

When combined with the content on the Sorted Topics this comprises a complete list of all of the topics covered at the Illinois DD Council Supported Employment Focus Groups

Goals

Benefits/Insurance, FT/PT work for good money and paid training. Stable, long-term employment. Predictable schedule, job expectations and no lay offs.

A job that I like, where I am trusted & I can trust others. A job where I am accepted & get along with others & I can socialize/get to know people/develop friendships w/ people of all ages. A job where my boss & co-workers are my friends.

To be respected by my boss/co-workers & others, not teased, insulted or taken advantage of. To take pride in myself & decrease assumptions based on perceptions, attitudes, judgments & prejudices.

Real work (not pretend), be able to learn new/more skills/talents. I want to use my skills to "try out" new jobs or work a variety of jobs to get experience to gain responsibility. To be independent/successful, do meaningful & important work. To make my own choices about what is important to me.

Equality among my co-workers, a job that's mutually beneficial for my employer. I want to be able to work as much or as little as I want. Promotions/raises as I perfect my job, & I don't want to be fired the first time I make a mistake.

I want to help others, including other PWD & to make a difference. I want to matter to the company. I don't want to be known as a "consumer". I want to be allowed to do it myself (without a job coach) and stay on task.

I want to be engaged with life in my community, talk to neighbors, volunteer to prove that I can work. I want to be valued by society which would create more "real world" options. To work near my home & in my own community & earn enough money to take care of myself and my family.

Natural/person centered supports, support after learning - "career support". No more day programs/day care - they aren't for me. Employers that take ownership with mentoring & job carving. To get out of the workshop with a job coach & on-going support. Creative agencies that are flexible & innovative.

Safety at work & in the community. Transportation &/or assistance. Decrease employer liability & a fixed transition program. I don't want to have to fight for everything that I want or need. Security so I can keep my job in the community &/or workshop. I dream big so don't let my disability hold me back.

Why someone would want a job in the community?

Competitive wages w/ benefits, including retirement & insurance. To use my skills to improve my community so I am seen as a valued member & gain acceptance. To "pay my way" which will decrease stigmas. To get experience & save for the future to gain my independence.

To meet new people & build relationships. To fit in or feel "normal", build social capital and personal definition. More responsibility, to feel valued & important, with a sense of accomplishment. To use my current skills & build new ones.

A place to go to stay out of trouble; keep busy. Work near home so that I can walk to work. To feel safe in my community & be familiar with it. Meaningful work so that I'm not bored or wasting my day. To be productive & increase my self-determination & challenge me to learn new things. Variety at work.

Exposure to new job opportunities. Options like own my own business someday. To help/teach others & show that I am capable of being employed in the community. For people to know me & not see me as a "patient" that needs to be fixed.

A nice boss/co-workers that see me as part of the "team" & respects me. My family to support my working in the community which will decrease my depression & frustration so I don't feel like giving up. A job that is therapeutic for me. Others to see that it is my right to do what I want & get past the "big bus syndrome".

Why would someone NOT want a job in the community?

To lose my insurance/benefits/family income/SSDI. Shortened hours or less money than others make for the same job. To be passed over for raises/promotions even though I have seniority. To make so little money that I can't pay my taxes and other expenses. To be excluded/over looked with things like holiday/sick pay, vacation, etc. or to be fired when/if subsidies expire.

To work with/for mean, rude, prejudice or discriminating people who insult me, take advantage of me or resent me because they are jealous of "favoritism" shown to me. No tokenism, or working where I don't get along with my boss/co-workers or don't feel trusted. To work for a boss that I can't understand or who doesn't understand me. To be fired because they don't understand PWD or how to interact with PWD.

No transportation and/or issues like cost or distance. I don't want to burden my parents or family with getting to/from work. No calling me in on my day off or crazy schedules like constant changes or working weekends, holidays, and evenings. I don't want to continue to doing a job that isn't working for me.

