

The Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE)

Supported Employment Quality Indicators

National APSE is the largest professional advocacy organization in the country representing supported employment (SE) and the individuals served in SE. Supported Employment has grown significantly in the past decade, involving approximately 150,000 individuals with disabilities.

This document represents an effort by national APSE to articulate quality indicators of individualized and integrated Supported Employment. These quality indicators were designed to complement *APSE's Ethical Guidelines for Professionals in Supported Employment*.

Given the fact that individuals with disabilities have the right to drive their employment process with maximum choice and control of services, this document begins with quality indicators for individuals in SE. Direct service practitioners are in a position to support individual plans for employment. The second section delineates values and competencies for direct SE practitioners. The final section specifies organizational characteristics that support quality services.

This document may have multiple uses, including as a guide for: 1) hiring and training employment personnel; 2) developing training curricula; 3) reviewing and evaluating programs; 4) appraising individual performance; and 5) action planning. Potential users of this document include people with disabilities and their families, advocacy groups, employment consultants, trainers, administrators/managers, human resource personnel, and state agency personnel.

Quality Indicators for Individuals in Supported Employment- Individual Choice and Control of Resources and Supports

According to the Rehabilitation Act, individuals have the right to exercise informed choice throughout the entire rehabilitation process. This includes obtaining information and the necessary supports to assist people to develop, monitor, implement, and evaluate their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) with assistance as needed and desired.

- Individuals explore career opportunities based on their interests, abilities, and needs via such experiences as vocational education classes, job shadowing, job try-outs, and actual employment.
- Individuals have ongoing opportunities to develop self-determination skills through active participation in information gathering, experiential learning, and decision-making.
- Individuals direct their transition plan and/or IPE to the maximum extent possible, with support as needed.
- Individuals control the resources, if desired, to purchase services and supports. Family members, personal advisors, and other trusted advocates assist individuals as needed.
- Individuals are assisted as needed to secure employment according to their individual desires, including the type of work environments, activities, hours, pay, supports, etc.
- Individuals participate maximally in interviews and in choosing training and support procedures typical to workplaces.
- Individuals have necessary and appropriate accommodations, assistive technology, and individualized supports within and outside of their job.

- Individuals are connected to desired adult services, including generic supports, in order to pursue desired lifestyles.
- Individuals pursue career advancement opportunities in order to develop skills, increase pay and responsibilities, or other desired outcomes.
- Individuals develop satisfying relationships within and outside of their job, as desired.
- Individuals are supported to participate in social activities within and outside of their job, as desired.
- Individuals are compensated commensurate with others in their position.
- Individuals have access to reliable transportation.
- Individuals are assisted to manage their finances (e.g., banking, budgeting, benefits) as needed and desired.
- Individuals of retirement age are supported to pursue a variety of employment and/or post-employment options.

Quality Indicators for Supported Employment Personnel

Providing quality supported employment services requires technical and interpersonal skills applied creatively and flexibly. Personnel in direct service roles must listen to and respect the desires of each individual they support, adhere to the norms of each workplace, and work closely with others involved in the person's life. Quality services and supports are dignified, holistic, age-appropriate, and status/image enhancing, with the goal of connecting each individual to the fabric of work, home, social, and recreational activities.

- School personnel involved in transition assist youth to explore career opportunities, develop work skills and behaviors, and develop self-determination skills through active participation in information gathering, experiential learning, and decision-making.
- Transition team members support students to direct their transition plans to the maximum extent possible, with support as needed.
- School and adult service personnel assist youth in transition to obtain desired adult services, including generic supports, after high school.
- Providers get to know job seekers via activities such as spending time together in multiple settings, observing the individual work, talking with others who know the person best, etc.
- Providers assist job seekers, including individuals with significant disabilities, to participate maximally in job development and employer contact activities according to their individual plan for employment.
- Providers rely heavily on personal networks and referrals for job leads.
- Providers assist individuals to negotiate individual job descriptions/position titles, hours, commensurate wages (paid directly from the employer), work tasks, work location, and necessary accommodations prior to beginning a job, with the goal of maximizing presence and participation in the work setting. Providers are knowledgeable about job carving and restructuring.
- Providers do not group people together for the convenience of support or job availability.

