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***Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities***

***Employment Services Toolkit***

**Tool #4 – *Career Planning:* Discovery Experience Summary Instructions**

**Tool purpose:** A key element in identifying the best employment situation is to ensure a good match between the person and the job. Factors include:

* the tasks of a job and the individual’s skill set in performing those tasks
* the preferred environment of the person, in terms of physical setting
* the preferred environment of the person, in terms of work culture
* the needs of the business.

Using a strength-based perspective, information about the individual has been collected from the individual and their team, and documented using Tool #3 – *Career Planning:* Job Exploration Interview/Profile. This tool, *Career Planning:* Discovery Experience Summary*,* builds on that through collecting information about a person in a natural situation – i.e., a job site in the community or other community setting. It allows for confirmation and expansion regarding the information initially gathered, and for the individual to determine where to focus their job search. It also allows for information to be observed and recorded in a consistent manner, enabling observations in different situations to be compared.

**Directions and guidance for tool use:**

This tool is used for systematic documentation of observations of a person participating in various experiences in the community such as: volunteer activities, community exploration, job tours, job shadows, informational interviews, community-based work experiences, etc. *(see definitions below)*.

1. Review and familiarize yourself with the pertinent information gathered and documented in Tool #3: *Career Planning:* Job Exploration Interview/Profile.
2. Use the list of places at the end of Tool #3 (Summary – item #4), as a starting point for community settings where their specific interests and skills can be further explored. ***Each business or other community setting used for exploration, should be chosen based on the specific interests and needs of the job seeker, with their input.*** Avoid using the same sites and experiences for all job seekers.
3. Through review of Tool #3, familiarize yourself with the elements to be observed in the community experience. This includes identifying those items seen as important to the person’s success, as well as areas that are unknown, and make sure to note observations on these elements. This will help ensure a systematic and comprehensive experience for the job seeker.
4. Complete a separate form for each community experience. Depending on the nature of the experience, some items will be more applicable than others.
5. Discuss the observations with the person as you complete the final version of the tool for each experience. Get their perceptions and opinions regarding the experience: what they felt went well, what they enjoyed, what they disliked, what they learned, where they experienced challenges, and how they felt about the overall experience. If the person needs some time to process before sharing these thoughts, allow for that.
6. As appropriate, consider taking pictures/videos of the experience, and/or have the individual do so. This can be helpful in reviewing the experience later, and having the individual take a role in this (e.g., take pictures of what you like), can be empowering.
7. Remember that the purpose of these experiences and this tool is to identify the strengths, interests, and abilities of an individual that will enable them to succeed in employment. In alignment with the values of Employment First, conduct these activities with the presumption that with the right job match and supports, the individual will become successfully employed. The intent of this tool is not to determine whether an individual is “ready” for employment, or to support a rationale why they cannot be employed.
8. One of the areas to be identified is an individual’s learning style. Learning styles are the manner in which an individual naturally prefers receiving, processing, and expressing information. The following are definitions for the learning styles listed.
* Visual (spatial): Prefers using pictures, images, and spatial understanding.
* Auditory (auditory-musical): Prefers using sound, music, rhythms, and rhymes.
* Verbal (linguistic): Prefers using words, both in speech and writing.
* Physical (kinesthetic): Prefers learning through physical activities, using hands and sense of touch.
* Logical (mathematical): Prefers using logic, reasoning and systems.
* Social (interpersonal): Prefers to learn in groups or with other people.
* Solitary (intrapersonal): Prefers to work alone and use self-study.

**Definition of Discovery Experience Activities**

1. **Community exploration:** Spending time in a community to identify areas of interest. May include going to places of business (retail and eating establishments, etc.), recreational areas/activities, events, and other places that can assist in identifying employment interests.
2. **Job tour:** Touring an in-person tour of a place of business.
3. **Job shadow:** Observing a worker performing a job. Can be for a short period of time, for their entire workday, or a series of days, depending on the nature of the job, and level of interest of the job seeker.
4. **Informational interview:** Meeting with an employer, not for a job interview, but simply to gather information about the business. A good technique for career exploration, and also for helping job seekers to gain experience in interacting with employers, without the pressure of an interview focused on a hiring decision.
5. **Volunteer activities:** Unpaid activities at non-profit organizations.
6. **Community-based work experience:** Trying out the tasks of an actual job. See the [*ICI Situational Assessment Fact Sheet*](https://thinkcollege.net/resource/employment-supports/situational-assessment-fact-sheet)for further details on conducting community-based work experiences.

The publication [*Unpaid Work Experiences, Volunteering, and Internships: What’s Allowed*](https://dmh.mo.gov/media/pdf/unpaid-work-experiences-volunteering-and-internships) is a useful publication for ensuring compliance with wage and hour laws regarding situational assessments, volunteer work, and similar unpaid experiences.