

Holding Engaging Conversations about Work

Toolkit to Support Informed Choice in Employment

Minnesota Department of Human Services
2016 Informed Choice for Employment

The Minnesota Departments of Education, Employment and Economic Development, and Human Services (MDE, DEED and DHS) have developed this toolkit as part of an operational framework to support professionals (also referred to as facilitators) in helping people with disabilities and/or mental illness consider employment as an option and plan for work. The toolkit is a work in progress. Please use the “Give Feedback” button on DB101 to share your thoughts about the toolkit, suggest additional resources, or provide other feedback.

What is informed choice?

Informed choice means that the person you are supporting was able to make decisions based on the complete information that connects to their situation. It means that myths about employment and barriers to achieving goals are effectively addressed. Ensuring informed choice means that a person understands all of their options, understands methods to overcome barriers and understands the potential risks and benefits of decisions. Options are not limited to only disability specific programs. Community resources and supports are valued and explored. Informed choice occurs when a person understands their options and the *risks* and *benefits* of their decisions. Informed choice is an ongoing process that happens through engaging, person-centered conversations and activities.

Question...	Actions...
1. How can I better understand <i>Employment First</i> which stresses the importance of competitive employment for people with disabilities?	<p>You can prepare yourself to have engaging conversations about work by understanding Employment First, Person Centered Planning, and Informed Choice.</p> <p>Some things you can do include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Briefly review the Employment First Informed Choice Implementation Guide document. This document clarifies what informed choice is and how it fits into your work. 2. Watch a 4 minute video and answer discussion questions with your colleagues on how work expectations are changing. 3. Briefly review the one pager best practices for success in employment
2. How can I engage a person in conversations about employment?	<p>Holding an engaging conversation is far more than asking if a person wants to work. In fact, asking closed ended questions (those that require only a one-word answer) do not allow a person to share their narrative and story. It can prevent a person from achieving their goals and instead follow a pre-determined plan. What’s great is that you can use your current assessment tools and processes</p>

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	<p>(IEP, MNCHOICES, etc.) to collect information in a person centered manner which helps support informed choice.</p> <p>Some things you can do include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Briefly review the Employment First – Person Centered Planning – Informed Choice document. This document clarifies what informed choice is and how it fits into your work. 2. Review the Meeting the Person Where They Are document. This document helps target your conversation depending on where a person is in work readiness. 3. Review the Interviewer Companion Guide developed for individuals that assess people with disabilities on a number of domains including employment. 4. Watch the following videos to learn about applying person centered planning techniques to conversations about to employment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Introduction (10 minutes) b. Think Differently (12 minutes) c. Communicate Differently (4 minutes) d. Work differently (14 minutes)
<p>3. What if through my conversations I learn a person is ready and interested to work?</p>	<p>This person is ready for work and you should move the person into employment planning and document any insight into how the person came to choosing work.</p>
<p>4. What if through my conversations I learn a person is not sure about work or does not want to work?</p>	<p>This person may be on the fence for a number of reasons (never been asked about work, past negative experience with work, rumors or myths, or lack of jobs). You should explore further to build a better understanding of their thoughts and feelings.</p> <p>Activities you can support a person in doing can include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage in a dream building exercise using the “Build Your Dream” document. This document helps you frame questions about where a person wants to live, activities they want to do, etc. and then helps create a budget to match these dreams. 2. Discuss how work can be a path to achieving many of their goals beyond financial (socialization, etc.). See question 7 for more information. 3. Sign up for a myDB101 account and complete an estimator session using the “DB101 Estimator Session” document to show how income and benefits go together. Question 9 walks through the simple process of signing up for myDB101 account. 4. Help the person gain work experience. Review the Work Experience Guide to learn more about helping a person build their resume.

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	<p>If the person begins to see work as an option, move the person into employment planning. If the person decides not to work at this time, as long as they understand what this means for their life, that's okay. See Question 6 for more information about what to do in this situation.</p>
<p>5. What if barriers or pitfalls come up in a conversation?</p>	<p>Holding engaging conversations about work can be tough. We aren't guaranteed to succeed. However, having the right tools can help you overcome barriers or pitfalls that are identified in conversations.</p> <p>Plan ahead and understand common barriers and myths you may encounter in your conversations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Briefly review Talking about work 2. Briefly review Work: Frequently asked questions 3. Common barriers including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. I have had a bad experience with work. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestion: Discuss how we all experience this in our work. Review the Work Experience Guide to learn more about helping a person build their resume. b. My disability prevents me from working. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestion: Discuss the importance of planning, reasonable accommodations, and legal rights. The DB101 article on Progressive Disabilities may be helpful. c. I can't work without supports or services (transportation, assistive technology, etc.). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It may be true that a person needs additional supports to work. That does not mean work is not possible. The Services and Supports document offers some tips in this area. Many of these services can be funded through a waiver or a work incentive. d. My family or others are not supportive. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch the 10-minute video Working and not Working which can help you problem solve by looking at situations from a person's perspective as well as the family or others perspectives and then come to common understanding. e. There are no jobs. People won't hire me because I have a disability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While job creation can be difficult, it is important to be vigilant in the search process. Continue to help the person gain work experience and additional