- Providers work in partnership with supported employees on the best employment training approaches to meet the person's needs, emphasizing typical workplace supports and the use of discreet, status enhancing teaching techniques.
- Providers work in partnership with supported employees and workplace personnel to develop assistive technology and individualized supports that are as typical to the workplace as possible and that maximize individual performance.
- Providers treat individuals in a manner appropriate to their age, gender, and culture, and in accordance with the norms of their job and the workplace.
- Providers assist individuals as needed to develop relationships within and outside of their job.
- Providers support individuals as needed to access social activities (e.g., parties, holiday functions) and employer-sponsored activities (e.g., sports, community service projects) within and outside of their job.
- Providers encourage typical probation and performance appraisal processes within each workplace.
- Providers assist individuals as needed to access reliable transportation.
- Providers assist individuals to manage their finances (e.g., banking, budgeting, benefits) as needed.
- Providers monitor individual job satisfaction and support people to pursue career development and advancement opportunities.
- Providers support people of retirement age to pursue activities according to their interests, including employment and integrated community activities for senior citizens.
- Providers assist individuals as needed to access housing, community connections (e.g., church/synagogue, YMCA, service/civic clubs), and other necessary services and supports, with an emphasis on generic services.
- Providers interface with family members and other service providers according to the method (e.g., telephone, meetings) and schedule (e.g., weekly, monthly) determined by the individual and team.
- Providers develop long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships with businesses that result in career exploration activities, quality jobs, marketing efforts, etc. on the part of businesses, and consultation, training, accommodation strategies, etc. from providers.
- Providers interface with businesses and the larger community through connections with chambers of commerce, service clubs, and other organizations.

Organizational Practices That Support Quality Services

Most personnel involved in supported employment are affiliated with a community rehabilitation program, mental health center, or supported employment organization. Unless such organizations are structured to provide integrated employment and related community services with a clear mission to do so, personnel in direct service roles will have difficulty providing quality services.

- The organization has established a clear vision and mission that promotes integrated employment, community inclusion, and zero exclusion.

- The organization works toward a flat organizational structure, with most personnel in direct service roles.
- The organization promotes stakeholder involvement in planning and decision-making through various informal and formal means.
- The organization supports staff to be involved in person-centered/person-directed planning that addresses individual interests, preferences, and support needs.
- The organization supports individualized jobs and related supports for all service recipients, including people with high support needs.
- The organization pursues flexible, individualized funding that allows sufficient support for individuals with high support needs.
- The organization has job descriptions that promote the focus on integrated employment and related community supports.
- The organization configures staff to provide holistic supports in a collaborative fashion (e.g., full service, self-directed teams), and supports reasonable staff-to-individual ratios.
- The organization has a staff recruitment and retention process that promotes hiring and keeping high quality personnel.
- The organization invests in staff development through extensive, ongoing training and support.
- The organization promotes a learning culture in which creativity, innovation, and risk taking are supported and where staff feel empowered.
- The organization operates with an action bias, focusing on continuous evaluation and improvement of outcomes.
- The organization collects and uses data on consumer outcomes, staff productivity, customer satisfaction, cost efficiency, and other process and outcome variables.
- The organization has a staff compensation and reward process that reinforces desired outcomes.
- The organization promotes leadership at all levels of the organization.
- The organization has developed marketing materials and approaches that coincide with common business practices and promote a positive and professional image.
- The organization has developed partnerships with the business community and other external entities in the community, state, and nation.

APSE views this material as a “living document,” open to continuous evaluation and improvement as the field progresses. APSE invites your feedback about how the document is being used and welcomes suggested changes.

These quality indicators have been developed through the efforts of several people who have volunteered, at various times, to be part of APSE’s Quality Indicators Work Groups: Karen Flippo, Pat Keul, Tom Harrison, Debra Martin Petty, Brenda Harvey, Dale Dutton, Renee Drouet, Bob Niemiec, Rebecca McDonald, Sue Killam, Pat Rogan, Tammara Geary, Linda Quinn, Dale DiLeo, Rob Hoffman, and the New Jersey APSE Chapter. This final version was compiled by Pat Rogan.