I don't like the jobs being offered and I don't want to work too hard (lazy) so I can retire. Taking risks, being vulnerable or getting hurt. It's scary & harder because you have to learn a lot. I don't want to adjust to employers expectations or to have to look for a job. There aren't enough people to help me find a job or keep. Workshop staff don't want me to leave because I'm very productive. Not to be given a chance to do the job well. I don't want to leave workshop either because I'm familiar with it.

Being pressured to be more productive/multi-task or to be error free. Not enough support. My family being concerned about liability. To start over every time there's a new supervisor/mgr./owner, etc. Decreased supervision with increased responsibility, it's scary & uncomfortable & they make standards higher for PWD. I don't feel safe in the community yet, & I don't feel ready. I don't want to leave the workshop friends/BF/GF & my family knows that I'm safe there.

Of changing my routine plus I don't know how or don't want to get up early. I don't want to fail, don't know who I can trust, don't know what I'm able to do or how much help is needed. Don't want to be dependent on staff. I don't want a complicated or confusing job & I don't want to blow my whole check on "stuff", someone needs to help me budget my money/bills.

To be sheltered, health problems or to get stuck doing the same job forever. No "stupid funding" or broken connections after High School. To do a disservice to my employer/company, myself or my family. To be betrayed by the community.

What are your fears about getting a job in the community?

Rejection, failure, making serious mistakes, stress, not being able to do the work the right way, not having the right training or tools to do it right. Being forced to learn skills too fast, that I'm not prepared for "real work"/"real world", being late for work or falling asleep at work. Getting in trouble, having behavior problems & being too nervous.

Fatigue due to FT job, meeting new people, safety issues such as using public transportation, getting mugged/robbed or lost. Of impersonal rejection such as not being hired or being fired via e-mail, & inverse stereotypes.

That employers don't get ADA- Reasonable Accommodations, not having supports, no long term success, having to disclose my disability. That working is too hard & I can't do it. Not getting a chance to prove myself, that there isn't a job for me & I will have to take whatever is available. Bad job coaches or loss of them, poor continuity, duration & intensity. No long-term commitment to fund or support as needed, or no supports at all, esp. people that I know and trust. What if I don't want a job coach because of the stigma?

The interview process, not being hired, that average = poor, the steep learning curve esp. for complex jobs. Difficulty doing my job because of no accommodations, resource allocation (i.e. decreased 1:1 even if needed), inadequate training for community and employer. Job elimination due to crew "trims", fewer workers mean heavier work loads, multi-tasking. How to handle unexpected situations, low self-esteem, & being trained to for many jobs at once.

That the community will think my family is neglecting me & that only they should take care of me or that my family wants to keep me around for the money. The unknown, making a mistake might increase pressure on my family. That I'm not polished enough for the interview process or that I don't make a good first impression, my boss/co-workers won't understand what I'm trying to say, being unable to follow directions, I don't know who to ask for help or who I can trust.

Being out of my comfort zone, having a new job, increased expectations, changing communities, schedule changes, being distracted or unable to concentrate. Not being prepared to advance to a new job, being overwhelmed, rough transitions, being crowded, & not knowing what to do in an emergency.

Of mean, rude, discriminating boss/co-workers. That others don't understand PWD or that I'll be seen as dumb and get fired. That I'll be hurt, abused, taken advantage of, embarrassed & disrespected. Not fitting in, having no friends or losing the ones that I have, that I'll be insulted, harassed, intimidated, teased, get my feelings hurt, arguments, or violence. That I'll be patronized, ridiculed or exploited.

Loss of benefits, layoffs due to health concerns, poverty, not enough money/hours, or that the cost of working will take all of my pay. Pigeon holing or scapegoat, artificial or unfair standards, or being over worked and under paid. Vague, unclear expectations or changes, inflexible hours, staying late, working OT, increased pace or work load and starting over every time there is a new boss/mgr/owner. What if it doesn't work out?

