



THE CHOICE GROUP

Supported Employment Program

Service Description and Procedures

The Choice Group, Inc.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Choice Group is a commitment to excellence in meeting our client's needs, while foremost respecting their individuality and right to make life choices.

PURPOSE

The Choice Group, Inc.'s Supported Employment Program provides employment and support services to persons with severe/most severe disabilities. Specifically, persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, acquired brain injury, long term mental illness and transition students are the focus of services. This program is driven by the need for expanded employment services for persons with significant/most significant disabilities within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Consistent with the current movement in the area of supported employment service provision to increase client choice and empowerment, The Choice Group, Inc.'s Supported Employment Program offers additional choice to clients and referral sources and strengthens the quality of existing services through increase competition.

REFERRAL AND INTAKE PROCEDURES

The Choice Group will provide persons served with information about the organization to include the array of services provided, the qualifications of staff to provide these services, and its ability to serve the individual. This information will be provided through various methods, namely company brochures, marketing packets, the company website and the company CD. It is mandated that this information be shared with persons served by the referral agency. In addition, The Choice Group will disclose any potential conflict of interest noted when servicing these individuals. The Choice Group will also disclose costs of services, as well as information about outcomes performance. If the need arises for additional services, The Choice Group will make recommendations for such, and may reconsider the individual for admission to the program at a later date.

The following eligibility criteria are used to guide entrance into the program:

1. The client must be defined by the referral source as having a significant/most significant disability.

2. The client must live within a 50 mile radius of the service area. (Service area is defined as within a 50 mile radius of The Choice Group, Inc.'s office or physical location of the Vocational Counselor.
3. The client must be medically released to work.
4. The client must be willing to work with the assistance and support of a Vocational Counselor.
5. The client must express motivation to obtain employment.
6. Clients with histories of ongoing, current substance abuse must be willing to participate in a substance abuse evaluation and to comply with any recommendations made.

Rehabilitation Counselors and Case Managers making a referral to the program are asked to provide historical records, including discharge summaries, vocational evaluation, psychological and neuropsychological reports, for Vocational Counselors to review prior to/following the initial meeting with the client. Following receipt of this information, Vocational Counselors will schedule an appointment to conduct an initial interview with the client. Family members and the Rehabilitation Counselor will be asked to participate in this meeting whenever possible. Information gathered and discussed during the initial interview includes:

- Identification information/Emergency Contact Person
- Medical diagnosis/functional limitations
- Financial support status
- Education history
- Per/post injury work history
- Residential status
- Vocational/psychological/neuropsychological evaluations
- Activities of daily living
- Behavioral observations
- Support systems
- Vocational expectations
- Authorization to exchange information
- Client goals/desires

During the initial interview, services offered by the program are reviewed along with the client's responsibilities for participating. The client and family members are given the

opportunity to ask questions and to express any concerns regarding the client's participation in the program. Should any potential problem areas be identified which could impact employment, discussion will focus on additional resources which may enhance the client's participation in supported employment.

INDIVIDUALIZED PLANNING

Within 30 days of the initial interview, all clients, working with a Vocational Counselor, will develop an Individual Service Plan. Employment information will be considered in the development of the plan, to include work history, previous training and education, economic status and the impact of employment on any benefits the person may be receiving, resources for career planning, transportation needs, the availability of natural support, as well as the client's strengths, abilities, needs, preferences, desired outcomes, cultural background, and any other identified issues. The plan will also identify the person's desired employment outcomes that are relevant to the local job market. In addition, the plan will address barriers to an individual's desired employment opportunities, or retention of employment, and strengths, supports, or solutions to overcome these. This information will be captured and furnished via the monthly Situational Assessment or Supported Employment report. If needed, the person served will be given the opportunity to request a timely modification to the plan.

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH AND STAFFING

The Choice Group, Inc.'s Supported Employment Program utilizes the individual placement model to implement its services. The individual placement approach is characterized by the pairing of one Vocational Counselor with one client at a job site to provide training. The Vocational Counselor gradually reduces his/her time as the client acquires the skills necessary for the position. Information and resources regarding employment services will be provided to the person seeking employment in a manner that is understandable to him or her. Moreover, the person served will be involved in making informed employment-related decisions, including the expected results of the services for the individual, how the design of the services meets his or her identified needs, and how and when results will be evaluated. The person served is given information about the expected duration of the services, as well as possible alternatives for services.

The staff/client ratio for the individual program will be established as one Vocational Counselor to five clients. This ratio may be adjusted based on the characteristics and needs of clients participating in the program.

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES

Situational Assessment

When performing situational assessment activities, the Vocational Counselor will use positions in actual work settings to enable a client to test his/her interest in performing job duties within various work environments as well as to observe his/her response to training strategies and identify needs for support. For a client contemplating a return to pre-injury employment, situational assessments can be provided to determine the feasibility of returning to his/her regular job or to another position within the workplace. While a situational assessment will not be mandatory for all clients, it can be a useful tool when more information is desired regarding a vocational direction.

Information collected during situational assessments will include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Type and level of supports needed at the job site;
- Individual training needed to acquire and maintain acceptable production skills;
- Anticipated level of intervention that will be required by the Vocational Counselor;
- Integrated work environment in which the client can potentially succeed; and
- Other information needed to develop an appropriate individualized employment plan, including the supported employee's interest in doing the job, transportation to and from work, family support, and financial issues (i.e., wage impact on Social Security benefits).

Job Development

Research has demonstrated that clients participating in supported employment are most commonly placed into warehouse, clerical, and service related positions. However, The Choice Group, Inc. recognizes the diversity in interests, experience, and abilities of person referred for supported employment services. Consequently, efforts are made to expand employment opportunities into areas in addition to those listed above, including science and technology, business, communication, arts, and outdoor occupations. Specific job development activities are of course, driven by the individual interests and capabilities of each client.

