

Webinar transcript for Effective Job Development in IPS Supported Employment Programs

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Announcer: Thank you for visiting the Illinois Supported Employment Transformation Initiative web site. The following recording is part of our IPS Training & Education Online Library. Visit our web site to obtain free information and resources to promote employment in the behavioral health field.

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MS: Hello, and thank you for joining us for this training on IPS supported employment job development. My name is Mary Schepler and I am the Illinois Region 1&2 IPS trainer for the Division of Mental Health.

DH: And my name is Debbie Homan. I am the Illinois Williams/Colbert IPS Trainer for the Division of Mental Health.

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MS: Job development is the process of facilitating the employer decision to hire people with disabilities by understanding employers' needs as well as clients' preferences, abilities, and skills.

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MS: Today we are breaking down the steps of job development, focusing on starting new employer relationships, building new employer relationships, maintaining employer relationships, and negotiating job seeker employment.

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MS: Step one is starting new employer relationships, and in each of these steps we will have a purpose and a goal. Once you have identified an employer that you would like to job develop, the purpose of the initial call is to introduce yourself and what you do, provide a valid business reason for setting up a follow-up meeting, and getting a commitment to the next steps. The goal is to get an appointment to come back and get information that will help you to start or complete a business biography, or create a better understanding of the employers' hiring needs and process.

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MS: The stepping stones of this initial visit are to: 1) Give information; who you are, who you represent, some information about what you do, and give a valid business reason for the meeting. And 2) To get a commitment; ask for an appointment to come back and do a business biography.

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DH: I would now like to share with you some resources from the, *Tips for Employer Relationship Building: A Guide for IPS Supported Employment Specialists*, which is a job development guide that was created by Sarah Swanson from Westat; Jerry Wood from the

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in Vermont, and Laura Flint from the Vermont Department of Mental Health.

When creating an introductory statement for job development you need to include your name, your employer, what you do, and the purpose of your visit. Some examples of introductory statements are:

“Hello. My name is Buzz Aldrin, and I work for Job Opportunities here in town. I’m an employment specialist and my job is to introduce employers to people who want to work, and have the skills those employers need. Part of my job is to learn about local businesses. I am not necessarily looking for a job for someone today, but would like to schedule a 20-minute appointment with you to learn more about what you do here and the types of people who tend to be successful here.”

“Hello. My name is Chelsea Clinton, and I work for Mental Health Agency here in town. I’m an employment specialist and I help people who have been out of work to re-engage in the workforce. Part of my job is to learn from employers about their businesses and hiring preferences. Would it be possible to schedule a 15-minute appointment to come back and learn more about your business?”

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MS: Once you have secured your second meeting with the employer, step two is to begin building the employer relationship. The purpose of this meeting is to get information about the employer and their business, and to give information about some of the services you provide. The goal in this stage of the relationship is to begin to build trust, a shared goal (employment solutions), and to get a commitment to next steps.

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MS: Stepping stones of this stage include the introduction, starting the business biography/learning more about the business’s needs, providing the employer with the benefits of your IPS service, and asking for commitment to next steps.

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MS: In the introduction, you want to again state the reason for the meeting that is a valid business reason, indicate how long the meeting will last, and ask for an agreement (does this day and time still work for you?).

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MS: A business biography is really a fancy term that reflects getting to know more about this particular business, their culture, and their needs. When starting or completing a business biography, be sure to familiarize yourself with what questions you want to ask. Try to use a conversational style. Listen for clues as to what is important to that employer about the employees they hire, and what issues/concerns/problems they have faced in hiring good employees in the past. Also be sure to watch the time to show respect for the employers’ time during what is surely a busy day.

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DH: Some sample questions to learn more about an employer's need, and/or create a business biography could include:

Questions about the Business: Why do you like working for ____? What are your goals for ____? What is your vision for the company over the next year? What sets your company apart from others? As the manager for ____, what are you most proud of? Is there a time of year when your business is busiest?

Questions about the right candidates: What type of person tends to be successful here? What qualities do you look for when you are interviewing job candidates? What are some of your hiring headaches? Describe the qualities of a person who would love to work here.

Questions about the positions: Please describe your workforce. I see that you have ____ positions. What other positions do you have that I may not know about? What are some of the challenges that people have had in these positions? Do some positions have more turnover than others?

Questions about hiring process: What is your hiring process? So, people should start with an online application. But you mentioned that you need people who are self-starters with outgoing personalities. If you had a friend who matched that description, how would you advise your friend to go about applying for work here? How have you found good candidates in the past?

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DH: Some samples of ineffective questions are: Are you hiring? Do you anticipate job openings in future? Are you laying off? Do you hire people with criminal histories? Do you hire people who have substance use disorders? What do you do here?

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MS: During this meeting the employment specialist also wants to be sure to provide the employer with the benefits of their IPS services. We recommend that you do not give a laundry list of services, but instead, provide service information that is directed at the needs of the hiring manager that you are speaking to. Use the questions that Debbie shared earlier as an opportunity to state what you heard was a need and provide solutions.

