

LRS CHAPTER 4, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & GUIDANCE MANUAL

 <p>LOUISIANA WORKFORCE COMMISSION The Department of Labor</p>	Part 412.14.1	Name Customized Employment	Effective Date *3/28/2022**
	Authorization Federal Register, Volume 81, Department of Education, 34 CFR 361, Part VI, State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program, §361.5, 361.42, §361.45, §361.46, §361.47, §361.48, §361.52, and §361.55.		

I. PURPOSE

- A. Customized Employment (CE) means competitive integrated employment for an individual with a most significant disability and is distinguished from traditional Supported Employment by the use of flexible strategies, services and supports for an individual. Customized Employment is individualized, involving a job for one person. This begins with a person-centered determination of the strengths, needs and interests of the individual. The goal of Customized Employment is a placement which meets the specific abilities of the individual and also the business needs of the employer in a competitive, integrated setting.
- B. Customized Employment creates employment through negotiation of job duties with the employer instead of using the traditional approach of matching a person to an existing job. Customized Employment assumes the employability of every job candidate. Customized Employment is used to determine an employer’s unmet needs when more intensive interventions are needed than traditional Supported Employment to identify, obtain, or maintain employment.
- C. Customized Employment process is a flexible blend of strategies, services, and supports designed to increase employment options for job seekers with complex needs through voluntary negotiation of the employment relationship with an employer. The job seeker is the primary source of information and drives the process. The Customized Employment process begins with a discovery phase, which lays the foundation for employment planning. Planning results in a blueprint for the job search where an employment relationship is negotiated to meet the needs of both the job seeker and the employer.

II. ELIGIBILITY FOR CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT

- A. Customized Employment Services provided by Customized Employment Vendors who can demonstrate they have the skills and abilities to provide Customized Employment, are appropriate for consumers who:
1. Are classified as Significantly Disabled (SD) in Order of Selection Categories I and II ***;
 2. Require more support than provided through traditional Job Placement services and for a longer duration;
 3. Have a poor work history or have not experienced employment success;
 4. Need negotiated job duties with employer based on strengths.
- B. If the consumer meets all the above criteria and both the counselor and consumer agree that customized employment is the most appropriate placement option, the VR counselor will develop an IPE documenting the components listed below in Section III and will forward it to the District Supervisor for approval (including IAS counselors). If approved, the counselor will initiate customized employment services.

For information regarding approved Customized Employment Vendors refer to Chapter 5, Section 511.3.8.

III. DISCOVERY

- A. The Discovery process is conducted by a qualified Employment Vendor. Customized Employment Vendors will take the client through a process of Discovery that seeks to answer the questions “who is this person?” and “what are the ideal conditions of employment?” The process is used to reveal skills, and determine how to create employment in the community. Information for the Discovery process is gathered from the job seeker to determine the job seeker’s interests, skills and preferences related to potential employment.

The Discovery process often begins with a homebased evaluation which includes an inventory of the surrounding neighborhood surveying transportation options, natural supports and vocational opportunities nearby. Discovery expands to places where interests can be explored through informational interviews, paid work experiences, or engagement in activities that showcase tasks, skills and interests. The Discovery Profile is a narrative report, that the vendor will complete and will identify multiple employment directions, vocational themes, and skills, which will be used to create a unique employment fit in the community.

Time spent engaging with the job seeker to explore their unique needs, abilities, and interests, as well as their complexities, is essential to establishing successful employment. Unlike traditional testing or standardized assessment, Customized Employment engages the job seeker in controlling the discovery process, and captures their preferences and connections in the community. The job seeker selects friends, family, and colleagues to participate in the discovery phase so that they can share positive perspectives and potential connections to employment opportunities. At the conclusion of the discovery phase, the job seeker makes decisions about their employment goals and potential employers to approach.

- B. The CRP must receive prior written authorization from the Counselor prior to providing Discovery.
- C. Customized Employment Specialist will begin the Discovery Process. The Discovery Profile Interview/Intake form (CE-1) will be used to collect Discovery information. The Discovery Profile will be reviewed by the consumer and the counselor. Upon approval, Counselor will authorize payment of Milestone 1.

Rate for Discovery and the Discovery Profile is \$1,025

1. It should be evident in the Discovery Profile that methods such as interview, observation, participation with the employment seeker, job seeker discovery (described above) and by review of records (e.g. report cards, transcripts, IPEs etc.) and not formal assessments or tests were used to identify the individual's strengths, needs and interests. Documentation that interviews with family/friends and natural supports were conducted should also be contained in the Discovery Profile. In addition, there should be evidence that sufficient time was spent with the individual during Discovery.
2. The Discovery Profile should be written in a descriptive optimistic, non-evaluative and non-comparative manner. It should provide a full description of the individual including demographic information, the individual's life experiences, and preparation for the employment plan. The Discovery profile should be "owned" and approved by the consumer. The Discovery Profile is utilized to guide placement activities and the development of a customized job.