Job Placement

For each potential job identified through job development, data is collected on job requirements, responsibilities, working conditions, and social environment using detailed job analysis format. This information is used to evaluate the client and the position to determine whether the likelihood of a successful placement exists. If the comparison reveals a positive match, the Vocational Counselor completes activities to secure the placement to include: assistance with application procedures, support during the interview process, guidance regarding job offers and negotiation of salary, and initial planning for work.

Job Site Training and Advocacy

Clients with severe/most severe disabilities often possess a number of physical, cognitive and psychosocial deficits. Because these deficits vary among individuals, an individualized job training approach is used which is based on the needs of the client. We offer both Supported Employment Services (SES) as well as Job Coach Training Services (JCTS) in order to maximize flexibility in training approaches.

Job site training frequently focuses on performing job-specific tasks at acceptable levels of quantity and quality to ensure that employer expectations are met. In addition, the Vocational Counselor may need to restructure the work environment or adapt tools and equipment to accommodate a client's physical or sensory limitations. Deficits in reasoning, memory, or other cognitive areas might be addressed through the use of compensatory strategies such as checklists, flowcharts, memory books and alarm watches.

The Vocational Counselor will also attend to the social adjustment of the client to the workplace by encouraging positive interactions and minimizing unusual behaviors. Throughout job site training, the Vocational Counselor will address behavioral difficulties through functional analysis of behavior, ecological intervention, training in self-management of behavior, and teaching replacement behaviors.

To facilitate the integration of the client into the work setting, the Vocational Counselor will encourage the development of natural supports, such as supervisors, co-workers, customers, and other available employer resources. Since co-workers sometimes feel hesitant to initiate interactions with the clients, the Vocational Counselor acts as a liaison between the co-workers and client by actively participating in interactions until rapport has been established and positive, appropriate interactions are taking place.

Upon request, employers will be provided with educational resources, referrals of qualified job applicants, technical assistance, support in the development of employment opportunities, and other resources, as requested.

Ongoing Assessment and Follow-Along

After the client has achieved competence in his/her position, the Vocational Counselor continues to monitor his/her work performance and social adjustment through objective measures as well as interviews with the client, employer, co-workers, and family members. The Vocational Counselor's objective is to identify and address any problem areas before they become job-threatening. Intervention may also be needed for incidents which occur outside the work setting, such as financial or family difficulties or use of alcohol or drugs, which may affect job performance. The frequency of follow-along contacts will be based on the individual needs of the client; however, at least one contact per month will be provided.

Funding for follow-along services are sought, in part, through long term extended support services (LTESS), and the local community service boards for clients meeting the eligibility criteria. To supplement these funds, program participants will be evaluated for the feasibility of utilizing work incentive programs offered by the Social Security Administration (SSA). Clients eligible to use Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) or Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE) exclusions are offered assistance, as appropriate, in developing and monitoring programs which enables them to achieve their vocational goals.

Satisfaction/Communication

Each person's satisfaction with the employment services will be assessed on a regular basis, as appropriate to the individual and services provided. This information will be captured via the monthly Team Meeting form. The person served will be provided with resources for employment guidance, referrals for needed services, opportunities for meaningful employment, and sources for access to other resources, as requested by the person served. Access to current information on local job opportunities will be available and shared with the person served, and used in developing services. Employment services will be changed to meet the personnel needs of the local job market.

Outcomes/Exit Criteria

The intended outcome for program participants is that they successfully maintain competitive employment in integrated settings with opportunities for ongoing support, as needed, for at least one year. Regular feedback is sought from clients, family members, employers, and referral sources regarding their satisfaction with supported employment services provided.

Instances in which clients may exit from the program include:

- Job Coach Training Services have been provided and the client does not need long-term follow-along;
- The client has a diagnosis requiring treatment/hospitalization;
- The client does not wish to obtain employment;
- The client does not wish to work with the assistance and support of a Vocational Counselor;
- The client refuses to participate in a substance abuse evaluation in spite of evidence that ongoing substance abuse is impeding work performance;
- The client has moved away from the areas served.

STAFF COMPETENCY AND QUALIFICATIONS

The Choice Group, Inc.'s Supported Employment Program is managed by Robin Metcalf, M.Ed., M.S., C.R.C., N.C.C., C.C.M., C.R.P., L.P.C., as a Program Director. Please refer to the Appendix for Ms. Metcalf's curriculum vita which details her extensive experience in the field of rehabilitation.

Managers and Vocational Counselors hired for the program will meet the following minimum education and experience qualifications:

- Graduate degree from an accredited college in a related field (Rehabilitation Counseling, Social Work, Special Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Psychology, Sociology, Counseling, Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Human Services, or other degree determined to be equivalent), and 1 year of experience.
- Bachelor Degree from an accredited college in a related field (Rehabilitation Counseling, Social Work, Special Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Psychology, Sociology, Counseling, Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Human Services, or other degree determined to be equivalent), and 2 years of experience.
- Associates degree (or equivalent credits) from an accredited college in a related field (Rehabilitation Counseling, Social Work, Special Education, Vocational

Rehabilitation, Psychology, Sociology, Counseling, Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Human Services, or other degree determined to be equivalent), and 4 years of experience.

- High School diploma or equivalent and 10 years of related experience.

Employment Specialists hired for the program will meet the following minimum education and experience qualifications:

- Associates degree (or equivalent credits) or higher, and 2 years of experience.
- High School diploma or equivalent, and 4 years of experience.