

What are employment services? What can I expect?

What are supported employment services?

Supported employment services are for people with disabilities who are interested in working and who need support in finding and keeping a job. Supported Employment services focus on competitive (e.g. minimum wage or higher), integrated employment opportunities in community businesses. According to Virginia's Employment First initiative, competitive and integrated employment is the first and preferred option for people with disabilities. Depending on eligibility funding may be available through federal, state, waiver or local dollars.

How are employment services different from day support services?

Employment services are interactive, and are a collaborative effort between the person seeking employment and a job coach. Activities that can be done in employment services include exploring jobs, writing resumes, and preparing for interviews. In addition, once the person secures employment, a job coach will support that individual with orientation, learning job tasks, and developing natural supports on-site. These services are done one-to-one with the job coach, on a schedule agreed upon between the person and the job coach. Usually, services are evaluated and authorized on a month to month basis, depending on the supports needed.

Day support services include training, assistance, and specialized supervision in the acquisition, retention, or improvement of self-help, socialization, and adaptive skills. Day support services focuses on enabling the individual to attain or maintain his/her maximum functional level. These services can be center based, or community based services, with both focusing on community inclusion. Day support services can be part-time or full-time and can occur for as long as you remain eligible and funding is available.

Who is eligible for employment services?

You may be eligible if you have a physical, developmental, or behavioral health related disability and:

- The disability keeps you from finding or keeping a job,
- You want to work and you think employment services can help you, and
- You are in Virginia (live in, or are moving to Virginia).

If you think you have a disability but have never been diagnosed, you may also apply.

How do I get started?

If your child is 13 through 21 and still in school, talk to the person who coordinates your child's 504 Plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP). That person can help you with a referral to an adult service agency, such as DARS, and invite a representative, with your written consent, to your child's meeting. If education rights have transferred to your child, they will provide consent to invite someone from outside of the school. You or your child may invite someone to the meeting, and that does not require consent.

If you are over 22 years old and have a support coordinator, call your support coordinator/case manager. He or she will help you start the DARS referral process.

If you are over 22 years old and do not have a support coordinator, you can find more information at www.vadars.org or by dialing 1-800-552-5019.

Who provides funding for employment services?

The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) determines eligibility for employment services. If you are found eligible, DARS will provide the service through state and federal funding, although in some circumstances, a job seeker or family may need to contribute financially. If DARS is not able to provide funding, people with disabilities who have a Medicaid Waiver can receive funding for job development services through the waiver. You can also check with your locality to see if they offer employment funding. In some cases private pay options are available.

How long does the eligibility process take?

By law, DARS has 60 days to decide if you are eligible for employment services. During these 60 days, a DARS counselor will review paperwork you have from school and/or doctors about your disability. They will also ask about any money you have. If you live at home, they may also ask about your family's income. In some case when the DARS counselor is not able to determine eligibility within 60 days they may extend the time it takes by using Trial Work. Your DARS counselor can explain what Trial work entails.