

QUATSEE COURSE OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

LESSON 5

1st PHASE OF S.E.: CLIENT ENGAGEMENT AND THE VOCATIONAL PROFILE, ASSESSMENT OF JOB-SEEKERS.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson, you should:

- Understand the philosophy and processes and activities of assessment of candidates or job-seekers for supported employment.
- Know to make behavioural assessments in real situation.
- Know how to gather useful information for labour inclusion of candidates: the required profile.

In this first phase of supported employment we will get into one of the most important components of this system of labour inclusion: knowledge of the individual. We have already said, and we will continue repeating it throughout the course, that for supported employment the candidate who needs support is the central component and, therefore, any professional who wants to accompany candidates on their process to get and keep a job, the first thing to do is know them well, from the point of view of their preferences, skills and abilities, and be sure of the support they need, one by one, to get the best job matching.

We want to encourage the influence of the previous attitude of the professional before the client engagement and the assessment of candidates for supported employment and the philosophy faced within this process. The assessment cannot focus on the weaknesses or mainly emphasize the negative elements of the person, to exclude this of the supported employment path. The attitude of the person who assess cannot be that of who is seeking which behaviours or characteristics of the candidate justify his/her exclusion from

employment, nor that of an inspector or coach that determines who may or may not become a candidate for supported employment. We have said previously that all people are able to contribute with something and work can be performed effectively, if given the necessary support.

Unfortunately, you can often find these attitudes in professionals whose function is evaluating and guiding people with diverse abilities to one or another line of services. In many entities in our environment, individuals cannot even acquire the category of "candidate for supported employment" because the professionals have catalogued them as "unfit" based on their impairments and disabilities, not doing a full and objective assessment of their abilities to identify in which field they are good at. These attitudes result in the rejection of many potential candidates who would have been rated positively to start a path of supported employment.

In the more general concept of supported employment, the professional that should make the assessment of candidates for employment is the job coach or the technician specialized in labour inclusion, and then he/she will have to bear his/her accompaniment, training and support. In some entities the assessment process is done jointly by the job coach and psychologist or counsellor, this being a system that can also give good results, if both act with the proper philosophy.

Anyway, the **technical competences** that professionals must demonstrate in the assessment of candidates are basically these:

- Review from the perspective of employment the individual reports of all types (educational, social, medical, vocational training, service record, etc..).
- Interview the candidate and people around him/her that can provide information about him/her (family, friends, teachers, social workers, psychologists, neighbours, etc..).
- Monitor and evaluate the behaviour of the candidate in community settings and in real work situations.
- Observe and evaluate the interaction of the environment with the individual and the possibilities of support.
- Gather all the information in a protocol or profile of the candidate for employment.

5. 1. PROCESSES AND ACTIVITIES OF ASSESSMENT OF CANDIDATES FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT.

It should be remembered now what we mean by assessment of candidates for supported employment:

Definition

It is the process of assessing the current skills and interests of a candidate and the conditions of his/her environment and the needs and possibilities of support, in order to do the best possible job match.

Evaluate skills and interests

Note that the assessment process has two components, both essential: first, skills and interests of the candidate or job-seeker at the present time are measured and, second, support needs to perform certain tasks are measured.

Identify the needs of support

In the assessment exercise is very important to consider the second part, which is often ignored. It is not enough to collect information on current skills the candidate has to perform tasks independently, but also the supports he/she needs to perform different tasks should be identified. This identification will allow the candidate to develop certain functions and tasks that, without the right support, it would be unthinkable that the candidate could make them and therefore he/she will be given access to a much larger range of possibilities and the potential performance of several tasks within the workplace.

But we must also note that in supported employment the assessment process must inevitably lead to a job matching and therefore it is essential to observe and assess both the individual in relation to the environment, and the environment in relation to the individual. That is, it is a process of observation,

analysis and evaluation of behaviour -whether of the individual or of the environment- and possible interactions that could occur between them. This type of assessment is known by the nickname of "*ecological*" because it does not take into account only the individual but also the environment where the individual is and his/her current or future mutual interactions.

*Negative
assessment*

The assessment of candidates in supported employment has nothing to do, therefore, with other models intended to exclude candidates to select the best ones. These traditional models are well known and maybe we have experienced them more than once, among them, the most skilled or the luckiest in testing recruiters are who succeed. In general, people with disabilities who are candidates for supported employment often fail in this type of standard tests and therefore, one must seek other evaluation methods that are more effective for the target to be achieved: his/her labour inclusion in the ordinary labour market (see Table 1).