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	<p>training to increase their competitiveness on the job market. Review the Finding the Right Job For You article on DB101.</p> <p>f. I don't know what I want to do.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try some career exploration activities with the person. This could include My Skills My Future and Occupational Outlook Handbook. <p>Empower the person to self-advocate and overcome barriers. It is important to keep in mind the strengths a person has within their informal network and supports. Family members and friends are sometimes the most important sources of support. For youth, review the What Parents Can Do to Support Future Employment one pager.</p> <p>One of the top myths to competitive employment is fear of losing cash and/or health care benefits. You might hear "I can only work this many hours a month or I'll lose my benefits." This is often the result of misinformation. To help a person in this situation, explore myths and confusion about benefits together. You can:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Familiarize yourself about benefits by watching the following of the Busting Down the Benefits Barrier video on DB101: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What We Know (3:09) b. Responding to Myths (2:32) c. Learn the Facts (3:35) d. Myth 1 (5:14) – <i>My SSI goes down when I work, so I under up losing money</i> e. Myth 2 (2:20) – <i>If work reduces SSI to \$0, there's no way to get it back</i> f. Myth 3 (2:11) – <i>If work, I lose my MA</i> g. Myth 4 (4:59) - <i>I'll lose my SSDI if I work</i> h. Keep Your Eye on the Ball (1:08) i. Closing Thought (0:41) 5. Set up a myDB101 account (see question 8), run an estimator session to see how benefits and work go together, and use Talk to an Expert live chat when you have questions. 6. Review programs that can support work including SSDI Work Incentives and SSI Work Incentives
6. What if the person decides not to work?	It is important to recognize that for many people with disabilities competitive work has not been seen as an option. One underlying assumption is that many people have not had engaging conversations about work – they say "no" when asked about work and there is no further

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	<p>exploration of how they got to “no.” This is supported by a number of studies that show that people with disabilities are underrepresented in the workforce and overrepresented in poverty.</p> <p>If the person decides not to work in competitive employment at this time it’s okay. It is important they understand what this means for their life – their income, benefits, housing, etc. Informed choice isn’t about forcing a person into competitive work. It’s about helping them understand options, addressing fears and barriers, and coming to a decision based on available and reliable information.</p> <p>However, just because competitive employment was chosen right now, that doesn’t mean it won’t be an option in the future. Be sure to document the results of conversations (especially concerns and reasons for deciding not to work) and check in at least twice a year.</p>
<p>7. How can work be used as a goal and/or a strategy?</p>	<p>In having engaging conversations, you may here “I want to work” or through exploring find that work is definitely on a person’s radar. In this instance, work might be seen as a goal. You might set a goal of “Getting a job at Bob’s Lawn Service.” Action steps might include creating a resume, job shadowing, interviewing, and getting technical skills on small machines.</p> <p>Sometimes during an engaging conversation “I want to work” doesn’t come up. Instead you hear, “I want to meet more people” or “I want to move out of my parent’s house” or “I want to buy a new cell phone.” In these situations, work might actually be seen as a strategy to achieving a goal.</p> <p>Work can be a strategy to achieve all kinds of goals including: meet new people and increase socialization, increase income, access to health care, support independent living, acquire goods or materials, develop a hobby, foster interests, challenge myself, etc.</p> <p>For example, if someone wants to live on their own, you might work through a conversation using the “Build Your Dream” guide. In this guide you help the person create a budget. When they see that moving out might require more income, you can talk about how work can increase a person’s income. Work (the strategy) helps a person find their own place (the goal).</p>
<p>8. How do I know informed choice occurred?</p>	<p>Informed choice, as noted above, is the result of holding engaging conversations. To see if your conversations may have resulted in informed choice. If you did any of the following activities, you have increased your chances you’ve reached informed choice:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participated in a person, centered, engaging conversation about competitive, integrated employment no matter what assessment forms you used.

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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Helped the person get hands on experience such as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Conducted DB101 estimator session b. Developed work experience c. Talked with others who have experience with work including friends, family, and businesses 3. Explored the risks and benefits of decisions <p>In addition, be sure to document the conversation and the next steps in the person's plan.</p>
9. How do I set up a myDB101 account?	<p>My DB101 lets you customize the DB101 site to meet your needs. With MyDB101, you can: save favorite DB101 pages, find favorite DB101 mini-tools easily, and automatically save your DB101 Estimator sessions and return to them later.</p> <p>To set up an account:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Go to www.db101.org 2. Click on "Register" at the top of the DB101 home page 3. Enter your email, create a password, and enter your organization 4. Click "Submit" 5. Click on "My DB101" on the top of the page. It says, "Welcome (your email)"