides information about each of the organizations in Polk County that provide supported employment services. With this information you can explore and evaluate the providers of community employment in Polk County.

Most of the information in this report comes from reports that the employment organizations have submitted to the National Results Council. From these reports, the National Results Council provides information on how well the organizations did in helping people to get and keep jobs. The National Results Council is an independent organization and makes sure that the information is accurate.

This report has several sections that give you information about the employment service provider organizations. To help you understand the information Polk County Health Services has prepared this *How to Read The Guide* brochure to give a brief description of the information in the report.

No report can give you all the information that you need. Before making your decision, you should visit the organizations and ask them questions about how they can meet your needs.

When choosing your employment provider, use a step-by-step approach.

1. Think about the kind of job you want.
2. Then use the report to explore your options.
3. Finally, visit the organizations and ask questions to get more information. We have prepared a brochure for you to use when you visit the organization that provides you with questions that you may want to ask.

When you take it step-by-step you can make an informed decision and find the organization that is right for you. Good luck.

How to Read the Guide

A description is provided for each category listed in the guide.

The Polk County Employment Provider Profile

Programs and Support Services

On the first page of the Report, each organization describes the program and support services that they provide by checking boxes for the services that they offer. Some organizations may provide many programs and services, while others will have just a few. What should be most important to you is that the organization has the programs and services that you need. If you know what kind of job you want, then you can use this information to help you choose an employment service provider.

Transportation

This section on the first page of the report tells you the kind of transportation assistance that the organization provides. If you need transportation to get to a job then it will be important for you to find out how the organization can help you. It is unlikely that an organization will provide you free transportation to get you to and from your job. However, it should assist you in finding ways to meet your transportation needs

Staff Certification/Training

In this section on the first page of the report the organization checks whether it requires or does not require its supported employment staff members to be certified. A person who is certified in supported employment has completed courses from a college, a professional organization, or a government agency. Typically, these courses include training on job development, job matching, and job supports.

Average Length of Employment for Staff

This section on the first page of the report tells you about the turnover rate of the people with whom you'll be working. As you make your decision about an organization you will want to know how stable it is. If you have the same job coach, that person gets to know your preferences, abilities and work history. This is much better than having a series of people, each of them having to go through a period of time to get to know you.

Organization Accreditation

In this section on the first page of the report, if the boxes are checked, then the organization is accredited by the agency listed next to the box. There are both national and state organizations that accredit services. The most common of the national organizations are CARF and The Council. The state of Iowa also accredits programs.

In an accreditation survey, a team of professionals from outside the organization reviews whether the organization is providing quality services. When an organization is accredited, it means that it is showing quality in the services that it provides. However, it does not mean that the organization is perfect. The organization's survey report describes both its strengths and where it needs to improve. When you visit the organization, you may want to ask to see the report and have it explained to you.

Number of Consumers Served in Employment

In this section on page 2 of the report, the organization reports the number of people that it serves in all its employment programs. Some organizations have more than one employment program. These might include sheltered work, skills training, individual supported employment and enclaves. If you do not know what these programs mean, please see the *Definitions* section of the guide. Seeing how many people are in each program may give you an idea of which programs the organization considers most important. The most important thing, however, is that the organization has the program that you need.

Types of Disabilities Served in Supported Employment

In this section on page 2 of the report, the organization tells you the kinds of disabilities of their consumers. There are organizations that will serve people with many types of disabilities. Others, however, may limit their services to just one or two types of disabilities. What should be important to you is that an organization has the ability to work with people with similar needs as yours.

Types of Jobs

This graph on page 2 shows you the kind of jobs that the organization helps people get and the percentage of their consumers that are working in each type of job. Knowing what type of job you want will help you decide which organization is best for you. For example, if you want a job in retail sales, you will probably want to choose an organization that has helped people get this kind of job.

Barriers to Employment

This graph on page 2 of the report tells you the kind of barriers to employment that the organization's consumers have in trying to find a job.

It would be good for you to read the Barriers to Employment Definition section, which comes after the graph. See if any of these describe your situation. Then look at the graph to see what percentage of people who have experienced similar barriers to yours the organization has worked with. The higher the percentage or number in the graph the more people with that barrier the organization has worked with. The more consumers with barriers similar to yours, the more experience the organization should have in helping you. Seeing how an organization has helped people with the same barriers that you have is a good way to decide which is the right organization.

How Long It Takes To Get A Job

This graph on page 4 of the report compares how many days it takes each organization to get a person a job once services start. Some organizations may get people jobs right away while others may take longer. There may be several reasons for this difference. Sometimes organizations that are working with people who do not have many barriers to employment are able to get them jobs right away. However, it may take longer for an organization working with people with more barriers to help them find the job. An organization may get a person placed quickly, but it may not be the best match or a job the person likes and the person loses the job. Other organizations may take longer because they are trying to find jobs that more closely match the interests and

abilities of the person. Finally, some types of jobs are easier to get than others. This might be another reason why some organizations can get people jobs quicker than others.