*Positive
assessment*

There are therefore three types of ratings:

1) The negative assessment, which mainly finds deficiencies, what the subject cannot do, lacking skills, disruptive behaviour, in general, disabilities; all this naturally leads to the rejection of candidates for an employment in the regular labour market.

*Positive and
ecological
assessment*

2) The positive assessment is attached in the skills of the individual, in his/her favourable attitudes, in the elements that can contribute to success in a competitive employment, that is, the one which focuses mainly on the capacity of the candidate; this model often leads to the placement of the "best ones" in the market offer.

3) The positive and ecological assessment, is to be applied in supported employment, it has all the ingredients of the previous model, but also detects the support needs of the candidate and the environment, provides reciprocal interactions, and is searching not only what is currently being produced, but what might happen taking into account the resources of the environment and the possible supports. It is an accurate assessment "to measure" the candidate, for he/she to contribute, in a specific environment and with the support of the environment. This assessment model leads to the selection of the best job, for this candidate in the best environment, or what is the same, the best job matching. It is the assessment that leads the candidate to be selected for supported employment.

1) Gather information through:

a) Interview the candidate

It can be seen that in the three assessment models, the same operations are performed: capturing information, review technical reports or records, conduct interviews, observations and assessments, collect all the data in a professional profile. The difference lies in the optical and the purpose for which these operations are made. We can say, therefore, that the "how" is the most important and it is what gives quality to the assessment process, and in supported employment we should always strive for high quality in the processes we apply.

b) Interview other important people

Let's see some of these operations in the assessment of candidates.

1) The first process to be performed in the assessment is the knowledge of the individual. For this, **it should be gathered as much information as possible** by all means at our disposal, both formally and informally.

c) Review of

reports

The activities to be done in order to gather information about the central person are:

- a) Interview the candidate to try to build bridges of unity and co-operation, and to obtain direct information about his/her interests, ambitions and concerns, likes and dislikes, resources and reactions etc. From these interviews, the individual plan for social and labour inclusion to be lead by the candidate supported by the job coach and the mediating entity will be shaping.
- b) Interview other people or agents who have a special significance in the life of the central person. Here we refer to the interviews with parents/guardians, siblings and other relatives, teachers, significant friends and neighbours, professionals who know him/her well, etc. In all these interviews, information that is useful from the labour and social point of view will be reached.
- c) Review all written reports about the candidate: school reports, medical, psychological, vocational assessments, social skills, personal autonomy, service records, etc. *Review* involves reading carefully, analyse and try to identify inconsistencies that may occur between a report and another to look for additional information from appropriate sources, if necessary. This exercise involves making a precautionary analysis of professional reports, as they are often drawn from a negative perspective and seem much more technical and wise when they highlight the weaknesses of the person. Too often, technical reports represent a burden for people with different abilities, especially for those who suffer from mental illness, and an insurmountable barrier to access to the regular labour market.
- d) Conduct informal observations to obtain direct information on the behaviour of the person in

d) Informal observations

2) Through the circle of support

his/her environments and different situations in real life. These observations often provide very fresh and useful information avoiding that the person feels observed. Here are some practical exercises that allow you to design your own observation exercises later, to apply them to the real person of reference, in your quest to know him/her better.

2) If working with the methodology of the **circle of support**, one can gather the necessary information on the central person, through all members of the circle that are a team with lots of information about the candidate. The job coach or facilitator should collect information meeting separately with each member and not forgetting, of course, the necessary interviews with the central person.

In this formula the job coach feels embraced by the collaboration and contributions of the circle team and together will build the individual plan, according to the interests and objectives set by the central person, and around him/her are the volunteer members committed to the individual (family, friends, significant people) and a professional, including the job coach.

NEGATIVE ASSESSMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reports ▪ Interviews ▪ Evaluations ▪ Observations 	REJECTION
POSITIVE ASSESSMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reports ▪ Interviews ▪ Evaluations ▪ Observations 	MATCHING (of the “best ones”)
POSITIVE AND ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reports ▪ Interviews ▪ Evaluations ▪ Observations 	SUPPORTED MATCHING (zero rejection)

Table 1: Different models of assessment and their consequences.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

Conduct informal observations

Scenario 1:

You are a job or technical coach in labour inclusion interested in informally observe *Carmel*, who wants a supported employment. As a part of the assessment process, you have decided to perform several sessions of observing her behaviour, to determine how she operates in different environments and her skill level. You know that *Carmel* has traumatic brain injury and is 28. When you meet her for an interview, you suggest she goes to look for two coffees and a sandwich at the cafe that is a few hundred meters to the right along the side-walk. So as to get there, she will have to cross several side streets without much traffic, and a walk with two-way traffic lights. You give her € 10 to pay.

