

Developing a Career Profile Webinar Transcript

Recorded by: Darius McKinney

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Hello my name is Darius McKinney. I work for the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health, and today I'm here to talk about developing the career profile. Basically, one of the most important things to a job seeker is trying to determine what he or she wants to do. As an employment specialist, one of his or her most important functions, as an employment specialist, is helping that person develop a career profile.

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A career profile is the building blocks of any job search because it's difficult to go out in the community and try to job-develop and find a job that fits somebody without having the building blocks of trying to find out what that person wants to do, what he likes to do, or what she desires to do. Career profiles are a very important aspect as far as IPS. So, today we're going to talk about that. The objectives basically for this training are: What is a career profile; completing a career profile; and using the career profile on job development.

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So first and foremost, what is a career profile? A career profile refers to a document in which the employment specialist records work and educational preferences, work history, educational history, strengths, justice system involvement, and other information that's important to a person's employment goals. It can also be called a vocational assessment, a vocational profile, or even a career assessment in certain places. All of these things are basically the same document – a career profile.

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Some things that a career profile is not – I think that's very, very important to understand what a career profile is not, especially in the IPS model. What a career profile is not; it is not a questionnaire, it is not a standardized vocational test of ability, it is not an intelligence test, it is not a work sample, it is not a physical or drug test, it is not a situational assessment or work try-out, it is not a one-time completed document, it is not developed in just one session. All these things are truly what a career profile is NOT.

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When doing a career profile, it is completed over two or three sessions. It is used as an engagement piece to really try to identify what your job seeker wants to do. You gather a ton of information so it's very, very comprehensive. It asks things about hobbies, likes, dislikes, things about how long a person wants to work, location of where they want to work, past work history, it includes all those items as well. It's an ongoing document -- which basically means, even

though you complete it in two or three sessions, during that entire time that you're working with that person to find a job, you're still gathering information about their work preferences. So even after a person has a job, you still add to that career profile to figure out what a person likes and dislikes.

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It's updated with changes and preferences, so if somebody has a change of heart of what they want to do, you can always add to a profile and change the preferences.

It's updated with information and work experience from jobs. As a person works, it is always updated. He or she may find new things they like, and they may realize things that they now don't like. So, if a job search ever needs to happen again, that information is definitely recorded.

It also aims at problem solving and environmental things. Use your environment and surroundings to figure out what a person wants to do. Does he or she like a busy work environment? Does he like a quiet workplace? Does she like to be around people? Does he like to be micromanaged? Does she not like to be micromanaged? Does she like to work outside? All those things are a part of the career profile.

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So, you gather different information from different resources. There are so many different places that you can gather this type of information from. First and foremost, of course you gather information from the job seeker on what his or her preferences are, and what he or she likes to do. Gather information from the client.

You also gather information from different treatment team members. They have a vast knowledge when working with that person for a few months, few years, or a few days. They have information they have gathered in their history of working with that person that might help with that career profile.

Clinical records are important also. There's information in clinical records that you might gather information from. If a person has an anger management problem, you might pick that from clinical records and that might be something you want to discuss as you work with that person in seeking a job.

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Family members, definitely with permission. If that client gives you permission to talk to family members, they have an insight as well of what a person wants to do, how he or she was happy when they had been working before, or what they might be satisfied with in future endeavors. I have put a star by family members as we will revisit family later.

Teachers, that's a good resource. Teachers have a good knowledge of determining what a person's special interests are, what they like to do, what they don't like to do, what they excel at, what they were good at, etc. Teachers are a good resource.

Previous employers, of course with the client's permission, is a good resource, too. Previous employers can determine a lot of stuff of what went well on the job, what didn't go so hot on the job, and what things needed to be improved so that person became successful in working in that environment. So that's a good resource as well.

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Field trips in the community. When I say field trips that means going out in the community and really observing different work settings. For instance, you take a person who says he wants to work in a dry cleaner – so take him on a field trip to a dry cleaner and observe all the things that a person does in a dry cleaning setting. Whether it's the cashier, interacting with customers, actually working in the back and working on dry cleaning clothes, doing the laundry, or doing tailor needs – all are work functions. All those types of things are different tasks that happen inside that work setting. So, you definitely want to take a person, depending on what he or she wants to do, to a similar job setting to see if that's something that fits for them.

