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The National Autism  
Resource & Information Center

A national initiative of The Arc



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# Employment

**Employment can mean many things to many people. For most, employment means having a job in the community like everyone else.**

It used to be that most people with autism and other developmental disabilities spent time in sheltered workshops or small groups of workers with disabilities. This is changing, as self-advocates have increasingly identified the need for real and meaningful work. These older options do not generally provide the same opportunity to earn income or choose the work you want. They also do not provide much opportunity to work with others in the world of work.

## **What Do I Want?**

**Figuring out what you want for employment begins with developing a vision and goal. To develop these, people should think about “the big picture” they want and “making it happen” by taking steps to meet goals.**

### **...the big picture**

- Do you need help finding out what job you would like and what you are good at?
- Who are you connected with? Who might know of an available job?
- What are your hopes for employment? Type of job? Number of hours?
- Do you need help finding things to do when you're not working?

### **...making it happen**

- What kinds of help do you need to do things now? In the future?
- How active can you be in finding a job?
- How often will you need help on the job?
- Do you need help finding out about benefits?
- Do you have a way to get to your job every day?

## **How do I know if my services are good?**

**People with autism and other developmental disabilities are often eligible to access employment services to help develop goals and find and keep a job. There are a lot of different types of employment services. These may include:**

- Arranging job try-outs; job shadowing
- Assessing skills and interests
- Developing career plans
- Providing information about the impact of earning an income on public benefits
- Workplace coaching (help learning job tasks, adjusting to job requirements)
- Developing resumes
- Job training

## **Who can help me find and keep a job?**

**Employment services can help workers find and keep jobs; however, it is important to know if your employment services help you get what you want.**



### **All Programs are Not Alike**

Programs differ in size, types and variety of services, service and staff quality, people served, and quality of results. It is important for you to know what services are available and what types of programs you prefer.

### **Are There Alternatives?**

Too often, only a few service possibilities exist. Programs may not be able to take additional referrals; there may not be many service providers; or, while alternatives may exist, they may not meet your needs. It is important to know what alternatives exist in your community to find out if you need to advocate for changes to existing services or develop creative alternatives.

### **You Have Choices**

People with autism and other developmental disabilities have say in the services they receive. Sometimes employment service providers present services with a “take it or leave it” attitude or from the point of view of an “expert” that knows best. Other times, service providers do not know the variety of options available. It is important to know what services exist in your community and advocate for alternatives that better support your needs.

### **Empowerment**

Taking the time to learn about service options allows you to be more in the “driver’s seat” when negotiating with service providers.

## **Resources**

### **Quality Employment Services: Will You Know It When You See It?**

[http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article\\_id=11](http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=11)

### **Glossary of Work-Related Terms**

<http://www.realworkstories.org/glossary>

### **National Center for Workforce and Disability**

<http://www.onestops.info/>

### **America’s Service Locator: Find Workforce Services in Your Neighborhood**

<http://www.servicelocator.org/>

## **About The National Autism Resource & Information Center**

**The National Autism Resource and Information Center** is a dynamic and interactive central point of quality resources and information for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and other developmental disabilities, and their families.

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