

EMPLOYMENT SKILLS PROGRAM

What is the Employment Skills Program?

The Employment Skills Program (ESP) is designed to provide individuals with disabilities who have limited work experience with an opportunity to experience career opportunities, develop skills and build a positive work history. This work experience for up to 250 hours is funded by the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Programs in the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. If needed, a Job Developer and Job Coach will be provided to assist in finding employment and training you on the job tasks.

How do I know if I am eligible for the Employment Skills Program?

- You must be at least 16 years old when you begin the Employment Skills Work Experience.
- You must be determined eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services and the Employment Skills Program by a VR Counselor. You are eligible if:
 - ☺ you have a physical or mental impairment that is a substantial impediment to employment;
 - ☺ you require VR services to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain gainful employment;
 - ☺ your VR counselor determines that you need an employment experience in order to prepare for adult employment;
 - ☺ it is reasonably likely that you can eventually become gainfully employed in the community after your work experience; and
 - ☺ your VR Counselor determines your eligibility to be above the order of selection level. (If there is a waiting list for services)

ARE YOU READY FOR THE NEXT STEP?

You have identified your interests

Now what is next?

Job Development, that's what...

**Job
Development**



Job Coaching

Job Development services consist of:

- 1) Assisting you in getting employment in areas that you like and are interested in employment must be in a community business not in school.
- 2) Contacting employers for potential work site openings.
- 3) Telling you about the job demands.
- 4) Negotiating and completing the Employment Skills Work Experience Agreement and getting approval from the VR Counselor before he work experience begins.
- 5) Helping identify your job tasks and skills you will learn on the job.
- 6) Processing modifications, if there is a change in wages, agreement period, job title, or in your job duties.

Job coaching services are services to support and train you in the employment setting. Job Coaches train you on how to perform the job tasks to meet your employer's requirements. This training usually starts one-on-one and gradually fades out as you become more independent on your job. The amount and length of services depends upon your needs.

Monitoring Services At the Worksite:



You will be monitored at the worksite. This is necessary to ensure that you are successful at your job and things are going smoothly for you, your employer and co-workers.

- 1) **The Employment Skills Program Monthly Service Report** needs to be **submitted to the VR Counselor**. This report provides information status of your job development, job coaching and how you are doing on the job. This is done by the job developer or job coach
- 2) If you are injured on the job, you must complete and submit the “South Dakota Employer’s **First Report of Injury**” form within 3 day from the date of injury. These forms are available from you VR counselor.

! Please note: **MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION:**

What happens if you get hurt at work? VR provides worker’s compensation insurance for individuals approved for this program. If the individual gets injured, they should contact the VR Counselor as soon as possible to complete the First Report of Injury Report. All the medical bills can be submitted to the VR Counselor and they can forward them on to the insurance company. Employers are not responsible for the worker’s compensation expenses, however they are required to have general liability insurance. This insurance covers general accidents that may occur on their property. For example: if an individual trips a customer by accident, the employer would pay for the customer’s injury, like they do for other employees.



Participant's Role:

Again, one of the most important decisions you will make in your life is preparing for employment. The questions you must ask yourself is "What will I do to earn money?" There are many people who can give you their input when you are making these choices about employment, jobs, and careers. Ask them for their assistance. You can ask your parents, teachers, VR counselors, school counselors, employers, friends, relatives, and on, and on, and on.

When you seek competitive employment you must compete with other job applicants from the community for the same jobs. That is why it is so important, you be responsible and know what your role is in your job. If you know what your worker role is and follow through on those responsibilities, you will succeed at your job and can look forward to a bright future.

The list below describes your role:

- ☺ Be on time
- ☺ Be honest
- ☺ Dress appropriately
- ☺ Be responsible
- ☺ Take directions from supervisors
- ☺ Respond appropriately to constructive criticism
- ☺ Get along with co-workers and supervisors
- ☺ Follow directions
- ☺ Let others know what they can do to assist you - advocate for yourself.
- ☺ Solve problems
- ☺ Perform specific job tasks
- ☺ Be persistent and willing to work and complete tasks



Parent/Guardian/ Surrogate's Role

Your parents want many things for you. They want you to have the right skills, knowledge, friends, common sense, and determination so that you will be successful in today's society. Your parents have to find a balance between protecting you too much and also letting go so you may be an independent young adult. This is really difficult for your parents. They will always be concerned for your well being in all areas of life!