When looking at this category it will be important to look at the Barriers to Employment, Types of Job and the Percentage of Consumers Working categories, too. Doing this will help you get the complete picture.

Jobs With Medical Benefits

The graph on page 4 of the report compares the organizations on the percentage of jobs that their consumers get which provide health insurance or medical benefits. This may be important to you if you do not have health care insurance. Again, knowing what you want and need is important for you in making the decision about which organization to choose.

Percentage of Consumers Working

This graph on page 4 of the report compares the organizations on the percentage of their consumers who are working. Helping people to stay in the workforce, even though they may switch jobs, is important. It is important that an organization helps you find the right job and then assists you to keep it.

Average Hours Worked Per Week

The graph on page for of the report compares the organizations on the average hours that their consumers work each week. Organizations that serve people with many barriers to employment may not be able to get jobs with as many hours as organizations that serve people with fewer barriers. You should consider how many hours per week you want to work. When looking at this category, you should review the Barriers to Employment and Types of Jobs sections as well in order to get a complete picture.

Wage Per Hour for Those Working

This graph on page four of the report compares the organizations on the average hourly wage that the organization's consumers make. The consumer barriers to employment and the types of jobs obtained all affect the money that people make. The skills you have will also impact on how much money you can make. You might want to ask the organization how it can help you learn new skills.

Visiting the Organization

In addition to using the guide to explore your options, it is also important for you to visit organizations. Your impressions are important when you make your visit. Here are some things to look for:

- *Does the building appear to be well maintained, clean, and safe?*
- *Is the building accessible? Are there features like handrails, elevators, automatic doors and ramps for people who need them?*
- *Are there common restrooms and dining facilities for both consumers and staff members?*
- *Does the organization have a welcome letter or packet of information for potential new consumers?*

It is also important for you to ask questions to help you get the information you need to make good decisions. Here are some more questions that you may want to ask. You may think of other questions as well.

Programs and Support Services

- *Describe how your programs and services will help me?*
- *Please tell me how my opinions and desires will be included when planning for services.*
- *How will the services be individualized to meet my needs?*
- *What are the opportunities for my family to participate?*

Transportation

- *If I need transportation, how will you help me?*
- *What will be the cost for my transportation?*

Staff Members

- *How do staff members keep up with trends in the field?*
- *What specific training have staff members had on the Americans with Disabilities Act and other legislation such as the Work Incentives Improvement Act and Ticket to Work?*
- *Do staff members receive training on sales and marketing?*
- *If I do not get along with my job coach, what would we do about it?*
- *How many people with disabilities do you employ and what do they do?*

Accreditation

- *How long have you been accredited and what is the length of your current accreditation?*
- *According to the survey report what were the areas in which you needed to improve and how are you trying to do that?*
- *Could I see a copy of your latest survey report?*

Community Employment

- *How long have you been providing community employment services?*
- *Do most of the people who come to you for help in finding a job get placed?*
- *Can you describe a recent, typical job development process?*
- *If I need accommodations, how will they be provided?*
- *What happens if I lose my job?*
- *What will you do if I am unhappy about how long it is taking to get me a job?*
- *If I am on public benefits (e.g. Social Security, Medicaid) how can you help me manage the impact of wages on my benefits?*
- *Are you involved in community advocacy efforts?*

Types of Jobs

- *If I am not sure of what kind of job I want, how can you help me?*
- *If I start out working part time, but want more hours or a different job, how will you help me?*
- *What if I need to go to college or a training program to learn a new skill? How will you help me do this?*
- *What kind of job advancement or planning for the future do you do?*

Funding

- *Where do you get your funding? Are funding sources stable?*
- *Can you show me comments from funders expressing their satisfactions with your services?*

Outcomes

- *How do you use information about customer service satisfaction and outcomes?*
- *Please give me an example of when a customer was dissatisfied with your service and what you did about it.*
- *What makes you different from the other community employment service providers in Polk County?*

Summary

The age of the consumer or customer has finally arrived in community employment services. You should look at the selection of an employment provider as you would any major purchase in your life- a car, a home, an appliance. The decision that you make will probably have a big impact on your life for many years to come.

Choosing the right provider for you will take time, but it is definitely worth the effort. Knowing your options will help you make informed choices about services so that you can work and live the way that you want.

It is unlikely that you will find a perfect organization, one that can meet all your expectations. However, with the use of this guide and help from family and friends, we hope that you can find the organization that best meets your needs.