What needs to be in place to relieve those fears and help you do a good job in the community?

Supports such as; family, natural, job, adult advocacy, peer to peer, volunteer, state funded, post-high school, & integrated. Coordination of supports, the right supports - for the right reasons - for the right duration and intensity. Support management and to be able to choose my supports & hire/fire job coaches, etc. Someone to maintain supports, provide employer support, support before and after work, for "real" transitions, adaptations, getting & keeping jobs. Support groups, more self advocates, and long-term supports.

Real job exploration & development, social skills & opportunities to practice and develop new skills, job shadowing, work trials, & OJT. To concentrate on my passions, find and develop jobs for me, soft skills training, coping skills, resume' & job hunting skills. Teach me how to listen to my boss & them how to be patient. More community based training with more supervision during training. Employers & co-workers need sensitivity training and disability awareness, address and assess my needs so that nothing is left undone.

Funding must follow referrals, consider allowing job/cost sharing, paid OJT, funding for workshop options, increasing job coaches. Mandate legislated funds & management of funds (money only goes to good providers), politicians must show proof of spending, and funding for post-secondary education.

Employers must know how to job carve, don't cause loss of benefits (income exemption-recognize permanent nature of disability), benefits planning, coordination and protection. Benefit law changes - transitional, transportation with decreased or no cost.

Train businesses to work with different disabilities, Reasonable Accommodations, educate schools, parents, & community the importance of work and what to expect. Education for PWD on how to "be" at work (responsible, reliable, etc), progressive employers, & increased hours as skills and hardening build. Skills testing, incentives for employers, providers, employer training. Education for parents on work incentives/benefits, etc. early inclusion for social skills, educate lawmakers - issue of investing in people and the community. Community, employer, and co-worker education (busting stigmas), education on creativity and non-traditional options, & longer OJT.

On-call job coaching, job coach training, coaching (as long as needed with long-term follow up), mentoring, evaluation/monitoring coaches (high expectations + high wages = retaining coaches), employer coaches, change DORS/fade-out and a vocational counselor that cares.

Achievable goals based on abilities, willingness to try new things, help to do the job, stay on task, and/or encourage team work. Decreased paperwork for employers, job hotline for PWD and employer, employment advocate/job developer, employer consultant who can help with disability issues. Good matches between jobs and preferences of people, good PR with employers, employers promoting people equitably, and job interview and dream focused resources. Incentives for providers to do a good job, good employers, praise for a job well done, fair chance to demonstrate my skills, intro to employer/co-workers, more opportunities to practice, esp. being alone or shadowing & rules, policies and procedures must work for me.

Start early at school, school kids need broader experiences "real work skills", adapted, supported education, community college, self-esteem & confidence building for PWD. Get parents motivated, more respect for PWD, increase comfort level with real job tasks, decreased comfort at workshops, fair pay, good staff, self control and behavior. Good advice when I need it, encouragement, don't rush me or look over my shoulder, people need to get to know me, better prep for failures, problems and social engagement. Focus on social aspects and require staff to do more challenging activities.

Decrease DT & increase OJT, easier is not equal to better, good personal self-care, excellent transition, increase exposure to choices/options, fix school to work interface, cut red tape for DOL and no glorified babysitting. Fix the "forever" problem (first job = last job), teach me to read/write, expertise in legal aspects (advocacy, business law, preventing discrimination), no infantilizing, students/people to advocate for rights (don't make advocacy so time and energy consuming), Universal Healthcare, PASS/micro enterprises, equipment, adaptations, cell phones, alarms, etc., broad community buy-in, transition of managers, & one-stop-shop.

Other

Great education, then just home with TV. Wasn't well prepared after school. Jobs for PWD only belong to the school, regardless of performance. PR & public education. Educate the community leaders, teach all kids that they're just like everyone else & start early. Schools are improving some. Increase school integration & customize supports. Increase training & wages for DSP's, educate families. Government - put up or shut up, stop exporting jobs, illegals vs. PWD. Politicians - get to know us. Comprehensive agency transformation... education for CEO/CFO/COO. Greater flexibility & more education for everyone.