A long time ago, I took a person who was interested in working at a dry cleaning store to a dry cleaner to observe the work site. Come to find out – he hated it, the working area was too hot for him, he didn't enjoy the heat. So that was good information to put on the career profile – even though he wanted to work in this type of customer service setting, he did not like the heat. So climate control, that's a very important thing.

The final thing is job shadows. You can take a person and shadow someone who is already doing the job. So for instance, a lot of people, at first, say they want to work in the mailroom, so you can take that person and job shadow someone who actually works in the mailroom. The job seeker can ask that person information about what they like, what they dislike, the different type of job tasks they have to do every day, etc. All these things are great pieces of information that you can add to different career profiles.

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Getting back to family members, because family members is a very unique aspect of gathering information. I stress on this topic because family members are very important, but also everyone has a different view of what family members are. Everyone's view of family is very, very unique to them, and what they feel their family is. You know you can have a traditional family; mother, father, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, people like that. You can have a spouse, a boyfriend, a girlfriend, a partner – those people are family. Relatives, again you can be distant cousins, first cousins, second cousins – all those other relatives that make a family. For some people, a guardian, a payee, a landlord, or other people known over time have become really valuable family members in their view as well.

Payees or landlords or guardians – those are people who may have helped that person achieve in their goals of their life maybe other than work – so the client feels they are family. Gather information from them.

Religious leaders – a lot of times, religious leaders, depending on a person's faith, are very, very monumental in different cultural settings. A pastor or priest, they're a good person to get a different kind of information from.

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Community members – people in the community, friends, roommates, those also are very valuable sources people might feel as family. I remember a person who went to the local Dunkin Donuts every day, and the owner of that Dunkin Donuts store was a real resource to him. They developed a really good bond and, in the client's aspect, the store owner was family. That job seeker used that store owner as a source of information and a source of getting and gaining advice from. That's another source of family information for the career profile.

Then, others in recovery, maybe peers, maybe fellow job seekers, maybe people in other drop-in centers – those are also people who have very valuable opinions that people honor and want to hear from.

So there are many unique views of family members. So, when doing a career profile, please be open to whatever that job seeker feels his or her family members are. Be open, gather information, that's valuable information that you can use in your career profile.

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When gathering information, you have different types of information that you want to gather. The more information you have will help the career profile be solid. So, for instance, of course you're going to capture work goals, what that person wants to do as far as work. Education, what kinds of things has that person gained in educational history. Former work experience, what they did and didn't like on those jobs. Military experience, if they are a veteran, that's valuable information as well – what things they liked or were good at in the military.

Cultural background is important too. Cultural backgrounds are always valuable in regard to different information. To give you a brief example, I worked with a person and in his culture, they feel when a person passes, their spirit is also in their clothing that they have. I took him to a Salvation Army to get clothes and, in my mind, I figured that it was a good place to shop because it was not expensive, and there was very good clothing there. But in his mind, that was not a good place at all because in his religion and culture, the spirits of those who gave their clothes away are still in their clothes, which would have made him feel very uncomfortable wearing those clothes to work. This is just an example of how cultural background plays a part in gathering information. Make sure someone is comfortable on a job is valuable.

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Of course, a person's mental health – what kind of things can help that person be successful and what kind of things might be a barrier. Earlier, I talked about a person having anger management issues. That is something that you might want to know, so that when you do a career profile and you have that kind of information, you can make sure to help that person overcome those barriers as far as work.

Cognitive barriers are important as well – if a person has memory challenges you want to know. So, when you're out job developing at places, you can keep that in mind to make sure you have a plan for that person to help their memory with different types of tasks on the job.

Getting ready for a job – what kinds of things does that person need to be prepared? Does he need a driver’s license, state I.D., or a social security card? Does she need work clothing or work boots? Those kinds of things are important as well.

Interpersonal skills – how they react to different people, and whether they like working in a setting with a lot of people, in isolation, or working one-on-one with a person? Those are important things as well.

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Benefits – you want that benefit information to make sure that once a person sees a benefit planner, they can discuss how their salary or wage earning from their job will affect their entitlements.

