

Breaking into State Employment Offices and Being Invited to Stay



Creative problem solving appears to be the spring board to success and community partnerships for Job Connections

In 1989, job seekers typically went to their local unemployment office. Dr. James Moss, a vocational program director at the University of Washington in Seattle and advocate for people with disabilities, realized that those with developmental disabilities in particular could not effectively use the same services as the general public. Dr. Moss obtained a federal grant and started Job Connection, an employee service for people with developmental disabilities based on the traditional supportive employment model of meeting with potential employers, developing jobs for clients, providing job coaching (training) services, and supporting the worker long term with retaining his or her position. The grant enabled him to hire four experienced vocational specialists to work for Washington State Employment Security at two local unemployment offices.

Job Connection's approach has always been to emphasize what its customers can do for the employer's company. Companies have allowed Job Connection staff members to meet with employees to discover what tasks the staff members would be willing

to share. Job Connection staff members combine all these tasks, create a structured daily/weekly schedule, and present it to the company's management. Staff members explain how hiring someone to perform all these tasks could free up higher paid staff members' time to perform the work they were hired to do. This type of job carving saves the company money, makes its current staff members happy, and creates jobs for people with disabilities.

Job Connection staff members consider numerous factors when matching an applicant to a job. Will the worker make a contribution to the company? Will the worker fit into its corporate culture? Is it a good personality match? Is the job something that the worker enjoys doing? Can the company accommodate the worker's barriers? Can natural supports be developed before the job coaching period is completed? Job Connection staff members are very honest with employers and strongly encourage them to voice any concerns they may have. Staff members ask employers to rate what's important to them in a worker, such as speed, quality, good customer relations skills, flexibility, dependability, or coworker relations. If Job Connection doesn't have an applicant who is a good match for the job, it doesn't refer anyone. It's more important to develop a trusting relationship with a potential employer than to develop a situation that is likely to fail. By expanding Job Connection's role from being strictly an advocate for the worker to that of a consultant and at times a mediator, a greater natural integration occurs at the job site.

When the grant for the initial project ended, Job Connection continued through various funding sources from the Department of Social and Health Services. Over the years, there have been many advances in developing access to traditional services for people with disabilities.

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Putting out the Good Word: Some Information About the Promising Practices Series

For several years, CARF surveyors have provided observations on promising practices, or exemplary conformance to standards, in their survey reports. Through the CARF data collection system we can identify those organizations that have received exemplary conformance ratings for one or several standards.

In response to the frequent request, "Do you know who does...?," we are offering a series of short articles on a variety of promising practices that CARF surveyors have observed during surveys from 2004 to the present.

The practice presented in each article is usually from an organization that has one or two practices rated exemplary out of the hundreds of standards rated for conformance during a survey. We have no particular order we will follow in presenting this series of short reports. The purpose is not to rate one organization over another, but to encourage U.S. and Canadian community providers to dialogue with one another

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and to encourage creative solutions to individual service designs and organizational business practices and thereby achieve effective and positive results in each organization's community.

Although there are indeed a number of ways to approach conformance to a standard, what makes organizations given an exemplary rating stand out is their professional and strategic response to an observed service or business need, always designed with input from their stakeholders and based on those individuals' quality expectations.