D. Quality Indicators for Discovery and Discovery Profile.

1. The Discovery Profile (Form CE- 1) was received and the topic areas addressed included at a minimum, the following:
 - a. Part I of the Profile including the identification of the participant, identification of family including spouse/significant other and all who live in the home and their living situation, the residential history, description of the neighborhood, transportation and ability to move about in the neighborhood and community, and a description of the businesses and services located in the neighborhood. A description of the participant's education, specialized training, and work history.
 - b. Part II of the profile including a narrative, description of the participant and family; educational experiences; employment related activity; life experiences; description of skills, interests and conditions in life activities; and the participant's connections for employment. Part II was provided in narrative form, without charts, tables, numerical data, and other comparative and evaluative perspectives. The focus was on the individual and not the opinions of the vendor.
 - c. Part III of the profile contained preparation for the employment plan such as the strengths, needs, and interest of the employment seeker. Personalized preferences and conditions for employment along with individual contributions to be offered to employers were identified. A list of potential employers was included.
2. The profile was signed by the participant and/or representative in validation of the accuracy of the Discovery profile.
3. If the Counselor determines that the Discovery Profile is lacking critical or sufficient information as noted above to provide information for the customized employment team to develop a customized plan for employment, the Counselor must obtain the information lacking in writing from the CRP before payment is authorized.

IV. THE CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT PLANNING MEETING AND CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT PLAN

- A. A Customized Employment Team should be identified to assist in the development of the Customized Employment Plan. The Customized Employment Team should be inclusive of both professionals who represent the consumer, such as counselors, employment specialists, educators, direct care staff, as well as

unpaid representatives of the consumer's choice (e.g. family, friends, neighbors, classmates, church members, etc.). The planning meeting should be attended by all interested parties including the Customized Employment Team. It should provide a recap of consumer's strengths, needs and interests, as well as, a listing of job tasks that fit the consumer and can be offered to potential employers. A specific list of employers consistent with the job seeker's interest and that match the needs of those employers should be identified and prioritized. The Planning Activity Guides (CE-2) will be utilized to detail these items.

- B. The Discovery Profile (CE-1) will be provided to all members of the team and used in the planning meeting to develop the Customized Employment Plan. Counselor must obtain any needed confidentiality releases.
- C. The Customized Employment Plan should not be confused with the IPE as it is a step in the job development process. The plan should be completed following the completion of the Discovery Process and the Discovery Profile report (CE-1). A typed document outlining the details of the plan, along with the Plan for Customized Employment (CE-2) will be submitted to the Counselor for payment of Milestone 2.
- D. Quality Indicators for the Customized Employment Planning Meeting and Customized Employment Plan
 - 1. Form CE-2 was received including a list of the names, relationship and contact information for each individual on the customized employment team; The customized planning meeting activity guides were submitted as verification that the vendor facilitated the planning meeting and guided the participant and the team in using the information obtained in Discovery to develop the customized plan for employment; The customized plan for employment was submitted in a typed document containing the following information:
 - a. The conditions for employment or conditions needed to ensure success in employment;
 - b. The job seeker's specific areas of interests as it relates to the job market;
 - c. The specific contributions or personality characteristics of the job seeker that can be presented to an employer
 - d. Specific job tasks that can be performed by the job seeker in their areas of interest that would meet an employer's needs
 - e. A list of specific employers to in the area who might have a need for the job tasks identified and that are consistent with the job seeker's interests.

V. QUALITY INDICATORS FOR CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT JOB DEVELOPMENT AND PLACEMENT.

- A. The vendor will begin Job Development using Customized Employment strategies until an appropriate placement has been developed for the consumer. During job development the employers identified in the customized employment plan are contacted for presenting the job seeker's potential contributions.
1. When job development begins, the CRP submits the monthly Customized Employment Job Development Progress Report (CE-3) which must document that the following Quality Indicators for Customized job development were met:
 - a. Names, addresses and contact information of the employers and the date they were contacted
 - b. The title(s) of the jobs observed
 - c. The starting wage for individuals performing the job(s) observed
 - d. The number of hours the individual performing the job works per shift/day/week
 - e. The supervisor responsible for the job observed
 - f. The essential functions of the job
 - g. The employer's unmet needs or tasks that need to be done but are not being done the way the employer would like
 - h. Tasks that may be better performed by others or aspects of the job that may be better performed by others at a lower pay grade.
 - i. Needs for additional productivity or workplace needs for additional productivity in specific tasks that match the job seeker's specific competencies
 - j. The vendor has signed the form certifying that the employer was contacted and the job and worksite had been observed.
 2. Customized Employment involves matching the job seeker with an employer that values the specific benefits of the individual. This consists of working with an employer to facilitate job placement, by customizing a job that is based on an employer's current needs and can include previously unidentified and unmet needs. The Customized Employment job should reflect the wishes of the consumer rather than job openings or existing relationships held by the Employment Vendor.
 3. Examples of job development activities include:
 - Negotiating job duties between the Customized Employment Specialist and employer
 - Arranging a work schedule
 - Determining the worksite location