Disclosure is important. There are two types of people when helping a job seeker. One type of person wants to disclose that they’re working with you and your agency as far as trying to help them find a job. The other type of person does not want to disclose, so you help them behind the scenes. You never go to that person’s job site and you never want to go directly to that person on their work job site because it’s a breach of their confidentiality and breach of their disclosure. Disclosure is something you need to know as you gather information for their career profile.

Substance use and legal history, those two things are important to know as well. You want to know what kind of barriers you and the job seeker need to overcome, and what things you need to put in place to overcome these barriers. Those two things are definitely things that you want to know about.

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Daily activities – what are the person’s hobbies or what does he or she like to do. That’s good information as well because if you find a job that is within that person’s hobbies, they are going to like their job very much. If they like music as a hobby or play guitar as a daily activity, one of the first places you can seek to find them a job is a music store or record store. So, daily activities are important as well.

Networking contacts – what kind of contacts that person has. Going back to the job seeker who built a great relationship with the Dunkin Donuts store owner, either that business owner can be their boss [if the store owner allows him to work there] or, that store owner can be a direct contact and reference for that job seeker.

With jobs leads in the world, only 30-40% of them are posted in want ads or advertised. Sixty to 70% of the jobs people get are by hearsay, by networking, or by having family members knowing insider information that an employer is about to hire. Gaining information from others and by just knowing the people that you know can lead to employment. So, those contacts are important. And then there are additional notes that you might take as well. All these things are very important in making and gathering information about having a real successful ongoing career profile.

As I said before, a career profile is an ongoing document. Continue gathering and adding more information as a person's time on the job and preferences change, and as a person's likes and dislikes change. Always update your career profile.

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There are several reasons for continuing to update the career profile. A hire or job loss – a person gets hired at a job or person loses a job, you want to update that profile. You want to say what things that person did to get hired, and also, if that person loses a job, what made that person lose a job. Was it the environment, was it the people that they worked with, was it the job itself?

There are various reasons why people lose jobs. You want to keep that in mind and add it to your career profile, so that will not become a barrier in the future. Or, if that person gets a similar job, you can work on that potential barrier.

Over time, a change in interests or preferences could happen. Today a person might want to work at dry cleaners, and tomorrow they want to work in a mail room. Maybe after they worked in the mail room for a little bit, they want a bigger and better job because they are now exposed to different types of jobs in that setting. Interests in jobs are supposed to change. For me, this is job number 7. I've learned from my first job working at McDonalds all the way now working with the Division Mental Health. I had 5 jobs in between. Each job, I learned and gained more knowledge. As I worked, I wanted to look for a higher level and better paying job – the SAME holds true for clients.

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A change in the idea of disclosure or reintroduction of the disclosure topic. Maybe a person at first decides that they do not want to disclose. As the job search continues, the client may get a better understanding of what disclosure means, and now will disclose. Or, more commonly, as a person starts a job and works one or two months, things start to happen. They might now want to disclose to ask for some type of ADA accommodation, or get some more specific work assistance from a manager or their employment specialist. Disclosure is always going to be a topic that is reintroduced every time on your career profile.

Benefits planning and benefits consultation is important. You always want to make sure you and the client knows when benefits change with a new job. We also know that a person's circumstance once they start to get a paycheck and start to save money changes benefits as well. You want to make sure that benefit planning is always part of your career profile.

Again, a new interest, new goals, new triggers, new obstacles, new resources, new natural supports – all are great informational items that you want to make sure gets updated on your career profile.

Natural supports change. The client could be working at one location, have great natural supports, and then suddenly, your client is transferred to a different location. Now natural supports need to be built again. You want to make sure that those next set natural supports are always updated on your career profile.

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Obstacles change. A person works at Target as a cashier using one type of system, then suddenly, a new computer system, cash register system, point of sale system, changes. So now that's a new obstacle. That's a change on the career profile to help that person get along with understanding that new point of sale instrument, point-of-sale merchandising, point of sale cashier need, or computer system. Those are obstacles that always should change on your career profile.

