



Chapter Four

Meaningful Employment

When persons with intellectual disabilities are looking for employment, they may need to try different options until they find what best suits them. The challenge may be helping others to see that they need time and the permission to change their mind. Another challenge may be getting the proper supports in place so they can do what they enjoy. In this section, we will look at some of the options and supports available for employment and daily activities.

Today, doors are opening for people with disabilities to receive the necessary support to find meaningful work and activities in their communities. Regardless of the options you and your child are considering, make sure that your child's personality, interests and happiness are front and center. INSK's Employment and Transition Facilitators can answer your questions about meaningful employment in the community.

4.1 High School Work Experience Programs

The lack of paid experience is one of the biggest barriers to employment for people with intellectual disabilities. In order to move into regular employment after high school, it is very important that young adults with disabilities have the opportunity to experience paid employment before they finish school. A great way for young adults to gain paid experience is through school work-experience programs.

Tip: Work with teachers to ensure that the work experience reflects the reality of being in the workforce. Occasionally, young adults are given the least demanding and least relevant jobs. You need to be aware that this could lead to unrealistic perceptions of employment once individuals start working. Also, suggest to the teacher that they ask the employer to view the student as a potential employee. If this request is made, the employer is more likely to challenge and evaluate the student like a real employee. This approach can change everything; it will allow the student will come away from the experience with a clearer idea of what the employer expects and be more prepared to work in the community.

4.2 Job Creation

Job creation means working with an employer to create a new position that makes use of the skills of a person with a disability, while also benefiting the business owner. In most workplaces, these jobs will focus on handling routine and frequently unfinished tasks that are time consuming (e.g. light administrative duties like filing paperwork or office cleaning). The goal is to create a long-term, sustainable job that fits the person and benefits the business.

4.3 Job Coaches

Job coaches provide one-on-one support that helps persons with intellectual disabilities learn the tasks of a job and help foster a supportive and inclusive environment with other employees in the workplace. As the individual becomes more and more comfortable and capable in their workplace, the job coach is slowly phased out. A job coach will help to:

- Identify tasks pertaining to the position.



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- Sort tasks in priority.
- Identify areas for accommodation.
- Orient the individual to the workplace (with the employer if possible) including: the physical layout (bathroom, lunchroom, employer's office, etc.); introduction to co-workers, customers, and employers; review of the safety rules; review of the company rules/consequences.

For more information on job coaching, contact an INSK Employment and Transitions Facilitator.

4.4 Self-Employment

Self-employment can be very successful for people with intellectual disabilities. It allows them to discover the freedom, flexibility and independence that comes from running their own business. You can help your child gain employment and build it around their needs by creating the business yourselves. Doing something they love can be empowering, rather than being placed in a job that does not work for them.

Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program

The Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program (EDP) helps people with disabilities start and grow their own businesses. They provide one-to-one business consultation, so if you are planning to start a business or already have one, they will meet with you to discuss your business's needs. They can assist you with creating your business plan and direct you to available resources and business training in your community. They even help you with the process of accessing business loans. There are three offices that you can contact: North Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre (NSILC) in Saskatoon, South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre (SSILC) in Regina and Community Futures which has 13 branches in rural Saskatchewan areas.