Too many PWD fall through the cracks, we need providers that really understand disabilities. Listen to families, & aging parents are a major concern. Hard to do job creation if the job I have is sufficient. Need time to make personal connection - trouble applying on-line. PWD should not be at the mercy of the system, end waiting lists. End waiting lists. I want to own my home or have my own apartment one day. Why don't we just ask PWD what they want & help them get it. Free choice, how I feel about my work is important to me. We need to look at other states and successful models. People don't attend public events. Future plans are important to me. It's easier with a friend.

Big problem- DRS dictate which agency gets used but they also help people get/keep jobs. Legislative - incentives for companies/community & protected benefits. Minimum hours & other union or employer policies create issues = hindrance. We want to know before you change laws/rules & give us advanced notice. To legislators - listen to us. Ask the people where the money should go - not bureaucrats or unions. Get the state off the side of the "bad guys", i.e. workshops. Don't balance budgets on the backs of PWD. Government = #1 barrier (benefits, stupid grant rules, program requirements, advocates don't really help). Legislative efforts for funding/money. Decreased funding = decreased staff = increased case load. Grants to change type/nature of work, i.e. service.

Takes major advocacy to get a "real job". Develop a work plan with supports, i.e. job coaches/transportation before and after work, etc. Build on local networks of support and community. Need funds for residential supports. Too many delays... support us NOW. Need more money to hire more support workers & higher wages for them. Why are we maintaining the "illusion" of real supports. Employer/employee transition support and employer relations. Advocacy for PWD... doesn't work for PWD. Everyone can work in the community with the right supports. We need peer supports & team based supports, "modular" business organization, marketing and technology supports... adapt.

Busting prejudice/stigmas in rural towns as well as stereotypes. It's a shame they can't be more productive because they get depressed about status, there are too many hoops. There must be more pressure on employers to do the right thing. Stop overwhelming good employers. There are no internships or job rotations. We need pace based work. Increase tax incentives/grants for employers & bonus incentives for agency. Move money from institutions to community, redirect to community & decrease turnover - it's a must. "Work" may need to be more flexibly defined. Employers fear liability - give them protection. Employer expectations increase with minimum wage = harder placement/few accommodations.

Stupid skill development = exclusion from community employment. There is too much pressure to go to workshops. Work = happy/develop to the point that he can job coach. Workshops must pay minimum wage. Cost of doing must be addressed. Don't just stick me in a workshop, ask what I want & help me learn how to make more choices. Workshops don't care about my goals, & don't even know what our real talents/interests are, or if they do know, they put up barriers instead of helping. Set new goals when you reach old ones. Workshops are supposed to be temporary training, not permanent placement.

Too much pressure to meet numbers or close cases. Assess competence, access & quality of service. Disability/funding silos. You can't always ask for more. Dignity of work is important. Inclusion = public policy & PR. Consumer vs. PWD. We need good money. Equal opportunity = BS ... stop talking about human rights if it only applies to those without disabilities. How do agencies address or train for failure? The only way out of D.T./workshops is to be kicked out. Having no money for residential programs = increased costs and problems. We need a "watchdog" system, community PR so other employees don't bother PWD who are working. Many more would be here if they weren't working. Problem with "rubber meeting the road" regarding transition services. Some PWD are excluded from programs due to intense needs.

What about selling services? Can managers find a way to be marketed, possibly on the web? Consultants for micro-enterprises. Enclave = us assuming liability & temporary service needs. Make it more inclusive. We need flexibility - 1. Roles - PT at multiple locations is ok. 2. Funding. Can't we be trained by volunteering? It has already taken too long...NOW! Forge new, stronger alliances - stronger than institutions. Why does it take 3+ years to get a job & when I do get a job, they won't pay me as much as others.