

EMPLOYMENT **TOOLKIT**

Barriers & Assets Identification Meetings Steps for Discussing an Individual's Dream Job

Step #1

Create an environment in which the consumer feels comfortable sharing their dreams. Remember, this is very personal information and some individuals may be hesitant to share their dreams. This initial meeting/conversation also includes reviewing the VFP process and explaining the roles of the Employment Consultant and the Benefit Specialist.

Step #2

Encourage the consumer to take a moment to think about what excites them in life. Ask, "What is your dream job?" Often, people are unable to talk about their dream job because they see too many barriers. Encourage the individual to forget about the barriers, e.g. transportation, attendant care, training needs, and health, and ask, "Regardless of any barriers to employment, what is your dream job?"

Step #3

Ask, "What is it about this occupational field that interests or excites you?"

If the consumer has difficulty with the question, "what is your dream job?" discuss the following questions:

- What are you passionate about in life?
- What excites you in life?
- What are your hobbies?
- What are your favorite pastimes?
- What topics do you like to read?
- What do you like to watch on TV?
- What careers sound interesting to you?
- When you were growing up, what did you want to be?

Remember, some individuals have never been asked about their dreams by a service provider and may be surprised when you ask this question. Don't be surprised if you encounter one of the following situations:

The individual:

1. might not be able to state a dream job
2. is unwilling to share the information because of a lack of trust
3. cannot clearly define the dream job and give you steps on how to accomplish this goal
4. states a goal that seems completely unrealistic

5. just wants a job- any job
6. is not able to describe strengths and skills.

What if the employment goal sounds unrealistic?

The VFP staff should remain “judgment-free”, allowing the consumer to dream. It is important to understand what factors influenced the consumer’s career decision. Consider the following:

1. Are the job duties the driving force?
2. Is the work environment the driving force?
3. Is the salary/pay scale the driving force?
4. Is public image important?
5. Is it the uniform/clothing that is important?
6. Is it already a hobby?
7. Is it a job that a friend or family member has so it is familiar?
8. Does the consumer already have the skills, knowledge, and experience for the employment goal?

**** Remember, the individual uses the VFP process to determine the feasibility of the employment goal, not The VFP staff or others involved in the process.

It is possible to proceed with conversations about the barriers and assets without a stated employment goal. If the goal has not been defined, it will be treated as a barrier and addressed through career exploration.

Conversation Tips for Discussing an Individual's Barriers and Assets

Tip #1

Before diving into all of the questions about barriers and assets, make sure the individual is comfortable to proceed. Does the consumer have any questions about the VFP process that need to be answered?

Tip #2

Discussing the barriers and assets requires skillful interviewing and active listening. If you have little experience gathering information and/or interviewing, become familiar with the questions provided. Practice the questions with a colleague so they become natural. Don't rely on the questions as a form or checklist. Let it be a guide to generate conversation and additional questions. Individualize and personalize the questions. All information should be gathered in the context of the barriers and assets identification. The most natural way to start the discussion on barriers is to ask the consumer, “What barriers would you like to discuss first?”

Tip #3

The Barriers & Assets Identification process can be accomplished through a series of conversational meetings. Take as many meetings as necessary to gather the information on

the barriers and assets. It usually takes 2-3 meetings. The written Barriers & Assets report will be a snapshot of the consumer's current situation. Barriers do change and can change quickly. Resist the temptation to revisit barriers as they change during the Barriers & Assets meetings. A more appropriate time to revisit changing barriers would be during the upcoming VFP meetings.

Tip #4

Remember, this is a not a solution-driven meeting(s). Gather information, and avoid the temptation to solve problems and/or discuss solutions. Leave this task for future meetings with the VFP team. If there is an emergency barrier that needs to be addressed before the VFP meetings begin, assist the individual through that barrier. For example, if the consumer is extremely anxious about his/her benefits situation and can't proceed until their fears have been addressed, provide the necessary information to the consumer.

Barriers and Assets Identification Checklist

- ✓ Develop a rapport with the consumer.
- ✓ Create an environment that is safe and filled with trust.
- ✓ Clearly explain the VFP process and the roles of the Employment Consultant and the Benefit Specialist.
- ✓ Guide the consumer into talking about dreams, passions, hobbies, and a dream job regardless of barriers.
- ✓ Have conversations about the barriers and assets.