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DH: A moment ago, I shared some questions that have been found to be ineffective when job developing. Here are also the top 5 mistakes to avoid.

Asking about job openings: learn about the employer's business needs and build a relationship before asking about a job opening or a job seeker.

Interrupting the employer: whatever the employer is talking about is what he or she thinks is important. Listen! Be curious.

Asking if the employer is open to hiring people with criminal histories: if you ask this, employers may assume that everyone you work with has a criminal history. And, even if you do work exclusively with people who have legal histories, this is not the first bit of information you want employers to know about the people you represent.

Speaking at length about your program: the goal is for the employer to do most of the talking. Answer questions about your program and then return to learning about the employer.

Neglecting to prepare for the meeting: demonstrate that you are willing to work at this relationship. Know the basic goods or services produced by the company. Consider looking up the mission statement, have questions prepared. Bring your business card, program brochure, and appointment book. Dress appropriately!

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MS: And the last step in this stage is to ask for commitment to the next steps. With job development, the goal is to always be moving forward and finding ways to continue the relationship. Examples of asking for a next step could be asking for the employer to give practice or informational interviews. An offer to introduce to other employers who use your IPS services. Requesting to tour the work environment or asking for the opportunity to witness the actual job performed.

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MS: In stage three, we are now working to maintain the employer relationship that we have created. The purpose is to build upon the credibility and trust you have begun to establish. The idea is not to let the relationship and work you have already completed dwindle and, as always, the goal is to get commitment to the next steps.

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DH: There are lots of ways to maintain Employer Relationships over time. We recommend you stay in touch with the employer at least every four to six weeks. Each time the employer sees you again, it reinforces the notion that you are interested in a long-term relationship and that you are reliable. You keep showing up! Further, don't rely on busy employers to remember to call you when they have job openings. By visiting regularly, you will hear about openings before employers advertise those jobs.

Keep a list of 12-15 employers with whom you are building long-term relationships. Next to each employer, jot down the date of your most recent visit so that you can remember when you should return. Some great reasons to return to an employer are:

Return to share good news about your program. For example, an article in the paper about your program or a record number of job starts in the last quarter.

Return to let the employer know that you are working with someone who is interested in _____ work. Ask if the employer would be open to allowing the person to visit in order to observe and ask questions about that type of person.

Return to congratulate the employer about an article you read about their business. Ask for a tour of the business.

Return to ask the employer if they would be interested in attending a steering committee meeting to help members understand the needs of local employers.

Stop by to say hello and to ask the employer how business is going.

Return to let the employer know that a job seeker you know submitted an application.

Drop off a holiday card.

Drop off information about the Work Opportunities Tax Credit or other hiring incentives.

Return to share printed materials about your program.

Return after a job candidate interviews for a position to ask the employer for her impressions of the candidate.

Drop off thank-you notes for anything the employer has done to help you.

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MS: As Debbie mentioned, while cementing the relationship, we want to make an effort to contact the employer on a regular but not too frequent basis. Make visits to the employer with the intent of just checking in on the status of business needs or potential hiring in future. If you have a candidate who might be a good job match, try to get an interview with the employer if there is no position available, or try to get a job site visit with candidate to assess if this might good job match.

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MS: Negotiating job seeker employment. Always be prepared to enter into a negotiation that might result in the hiring of an individual that you represent.

DH: One of the greatest reasons to return to an employer is to let them know that you do know a candidate who would be a good fit for their business. “Shauna, I know it’s important to you to find employees who want to work here because they are interested in books, and also people who are friendly and outgoing. I do know someone who fits that description. Would you like to hear a little bit more about them?”

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MS: In addition to all of the information and tips that we have already shared, we would like you all to ask yourself four questions during your job development pre-planning. Why am I here? What do I want the employer to do? Why should the employer see me? Do I have credibility?

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MS: Some reasons for why am I here could include: I am here to close the deal, get information, give information, get commitment, and/or to maintain my employer relationship.

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MS: What do I want the employer to do? Every call has the same goal: to get a commitment from your partner in the process to do something. To agree to the next appointment, to watch a DVD on IPS supported employment, to agree to interview your candidate, to agree to provide information for the business biography.

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MS: Why should the employer see me? This is not your reason, but the employer's reason or a valid business reason. This is the one that gives potential employers a reason to spend some of their valuable time in a meeting with you.

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MS: And finally, do I have credibility? In all job development where long-term success is important, establishing your personal credibility and your agency's credibility is a must. When surveyed, it was shown that there were 5 major themes with employers that will be reluctant to do business with an employment specialist. No need, no money, no desire, no urgency, or no trust. We strongly encourage you to focus on the items in this list that are within your control and know that if you follow the tips that were shared in this training, you will have great success in your community job development.

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DH: And again, we would like to give a special thank you to Sarah Swanson, Jerry Wood, and Laura Flint for their work on, *Tips for Employer Relationship Building: A Guide for IPS Supported Employment Specialists*. Thank you and have a great day.