



*A Specialized Human Resource Organization*

*Meeting the employment needs of people with disabilities and the business community*

## **PARTICIPANT SERVICES**

Many would agree that obtaining and sustaining employment is a major key to independence and an essential element in the overall quality of life. Our organization has been recognized numerous times for providing services that are innovative, personalized, and results-oriented. We are very aware of the resources available to support individuals with disabilities and are always looking for new ones that will allow our services to expand and also reach new communities.

Since community employment is our passion, we only assist youth and adults that are interested in exploring/securing/maintaining employment in competitive work settings. We want to see individuals realize their dreams to become a more independent member of their communities; working along side others that do not have disabilities. Likewise, we focus on job opportunities where people with disabilities are compensated with earnings that are at least minimum wage and consistent with the earnings of their non-disabled peers.

This agency's individualized approach includes a variety of service options that many refer to as "Supported Employment". Supported employment refers to providing assistance in integrated settings. Specifically, agencies providing "Supported Employment" will offer some or all of the following types of support: job development; job coaches for individualized job site training support; on-going support for job retention; transportation training; and connection to/provision of assistive technology.

Our employees work with the individual seeking employment support to develop a Plan of Service. Depending upon need of this program participant, here are the general categories of services that can be individualized within a person's plan:

### Information & Referral

Though AHEDD is a specialized human resource organization, AHEDD staff can also provide information and referral for other community resources that are integral in the overall development of independence. Most of the services that AHEDD provides or coordinates are funded by third party agreements. If there is not a financial sponsor available, AHEDD will make referrals to help an individual sort through available options, including private pay from a participant or his/her family.

### Pre-Employment Services

Depending on need, a customer may participate in pre-employment activities such as Community Based Work Assessments (conducted with employers in the community), job seeking and interview skill training, resume development, and more – all of which are aimed to prepare the individual for selecting and securing employment to match current skills and abilities.

### Job Development

As a component of AHEDD's Community Employment Services for individuals with disabilities, the organization regularly canvasses the business community to identify diverse types of employment for program participants. They also leverage the business outreach conducted by the PA Business Leadership Network (PA BLN) to connect with companies and provide a greater variety of employment options to the people served.

Taking time upfront to understand the workplace needs and specifics is critical to ensuring that AHEDD finds jobs that individuals want to do and that fit within their capability and qualifications.

### On-site and Off-site Support

Commonly referred to as job coaching, this service can include job site instruction, the coordination of vocational and educational services, and/or other job-related assistance such as advocacy for reasonable accommodations. On-going support is available to help the customer maintain and, when the opportunity presents itself, advance their career.

### Follow Along Services

AHEDD commits to provide support and guidance to our program participants for at least 12 months after they first go to work. This commitment to ongoing (follow along) support is a great benefit for both our program participants and employers. We not only want people to get a job, we want them to stay employed.

While the level of support is customized according to need, providing such Follow Along services helps the individual to maintain employment, address career development issues, and enhance their economic well being. AHEDD is there to help with any type of issue that could impact someone's ability to maintain employment successfully. We can make a difference by guiding folks on how to address conflicts with co-workers or supervisors, assessing production deficiencies and providing possible solutions, assisting folks with how to handle their responsibilities for reporting earnings to SSA, and much more.

### Work Incentive Counseling (WIC)

Many people receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) would like to explore work opportunities or increase their earnings, but are concerned about losing cash benefits and health care. While these benefits are intended to provide basic support for millions of persons with disabilities, they have evolved as a new obstacle to the search for gainful employment and greater participation in community living.

Since 2001, AHEDD has been helping participants understand how to maximize their benefits and related work incentives to achieve greater financial independence and reach their employment goals. We can provide WIC to anyone receiving an SSI and/or SSDI cash payment between the ages of 14 and 64. Ideally, this service is for persons who are working or are considering work in the near future.

AHEDD is a specialized human resource organization with a mission to serve the community as a catalyst in the employment and development of persons with a disability. AHEDD provides community employment services through a network of field offices throughout Pennsylvania. For further information about our Services, contact AHEDD at 1-866-902-4333 or [inforequest@ahedd.org](mailto:inforequest@ahedd.org).