Coping strategies change. Earlier we talked about a cognitive issue for memory. One strategy with memory is writing a visual list of job tasks, so a person can always refer to that list and remember the tasks more easily. They can just continue to look at their list of job tasks to help with their memory. The new and different coping strategies, that's something also you want to add to the career profile and always update as well.

Unfortunately, staff turnover in our field happens quite often. So, getting prepared for someone like a different or new employment specialist, a different or new team leader, or even a different or new case manager is important. They can come in, review the career profile, and immediately continue the job search with the client where the previous staff left off.

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Here are different types of tips for the career profile. First and foremost, the career profile should be dated – the start date of the profile, the completion date of the profile, and any updates need to be dated. Always, please date your career profile. Again, it's a living document. So, as you go on, as you add information, as jobs change, as preferences change, you want to keep those dates in mind. You want to add those dates to when those things happen. Again, unfortunately, staff turnover in our field happens quite often. So, when a staff member leaves and another new staff comes in, the new employment specialist should know how current this information on the career profile is, and how recent it has been updated. That's very, very important.

It can also involve community based information, observations, informational interviews, or career explorations. I used the example before as a person wants to work in a mail room, so take that person on a job shadow of a mail room. That's career exploration. Add the information that you gathered from that job shadow session: Did the job seeker like the environment? Did the job seeker like different work tasks? Who does the job seeker really identify with, as they talk to the different employers and workers doing the job that they would like to do? Those are all things that you want to capture on the career profile to make sure it's very comprehensive and very thorough.

Observations are important. As you go out into the community with the job seeker on a "field trip" to see different types of jobs in the community, you also want to observe how that job seeker reacts in the community, as far as interactions with people who may come to him or her daily or with people if they're buying a coffee or saying "hello" – things like that. What are those observations that you see? Does that person have a very friendly smile and like being in the community? Or, does the job seeker get very uncomfortable and start to get angry in the community? Those are community-based things that you observe by being in the community. You cannot get "real life" information doing a career profile at the site, at the clinic, or inside the

place where that provider agency is located. You get most of that type of information in the community. So, you want to take that person in the community together to gather information.

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Please use open-ended questions. Yes, no, yes, no – that is the worst kind of questioning that you can give a person as far as gathering information from them. We all know what open-ended questions are: Why do you like this type of job? How do you think this environment would affect you? Those types of questions gather needed information on your profile.

So many times, when I look at career profiles, I read the words: “see resume.” Please, do not say in the work experience section of your career profile, “see resume.” That does not help anyone. You already know you're going to look at a resume. A resume basically shows where that person has worked and the type of job things they've done in those positions. Yes, it's helpful, but there is so much more information to gather completing the work experience section. A work experience section also allows you to see positive and negative elements of the position, employer information, job tasks, dates, telephone numbers, different locations. There's so much stuff that goes into that work experience section that's not necessarily on a resume. Why did the person leave a job? Why did this person want to gain a new job? What kind of preferences made you change? What type of people on that job? How much money did they make? Those are all things that come into the work experience section that are not necessarily on a resume, so please do not just say “see resume” and attach a resume to a career profile. Yes, you can add a resume to be in the career profile, but the work experience section should be completed.

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When completing the career profile, be specific and gather information from diverse sources. Technically, if a person is working with a mental health treatment team and working with the IPS supported employment team, if a person reads that career profile about a client, that person should know exactly who that client is, without any names attached to it. The staff who works directly with that client should know, and be able to tell, who that client is just from their career profile, without reading that name. That's how you know you got a good career profile. That's how you know that your profile is very, very comprehensive, because you know who that person is. If the clinical team talks about that person day in and day out, if they read the career profile, they should know who that person is.

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Having a job with poor working conditions could be just as bad for a person's mental health as being unemployed. That's why a career profile is very, very important. I love IPS because one of the basic principles of IPS is a person's preferences. You identify that person's preferences to do very good job development and a good job match with an employer. A bad job match can be bad on a person's stress levels.

I use myself as an example. I wouldn't like to work in food industry. I don't like coming home smelling like McDonald's hamburgers. Now McDonald's is probably a good corporation, but for me and my preferences, I prefer not to work in food. So, if my employment specialist were to

find a job for me in food service, I'm not going to be happy, I'm not going to be satisfied, and I'm not going to want to go in to work.