Your parents can assist you with information regarding your habits and feelings and they generally know what interests you have and what you can do. They may know how you learn best and can inform your teacher and employer as to what supports you may need to begin employment in the community. Talk to your parents.... And together you can plan your future and start setting your goals.

Tell your parents this is how they can assist.....

- ☺ Give permission for work experience program
- ☺ Be good role models
- ☺ Provide opportunities to learn skills of independence
- ☺ Give you responsibilities/opportunities to make choices
- ☺ Learn and exercise education rights
- ☺ Discuss and plan postsecondary goals
- ☺ Listen to you
- ☺ Organize family resources
- ☺ Teach practical life skills
- ☺ Help you plan for your future
- ☺ Serve as a link between school and agencies
- ☺ Learn about community resources
- ☺ Identify supports that work for you



Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's Role

Your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor can assist you with career planning and help you identify a job goal that will match your strengths and abilities. They can help you identify necessary services and work

experience programs such as the Employment Skills Program. When transitioning from school to the work force, VR may also assist you with training costs after high school

The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor can provide you with:

- ☺ Vocational guidance and counseling
- ☺ Vocational assessments
- ☺ Medical or psychological assessments
- ☺ Situational assessments
- ☺ Assistance in obtaining employment
- ☺ Skills training for a specific job
- ☺ Information regarding assistive technology as well as some financial assistance for the assistive technology device
- ☺ Liaison with other adult service agencies to ensure a smooth transition
- ☺ Financial assistance with post-secondary education, possibly financial assistance with books if financial need is met
- ☺ Short term services such as medical services and other emergency services if financial need is met
- ☺ Information on your rights as provided for in the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA)



Employer's Role

Employment Skills Program is a huge opportunity! This is a time in which you, your VR Counselor and your employer will all need to communicate effectively and work together to make this a successful partnership! Your employer will take the time to help you learn new techniques and skills to better yourself! All you need to do is come to work motivated with the willingness to learn!

Employers are looking for people who are hard workers, have good work ethic and the ability to get along with others. They will assist in training for the job by following the training plan listed on your work experience agreement. They will also provide you with supervision and will supply sufficient materials and equipment to perform assigned duties. Your employer will make sure that the working conditions are safe and that you will obey all safety practices.

- ☺ Keep accurate time and attendance records for you and assist in sending in your time card on a bi-monthly basis.
- ☺ Provide adequate general liability and automobile liability insurance covering your actions. (if you drive the employer's vehicle.)
- ☺ Provide information about progress in employment.
- ☺ Provide suggestions for modifying your work environment.
- ☺ Provide information regarding future vacancies.
- ☺ Suggest work-related skills to improve on.
- ☺ Participate in identifying your training plan.
- ☺ Provide direction on your job duties.
- ☺ Promote good work habits.



Dept. of Labor and Regulation's Role

Check with your VR Counselor or Job Developer to see where your local Department of Labor and Regulation's (DLR) Office is located. Make an appointment to meet with a DLR Representative to register for their services. Once registered, you can receive listings of job openings in your community, labor market trends and information on other labor programs available to you.

A DLR Representative can offer assistance writing job descriptions for applications, answers to difficult interview questions, or ways to quit a job without getting the employer mad at you. DLR Representatives can help you learn about potential employers, what types of jobs a company may have, what they pay or benefits they offer, what the working environment is like, etc. DLR Representatives can make presentations to groups, classes, or organizations on choosing careers, determining your work skills, completing applications, interviewing techniques, and what work traits employers want in their employees.

What happens after the ESP work experience ends?

The work experience is not intended to be a permanent job. However for some individuals, the employer is pleased with the individual's work performance and willing to continue their employment. For other individuals it will help them in determining their future employment goal and potential training to obtain employment. When your ESP work experience ends, you need to meet with your VR Counselor to discuss changes in your employment plans.



Am I Ready to Start My Job?

