

PLAN FOR APPROACHING EMPLOYERS

Some people who use supported employment services ask their employment specialist to talk to employers on their behalf. For instance, if a person was interested in factory jobs, the employment specialist might go out to meet some managers of factories to learn more about their jobs and to talk about the reasons that the person would be a good worker. When employment specialists talk to employers, they usually tell the employer that they work for an employment program at a mental health center. Sometimes this strategy helps people find work a little more quickly or helps people find a very specific type of job. Further, if a person gets hired, the employment specialist can help talk to the employer if there is ever a problem.

Other people who use supported employment services do not give the employment specialist permission to talk to employers on their behalf. Instead they may ask for help with job leads, filling out applications, practicing interviewing skills or other things that can help them find a job. People use this strategy when they don't want employers to know they are working with a supported employment program. Many people find that they are successful with jobs by using this approach.

Either option is fine. You should pick the strategy that feels most comfortable to you. It's also ok to change your mind at any time during the job search or after you are hired.

It's important for you and your employment specialist to talk about the possible pros and cons introducing the employment specialist to employers. The reasons that some people would not want to use this approach include:

- Some people are fearful that employers won't hire them if their disability is known. It's true that there is stigma about mental illness and that some employers probably do discriminate. It's also true that some employers are interested in working with programs like supported employment.
- Some people don't mind if their supervisor knows they are working with a program, but they wouldn't want their co-workers to find out. The employment specialist could ask your supervisor to keep this information confidential, but there aren't any guarantees that the information won't slip out.
- Some people say that they don't want to use disclosure because they are working on recovery and want to take on more responsibility, such as dealing with a supervisor, themselves.
- Some people just don't feel that this type of help is necessary. They feel pretty sure that they can be successful with a job without the employment specialist talking to employers.

The reasons that a person might want the employment specialist to talk to employers could include:

- To get extra help with a job search. Employment specialists can talk to employers about the reasons that you would be a good employee, can find out more about the available jobs and can try to set up interviews with employers.
- To get extra feedback about your work performance. Some employers don't give their employees much feedback about their work performance. Extra feedback can help a worker improve his or her performance and succeed at work.
- To ask the boss for help with a job problem. For example, if you took a job and then found out that the hours were too much for you, your employment specialist could ask the employer to decrease your hours. The employer might say no, but there is a possibility that the employer would agree. Your employment specialist can give you other examples.

You probably have your own personal feelings about disclosure. Try working on the table below with your employment specialist.

| Possible Advantages of Disclosure | Possible Disadvantages of Disclosure |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | |

When employment specialists talk to employers, it is usually possible for them to keep some things private. For example, some people don't want their employment specialist to share information like diagnosis or medications. Talk this over with your employment specialist and write down the things that you wouldn't want the specialist to share with an employer.

If you think that you might want your employment specialist to speak with employers, the two of you should discuss what he or she might say. For example, if a person thought he might be anxious at first, the employment specialist could say, "He might have a little difficulty with concentration at first because he is anxious about doing a good job. However, after a couple of weeks, I'm sure that he will be accustomed to the job and his concentration will be fine." You and your employment specialist should **stop here** and talk about some of the things that he or she might say to employers.

For now, what is your preference about approaching employers?

- I don't want my employment specialist to talk to employers.
- I am not sure right now and I would like some more time to think about this and receive some more information.
- I don't want my employment specialist to share information about me with employers. However, if my employment specialist is talking to an employer who has the type of jobs that I like and s/he hears about a good job lead, I'd like to hear about that. Maybe I'll decide to disclose for that employer.
- It's fine with me if my employment specialist talks to employers on my behalf.

Client

Date

Employment specialist

Date