

Chapter 310: Supported Employment

Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Policy and Procedures Manual
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Definitions

- A. **“Individual with a most significant disability”** means an individual who has been determined by DVR to have a physical or mental impairment that constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment and that seriously limits function in four or more areas of functional capacity (mobility, communication, work tolerance, work skills, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, dexterity/coordination), requiring multiple services over a period of six months or more.
- B. **“Supported employment”** means competitive integrated employment, including customized employment, that is individualized and customized consistent with the strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individuals involved, for individuals with the most significant disabilities:
1. For whom competitive integrated employment has not historically occurred; or for whom competitive integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability; and
 2. Who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need intensive supported employment services and extended services after the transition from DVR services in order to perform the work involved.
- C. **“Customized Employment”** means an approach to supported employment which individualizes the employment relationship between employees and employers in ways that meet the needs of both. Customized employment precedes supported employment services. It is based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs, and interests of the individual, including youth, with a disability and is also designed to meet the specific needs of the employer. Customized employment may include employment developed through job carving, self-employment or entrepreneurial initiatives, or other job development or restructuring strategies that result in job responsibilities being customized and individually negotiated to fit the needs of the individual with a disability and the employer. Customized employment assumes the provision of reasonable accommodations and supports necessary for the individual to perform the functions of a job that is individually negotiated and developed.
- D. **“Supported employment services”** means ongoing support services, including customized employment, needed to support and maintain an individual, including youth with a most significant disability, in supported employment, that:
1. Are provided singly or in combination and are organized and made available in such a way as to assist an eligible individual to achieve competitive integrated employment;
 2. Are based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual, as specified in an individualized plan for employment; and
 3. Are provided by DVR for a period of not more than 24 months. However, that period may be extended, if necessary, in order to achieve the employment outcome identified in the individualized plan for employment.
- E. **“Extended services”** means ongoing support services and other appropriate services that are needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability/disabilities in supported employment. Extended services must be organized and made available, singly or in combination, in such a way as to assist

an individual in maintaining supported employment; based on needs specified in the IPE; provided by a State agency, a private nonprofit organization, employer, or any other appropriate resource after an individual has made the transition from support from the DVR agency; and, in the case of a youth with the most significant disabilities for a period not to exceed four years or the date they turn 25 years old whichever comes first.

F. **“Natural supports”** means the supports that exist in the community including support from an employer, supervisor of employee, co-workers, family members, mentors, friends, teachers, etc. that provides ongoing support needed to maintain an individual with the most significant disability in supported employment after Federal, State or non-profit support ends. For that reason, explore all options and discuss extended services with “natural supports” while during planning.

G. **“Youth with a disability”** means an individual with a disability who is not younger than 14 years of age or older than 24 years of age.

II. General Policy

A. **Overview of the vocational rehabilitation supported employment process**

The supported employment process within the DVR program occurs across three phases. The process is not linear, so the individual can move back and forth between phases based on their circumstances. The phases are:

Phase One: Vocational rehabilitation services, which might include but not be limited to, assessment, job readiness training, credentialed training, job development and job placement services provided prior to the individual starting work. Customized employment services including discovery, customized job development and/or customized job negotiation may also be included in this phase.

Phase Two: Supported employment services, which are the on and offsite supports necessary to maintain the individual in employment. Supported employment services only starts at the point the individual starts employment in a competitive integrated setting. This includes job coaching services. DVR can fund supported employment services for up to two years (or more if needed) until the individual achieves job stability.

Phase Three: Extended services, which are the ongoing supports needed to help the participant maintain employment after they have achieved job stability. The 90-day timeline for a supported employment closure does not start until job stability has been achieved. Extended services for adults over 24 years of age must be provided and funded by a third-party agency such as the Department of Mental Health or the Developmental Disability Services Division. DVR can fund extended services for youth for a period not to exceed four years or the date they turn 25 years old whichever comes first.

B. Eligibility-

An individual, including youth, may be eligible for supported employment services if-

- The individual has been determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation and is an individual with a most significant disability
- Supported employment has been identified as the appropriate employment outcome for the individual based on a comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs, including an evaluation of rehabilitation, career, and job needs.

C. Supported Employment Target Population

The Supported Employment program serves individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities:

- For whom competitive integrated employment has not historically occurred, or
- For whom competitive integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability, and who,
- Because of the nature and severity of their disabilities, need intensive supported employment services and extended services after the transition from support provided by the DVR agency in order to perform the work involved.

The time frame for the provision of supported employment services is no longer than 24 months, unless, under special circumstances, the eligible individual and the DVR counselor have jointly agreed to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE.

D. Developing a Supported Employment IPE

Once the DVR counselor has determined through the comprehensive needs assessment that the individual requires supported employment services to achieve competitive integrated employment, they can develop the IPE. A supported employment IPE:

- Must be identified as a supported employment IPE in the case record,
- Must identify the supported employment provider, and
- Must identify the source of extended services

Extended services can come from the following sources:

- a. State Global Commitment funded programs through the Department of Mental Health child and adult programs, and the Developmental Disability Services Division programs,
- b. Community based agencies,
- c. Employer supports,
- d. Family supports, and
- e. Natural supports

E. Assessment, Job Placement Services and other Services Provided Prior to Supported Employment Placement.

Prior to job placement in supported employment, individuals will receive DVR services identified on the IPE which they and the DVR counselor have agreed will lead to the achievement of the supported employment outcome. These services are typically assessment, job development, job placement and other standard DVR support services.

F. Supported Employment Services

Supported employment services are based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual as specified in the individualized plan for employment (IPE) and are provided by the DVR agency for a period of not more than 24 months, unless under special circumstances the eligible individual and the DVR counselor jointly agree to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE. Supported employment services can include:

- The provision of job coaching and intense job skill training at the work site,
- Social skills training for the job site,
- Regular observation of the participant on the job site,
- Follow-up services including regular contact with the employer, the individual, the parents, family members, guardians, advocates or authorized representatives of the individual, and other suitable professional and informed advisors, in order to reinforce and stabilize the job placement, and
- Facilitation of natural supports at the work site.

G. Supported Employment Stability

Supported employment job stability occurs when the following conditions are met:

- The -number of hours of support needed on and off the worksite has stabilized at a predictable number of hours per month;
- The individual and the employer agree the job is stable and going well; and
- In consultation with the supported employment provider, the DVR counselor agrees the job is stable.

Once the individual has achieved stability, they are transitioned into extended services.

H. Extended Services

Extended services for adults: Extended services for adults 25 years and older must be funded or supported by a source other than DVR. The potential source of extended services must be identified in the IPE (see D.). The case may only be closed with a successful supported employment outcome after 90 consecutive days in extended employment.

Extended Services for Youth: Extended services for youth can be supported by a source other than DVR. If so the potential source of extended services must be identified in the

IPE (see D.). If extended services are not otherwise available, DVR can fund extended services for youth for up to four years or to the point the youth turns 25 years of age, whichever comes sooner. *If DVR is funding extended services for a youth, the case must remain open.*

I. **Supported Employment Closure**

To close an individual in supported employment, all the conditions for an employment closure outlined in Chapter 204 must be met. In addition, the DVR counselor must:

- Confirm in a case note the individual's access to long term extended services, or;
- Confirm in a case note the individual's has access to sufficient natural supports to retain employment; and
- Confirm the individual has been in extended services for at least 90 consecutive days.