When a job site has been developed for you, the Employment Skills Program Work Agreement form needs to be completed and signed by the employer and VR Counselor. Make sure you carefully read the information in the section titled “Participant Obligation”. The work experience can range from 50 to 250 hours of employment. The maximum hours per week an individual can work is 20 hours.

One of the most important parts of the Work Experience Agreement is developing the Training Plan. This is where the skills you will learn from this employer will be identified. Make sure you get input from your parents, teacher, peers, employer, VR Counselor and the Job Developer. Following is an example of a training plan:

Example 1: TRAINING PLAN

Skills Areas:	Approx. Training Hrs.	Training Outline (Include specific job description, tools and equipment, job specifications and numerical measurements)
Customer Service	238	Teach/learn the following job tasks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • present menu, answers questions and make suggestions • Write out order and relay same to kitchen • Observe guests to respond to requests
Organizational Skills		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total bill and accept payment or refer to cashier • may toss salad, brew coffee • may clean & reset tables
Quality Control		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • measure ingredients using scale • dump specified ingredients into pan • preparatory to mixing • knead fermented dough • weigh amount of dough required to produce pizza • shape dough and sprinkle each with flour grease pan • place dough in pan and add ingredients to make pizza • check with baker and deliver pizza to customer • wash and scour pans • clean table and booths for new customers • vacuum carpet, arrange table and chairs

Example 2: TRAINING PLAN

Skills Areas:	Approx Training Hrs.	• Training Outline (Include specific job description, tools and equipment, job specifications and numerical measurements)
Organizational Skills	200	• help children remove outer garments
Leadership		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organize and participate in games, read to children teach simple painting, drawing, handwork, songs and similar activities • help children develop habits of caring for own clothes and picking up and putting away toys and books • maintain discipline • may serve meals and refreshments to children and regulate rest periods • may assist in preparing food and cleaning quarters

You must **complete the following three forms** before you begin employment. These forms are required by most employers to process your paycheck. Make sure you use your correct full name as printed on your Social Security Card on all of these forms. No nicknames.

- **Employment Eligibility Verification (1-9).**
- **Section A of the Non Permanent Payroll Form (BOP-PA-NP 4/97)**
- **W-4 Form**

When you first start your job, a Job Coach may need to be with you most of the time while you are learning the job duties. They will also:

- Learn the workplace, not just the job.
- Teach the workplace, not just the job.
- Find out routines of the co-workers, lunch breaks.
- Encourage you to get to know the co-workers and supervisors, but still stay on task.
- Not overprotect you, but let you go slowly.

As you learn more and more of your job duties, you will be able to work more independently. This is when your Job Coach can reduce the time spent with you at the job site. Don't worry, you won't be

completely alone. Your supervisor and co-workers are always a good resource to help with any problems you may have on the job. In addition your school will check at least three times a month at the job site to make sure your job performance is satisfactory and the supervisor is pleased with your work.

It is important to keep your VR Counselor informed of you progress in finding an employment site and how you are doing on the job. The person providing the job placement, job coaching or monitoring services for your school will submit a **Monthly Report** to your VR Counselor each month.

If the situation arises where you do not get all your hours of employment completed or you are able to work more hours, the Work Experience Agreement can be modified. The section "Modified Agreement Information" need to be completed when these changes occur. The VR Counselor needs to approve the modification if the total dollars of the agreement increases. The person providing job placement, job coaching or monitoring services for your school can approve all other changes including termination of the agreement due to quitting or getting fired. A photo copy of the modifications needs to be provided to your VR Counselor.

HOW DO I GET MY PAYCHECK?

When you first start your job, make sure you get a few time cards from the person providing the job development or your VR Counselor. Pay day will be on or about the 1st and 16th of each month. Should a payday fall on a weekend or a holiday, the pay day will need to be adjusted.

There is a pay roll calendar included in this packet. Mark these dates on your calendar. You need to make sure your time card is mailed or delivered to your VR Counselor by the date that is on the pay roll calendar. The name and address of your counselor is on the Work Experience Agreement form. It is very important that your time card is sent by the day that is indicated on the pay roll calendar. This way you will get your paycheck as soon as possible. *All paychecks will be direct deposit or payroll card.*

WILL MY PAYCHECK IMPACT FOOD STAMPS OR OTHER TYPES OF ASSISTANCE?