- Defining supervisory requirements including performance expectations and evaluations
 - Providing representation and advocacy to facilitate placement
 - Providing services and supports such as job coaching at the work location, as well as, providing the employer with training and resources for ADA, accommodations, etc.
 - Conducting job site analysis and workplace observations
 - Developing sequence of job duties and essential functions
4. Employment Specialists should develop a customized job description with the employer and job seeker that identifies the work tasks and expectations that uniquely fit the employment seeker and not those of an existing job description.
 5. After the consumer has worked 7 days, the vendor will invoice the LRS Counselor for Milestone 3 using the Customized Employment Job Placement Report (CE-4). In order to ensure that all Quality Indicators for Customized Employment Job Placement services are met, the Customized Employment Job Placement Report (CE-4) must describe the following:
 - a. The name and location of the employer
 - b. The employers web address
 - c. A description of what the employer does and its overall product, mission or purpose
 - d. The name, title and contact information of the supervisor who will supervise the consumer
 - e. The employment start date
 - f. The employee's rate of pay
 - g. The date the employee will be eligible for a raise
 - h. The benefits available to the employee/consumer
 - i. The employee's work schedule including the days of the week and hours
 - j. A description of the essential work duties of the customized job
 - k. Any episodic work duties that the employee may perform in addition to the primary job tasks
 - l. Any accommodations identified
 - m. A description of how the employee will interact with other employees in the work setting
 - n. A description of the natural supports available to the employee in the worksite and away from the worksite and how the supports will be provided
 - o. An explanation of how the customized job is consistent with the consumer's conditions for employment, interests and contributions specified in the customized employment plan.
 - p. The job placement report was signed by the CRP and the consumer.

VI. JOB STABILIZATION

- A. To achieve job stabilization, job coaching is provided by a Customized Employment Specialist at the consumer's job site. Job coaching should result in the development of essential skills needed to maintain employment, provide the necessary prompts, address possible behavioral changes needed, and build natural supports to ensure continued success at work. The job coaching provided by the CES should lead to job stabilization and can include but is not limited to:
1. Accompanying the consumer to employee/employer training
 2. Attending meetings with the worksite Supervisors
 3. Reviewing, training and teaching essential job duties to the consumer
 4. Providing individualized training for learning job tasks (as a supplement to employee/employer training)
 5. Performing on-site follow-up to ensure work needs are being met
 6. Providing direct interventions on the job
 7. Identifying and setting up accommodations in coordination with employer and VR Counselor
 8. Building natural supports for continued success, as it relates to work
 9. Shadowing and observation
 10. Developing consumer's understanding of work culture (breaks, time and attendance, calling in sick, etc.)
- B. After one month of successful Job Retention and Job Coaching the vendor will invoice the LRS counselor for Milestone 4 using form CE-5.
- C. After the consumer has become stable in their employment, the vendor will invoice the LRS counselor for Milestone 5 using form CE-5.
- D. After the consumer has worked a minimum of 90 days and has met all the requirements for successful case closure, the vendor will invoice the LRS counselor for Milestone 6 using form CE-5.
- E. If the job placement meets the criteria for payment for meeting the high-quality indicators, the counselor will authorize payment.

VII. PAYMENT

The following payment schedule will be used for Customized Employment:

- Milestone 1 - Completed and approved Discovery/Discovery Profile--\$1,025
- Milestone 2 - Customized Employment Plan- \$500.00
- Milestone 3 -Job Development/Placement--\$2,000
- Milestone 4 - One-Month Job Retention--\$1,000
- Milestone 5 - Job Stabilization--\$1,000
- Milestone 6 - Successful Case Closure--\$2,250

IF APPLICABLE - HIGH QUALITY INDICATORS - \$1,000

VIII. HIGH QUALITY INDICATORS

A payment for high quality indicators is available to a CRP if two of the following conditions are met:

- The consumer is employed 25 or more hours per week; and/or
- The consumer is compensated at or above \$10.00 per hour; and/or
- Health insurance benefits are made available to the consumer through the employer.

This information must be verified on the consumer's most recent pay check stub or other official documentation provided by the employer.

IX. PURCHASING GUIDELINES FOR CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT

- A. Customized Employment services are not dependent upon the Consumer's participation in the cost of such services. However, transportation, maintenance and any other ancillary service of this type is subject to both the Consumer's ability to participate in the cost of such services and the exploration and use of comparable services and benefits.
- B. LRS will not fund Extended Ongoing Support Services.
- C. The Counselor must complete the IPE/Plan. Submit to the District Supervisor for approval including Independent Status Counselors. Upon approval the RCA/Counselor will enter the Authorization(s). See Chapter 4, Part 411.1 for further instructions on Secondary Approval requirements.
- D. If the total of all items/services on any IPE/ Plan is equal to or greater than \$25,000, it shall be considered "high cost." In these instances, all Counselors must have the IPE/Plan approved by both the District Supervisor and the Regional Manager.