



When Everyone Works, Everyone Wins!

Freedom To Work Project

Looking for employment? Imagine this...

You go to your local Department of Labor office because you want to become employed. Because you are a person with a disability, you are referred to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). You complete an application with VR, and then it is suggested that you contact a Benefits Specialist. Later on you're directed to the Department of Social Services to see what services might be available to you from their agency. AND, you are already working with someone from a local Center for Independent Living or a local Mental Health Center or a local Community Support Provider or a private Job Developer.



Let's see now, we've mentioned eight different doors that you may be directed towards in your quest for employment. A revolving door may be a good symbol for the many doors you are directed towards on your path. PLUS you meet with each

the many doors you are directed towards on your path. FLOS you meet with each of these resource people one at a time.

Now imagine for a moment - a group of community members, who are committed to supporting people with disabilities in reaching their career and employment goals all in one room together. YOU have invited them to participate on YOUR team. These team members are volunteering their time and efforts because they believe in the abilities of people with disabilities - they believe in YOU. They come together to work with YOU - which helps with time management for you and them, and it provides opportunities for all of you to bounce ideas off one another. YOU decide when and where to meet and what to discuss at each meeting. YOU decide whether or not to accept their recommendations and act upon them. YOU are the ultimate designer of the outcome of the team's efforts.

Does one approach sound better than the other? If you said "yes" to the second approach, you choose a "Career Development Team" (CDT). If you want to explore how a CDT might assist you in reaching your employment and career goals, a first step is to contact Shelly Pfaff, Freedom to Work Project staff, and visit with her in more detail about this idea. You can reach Shelly by calling 1.800.210.0143 or by emailing her at shellyp@sd-ccd.org.

In the meantime, if you'd like to learn more about how this team approach has worked for others, read on...



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A Personal Success Story...

Joe had been working for several years at a local one-stop shopping center. He primarily made sure shopping carts were available and ready for customers. Once in a while he was given the opportunity to try a different job i.e., stocking inventory, working in the garden center. Joe's employer was happy with his job performance, and Joe knew he wanted and needed to be employed. Yet he also knew he was ready for a change.

Joe heard about the "Career Development Team" idea, and he decided he wanted to develop such a team around himself. So he identified about eight different community members, with whom he had a relationship and whom he thought could help him identify new employment opportunities and help him explore those opportunities.

Joe's team met for an hour once a month for about six months. Working together they identified several "job tasting" opportunities within the community. Then Joe worked with a job developer to explore these opportunities throughout the summer

worked with a job developer to explore those opportunities throughout the summer. Joe kept his current job, while completing the various “job tasting” opportunities. At the same time, Joe continued his involvement with various community organizations i.e., Lions Club, church, Parks and Recreation Board, and he volunteered with a local college’s athletic department.

In the end, the volunteer position at the college worked itself into a part-time paid position. Joe also applied for a second part-time position on campus, and he was hired for it. Now he is working in an environment he enjoys, surrounded by peers, and his new employment supports his ability to continue with his other community organization activities.

Even though the team is no longer meeting, Joe continues to see his “team members” because they were a part of his circle of natural supports in his community, and they continue to be part of his circle today.

One approach to the “Career Development Team” model - the outcome - successful employment. Joe made a career change that better fits his abilities and his desires, and he continues to live in the community he has called “home” for several years.





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One Community's Story...

Staff from local agencies, serving people with disabilities, came together to talk about how they might support people with disabilities, who they had been working with and who had been seeking employment and just weren't experiencing success. These individuals completed pre-employment classes, updated their resumes, applied for positions and completed interviews. Yet, they weren't becoming employed. The question these providers asked was, "How might we provide services in a different way that will lead to these individuals being successful?"

So they decided to develop a Career Development Team. The team was comprised of someone from VR, someone from the Department of Labor, a Benefits Specialist, someone from a technical institute, a private job developer, one or two persons with disabilities who had a history of successful employment, an employee of a center for independent living, and the manager of a temporary employment agency. They invited applications from people who had been working with VR for a longer period of time and had



had been working with VR for a longer period of time and had not been experiencing success on their career journeys.

Upon review of the applications, a small group of team members met with each applicant and visited with them about their career goals. It was an opportunity to learn more about the person's skills, interests, abilities, likes and dislikes and much more. Then the entire team met to brainstorm ideas for each individual i.e., identifying volunteer opportunities; pointing to employment opportunities that fit with the individual's likes and dislikes; identifying where a person might get needed training specific to a certain employment opportunity or to expand their skills in general.

Next, the team met with the individual(s) and shared ideas that they felt could lead to successful employment. Then it was up to each individual applicant to decide if they wanted to pursue any of the recommendations or not.

This process led to eight different individuals being successfully employed - individuals who had been seeking employment for a long time and for various reasons had not yet been successful in reaching their goals. A different approach to a CDT but the same outcome - successful employment.



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For persons with disabilities with a career goal, here are some first steps to forming a Career Development Team to help you achieve your goal:

- Identify community members who you feel will be able to help you reach your goal.
- Identify what you believe each brings to the team, and why it's important to have each of them on your team.
- Set a date, time and place for an initial meeting.
- Invite them to the meeting to learn about your goals, the Career Development Team model and how you'd like to use it to support you in reaching your goal.
- Host the initial meeting with support from FTW staff.
- Determine next steps...

For community providers serving people with disabilities who are seeking a career goal, here are some first steps



towards developing a Career Development team in your community:



- Identify other providers and community members who you feel would be an asset to the team
- Identify what you believe each brings to the team, and why it is important to have each of them on the team.
- Set a date, time and place for an initial meeting.
- Invite them to the meeting to learn about the Career Development Model, and how you see it supporting your fellow community members in reaching their career goals.
- Host the initial meeting with support from FTW staff.
- Determine next steps...

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