So, what's going to happen? Either I'm going to always be tardy or I'm going to start missing days and have many absences because I do not like my job. And, when I do come in to work, I'm going to be very upset and angry. Those traits might tend to show on the job – and now here I get a write up. So, either way, if you place somebody in a job they don't want to be in, you're going to have very poor results. So please, to make a good fit that the job seeker likes, have a very, very thorough career profile.

The benefits of working are restricted to good quality jobs. Basically, that's saying, guess what? I'm at a job that I like, that I enjoy, that is part of a hobby that I might have, that I really enjoyed doing because I like to do it in my personal life, that I like to do in my social life and now I get paid for it – of course I'm going to have a good quality of life. Of course, I'm going to feel proud about my job. Of course, I'm going to be on time when I go to work. Of course, I'm going to try my best to never miss a day of work. I'm going to enjoy the people I work with. I'm going to develop good natural supports in natural settings around me because I am at a job that I enjoy. Of course my recovery and my mental health is going to be better, at a better level.

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The poorest quality of work is comparable to unemployment. That's a factor risk for poor mental health. Again, you want to find the job seeker a job they want to be at. You do not want the client, who is now employed, to have negative stress and negative symptoms because they are at a job they do not like. A job is measured by different kinds of factors: high job demands, low job control, poor job security, low self-esteem. Those are all factors as measured by people in their job. If the client feels the job demands too much, the stress level is too high, the job is asking too much for the pay that is received, and guess what? The client is NOT going to be satisfied.

If I have low job control, the work tasks that I like to do, I do not have control over doing them, and I'm the person who is motivated by work tasks I like, guess what? I'm not going to be satisfied.

Poor job security. If the client feels every day that this might be his last day on the job because of budget cuts, because of termination, because of high turnover rate, because he feels the manager doesn't like him [and maybe he doesn't], but the client feels that way – then the client is always going to have this stress/anxiety because of the poor job security factor.

And of course, low self-esteem. If I have low self-esteem on a job, then that's going to affect my work performance. So, I want to make sure that I feel good at a place that I think I could be successful at. That will help my job esteem. That will help me feel that “yes” I belong here, this is my job. Those are all different factors that are measured by a successful career profile. That's why it's just so important that you gather good information on your career profile.

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You know what I think is the most important thing? If you remember anything I said today, the number one purpose for the career profile is for that job seeker – the client. The job seeker should have total input of what he or she wants to do.

That's the most important factor and purpose of a career profile. It's for the client. It's not for the employment specialist, it's not for mom and/or dad, it's not for the mental health treatment team. The career profile has been created and designed to benefit that job seeker to get a good job in the community, a job that he or she wants to do. So keep that in mind.

Sometimes I see people add to career profiles stuff that they want the job seeker to have as a work preference and not what the job seeker wants. Make sure that your profile is focused on that job seeker.

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A career profile is not just to pass a fidelity review, or so you can have a good or exemplary fidelity review. You're doing that career profile because you want to help that person find a job. The career profile is not to just please an IPS trainer, a fidelity reviewer, a clinical team member or the IPS team leader. It is to please the job seeker. To make sure he or she has a great basis on finding a job that he or she wants to do. It's also not just to have documentation for a CARF visit or a joint commission review. You're doing it for information, so you can have a good job plan to assist the job seeker in finding a job.

And again, it's not just to open a person to VR or the Division of Rehabilitation Services, it's not just for that. Again, the basis for the career profile is for the client to get a job. So all the things I just mentioned, those are not the number one priorities to get a career profile. The number one priority for a career profile is to make sure that you have all the needed information that will make an enjoyable job search for that client, so he knows that the job search is for the job he wants. That is part of their recovery. This is part of what they want to do to make them feel part of the community, part of the workforce, a citizen of the state of Illinois. This is the most important lesson today – what the career profile is for.

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So, in closing, I hope we all know the importance of developing a very strong and very capable career profile.

If you have any questions, you can reach our IPS team through the Contact page on the web portal where you found this webinar. You also will find my name and email address on the Contact page. We're happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for listening!

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