The income from your paycheck may be counted as income for programs such as food stamps, low income housing and other public assistance programs. The benefits of working and gaining employment skills will always out way any reductions in public assistance.

WHAT IF I GET SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME? WILL MY SSI CHECK BE REDUCED?

If you are receiving Social Security Income (SSI), it is important that you contact your local Social Security Administration (SSA) Office and inform them you are participating in the Employment Skills Program, a paid work experience program. You must inform them your wages are to be considered in the “Student Earned Income Exclusion for Individuals on SSI”. If you are younger than 22 years old and regularly attending school, you may exclude up to \$1,340 of earned income per month (\$5,410 during a calendar year),

your SSI check should not be reduced. You will need to report your earnings on a regular basis and make sure SSA knows the wages are from your work experience and part of your educational plan.

Does this seem complicated? You’re right it is and you should seek assistance from your VR Counselor to make sure your SSI check does not get reduced.

Disclosing your Disability to an Employer

For many job seekers with disabilities, the issue of “disclosure” (if, when and how to alert an employer to their disability) is a major area of concern. As you go about looking for a job, you will need to decide if and when to disclose your disability. There are no hard rules. It will be up to you to make those decisions. It will all be a strategic judgment call on your part.

Having a disability can be a liability in the job search – due to the possible misconceptions and/or prejudices of the people you will encounter. Sometimes, however, having a disability can be an asset!! When you are applying to proactive companies who have a reputation for hiring people with disabilities, they may have a specific interest in applicants with disabilities.

Probably more important than “when” you disclose your disability is “how” you do it. The way that you present your disability can greatly affect how the employer will view it. Are you presenting yourself as a person with a disability who has some skills – or a person with skills who happens to have a disability? Don’t be mistaken, this is an important distinction! Employers don’t hire people because they have disabilities – they hire people because they have skills. Make sure that you are presenting yourself as an enthusiastic and qualified candidate FIRST and someone with a disability, SECOND.

One of the key ingredients to disclosing your disability is to have a good understanding of who you are as an individual (self-awareness), including your interests, skills and abilities, and be able to advocate these to the employer. You should also be able to communicate what accommodation your disability requires and how this accommodation will assist you in being able to perform the essential functions of the job you are seeking.

If you don’t have a visible or otherwise obvious disability, you have the choice of when, how, and if you will disclose it to any employer. Even if you do require a reasonable accommodation on the job, you do not need to disclose your need for it until after you have been offered a job.

Resources on Disclosing your Disability

THE 411 ON DISABILITY DISCLOSURE

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/411-on-disability-disclosure>

JAN – THE JOB ACCOMMODATION NETWORK

<http://askjan.org/>

ODEP – THE GUIDEPOSTS FOR SUCCESS

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/youth/>

A page for notes

Contact a Rehabilitation Services office near you:

Aberdeen

**1707 4th Ave SE Ste A, 57401
Phone/TTY 605.626.2398 or 800.439.3417**

Brookings

**1310 Main Ave S Ste 102, 57006
Phone/TTY 605.688.4280 or 800.382.2176**

Chamberlain

**320 Sorenson Dr Ste 102, 57325
Phone/TTY 605.734.4555 or 800.265.9677**

Huron

**2361 Dakota Ave S, 57350
Phone/TTY 605.353.7130 or 800.382.2176**

Mitchell

**1321 N Main, 57301
Phone/TTY 605.995.8072 or 800.265.9677**

Pierre

**912 E Sioux Ave, 57501
Phone/TTY 605.773-3318 or 877.873.8500**

Rapid City

**2330 N Maple Ste 2, 57701
Phone/TTY 605.394.2261 or 800.439.8861**

Sioux Falls

**811 E 10th St Dept 21, 57103
Phone/TTY 605.367.5330 or 800.265.9679**

Spearfish

**1300 N Main Ave, 57783
Phone/TTY 605.642.6817 or 800.439.8861**

Watertown

**2001 9th Ave SW Ste 200, 57201
Phone/TTY 605.882.5150 or 866.261.9261**

Yankon

**3113 Spruce Ste 128, 57078
Phone/TTY 605.668.3050 or 800.265.9677**