List of **skills** that can be assessed during the observation of *Carmel*.
Describe them briefly.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Scenario 2:

You are the job coach who will conduct an informal observation of *Giorgio* for supported employment. He is 35 and has a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia that causes problems with social relationships and requires intermittent support. As a part of the assessment process, you have decided to go to lunch with him and see how he takes the bus from his home to a self-service restaurant well known where he has never been. Previously, you supplied him with written information on the bus route and at home he was given € 20 for lunch.

List of **skills** that can be assessed during the observation of *Giorgio*.
Describe them briefly.

1.- _____

2.- _____

3.- _____

4.- _____

5.- _____

6.- _____

7.- _____

5. 2. SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENTS.

Getting as much positive information as possible from the person who wants a job is crucial to succeed in the post job matching. One of the highlighted activities of the process of evaluating candidates is organizing sessions of situational assessment, in order to know his/her labour and social skills, and some features of his/her behaviour and the environmental conditions and positive interactions between them.

This activity is in fact a process of community-based assessment, which serves to identify the behaviours of candidates for employment to be observed and the real environments in which he/she moves. It is in fact what some call job taste, which may last from one day to one week.

*To observe
support needs*

The situational assessment records observed activities and the response of individuals to the demands and pressures of the real environment. It also serves to identify the support needs of individuals in the different situations they are exposed to.

Situational assessments can be done as well in a work environment, in this case one can observe along side a work experience or a work trial in a real company and are appropriate to determine the physical abilities of the person to perform the tasks of the position: if he/she has the required force, if he/she resists fatigue, and social skills; if he/she has the communication skills required in that environment, how the user receives and responds to supervision; they also serve to verify the interactions that occur between

Steps to organize
assessment
sessions

the person and his/her peers and vice versa, and the individual's response to factors of the environment where his/her workplace is located: temperature, noise, open or closed space, itineraries. Finally, this type of scheduled observations are also useful for identifying job preferences of the person: if he/she prefers to work more in the countryside or in the city, if he/she can fit better in a factory or in an office; and to determine when his/her labour contribution may be more effective and better quality: if his/her performance is better in the mornings or afternoons , for how long , etc.

According to Inge and others (1991)¹, the steps to follow to organize situational observations are:

- 1- Identify the jobs to observe: for this, it will be useful to study the yellow pages, be alert for jobs in ads, review the jobs that other people with diverse abilities have had.
- 2- Identify companies: they must have operational positions we want to observe, they will provide the scenario for the operations of assessment; it is better if a cooperation agreement is signed for this purpose.
- 3- Contact the Chief of Staff: to suggest the objectives of the operation, set the functions of each one, choose the most appropriate workplaces, inform managers, take a tour of the company, and realize a partnership.
- 4- Identify and analyse the chosen jobs: observe the workers in similar positions that then our

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Inge, K., Barcus, M., Brooke, V. y Everson, J. (1991): *Supported Employment Staff Training Manual*. Richmond: Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, Virginia Commonwealth University.

candidates will occupy, programmes must specify the duties of each position, and develop sequencing task analysis.

- 5- Make a programme of assessments, integrating all elements clearly: Days and hours of work and observation in various departments, which professional will observe in each moment and place, how the candidates will be distributed at the observation points and during the week, etc.
- 6- Conduct situational assessments: it will be useful to develop a record to collect information during the observation sessions in real situation.

In general, in order to successfully develop these assessments, it will be desirable to achieve agreements with a sufficient number of companies that participate in this social collaboration, it is better if they are very different companies in order to offer to our candidates many different positions.

It is necessary to stress the importance of **identifying the support needs of the candidate**: any effective assessment process must be able to identify in which areas the assessed person needs technical support, because only with those identified supports, the professional and human team that will accompany him/her will be able to provide them to our candidate, and the person will succeed in employment.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

You must make a week schedule of *labour trials* of some candidates in real situation. Two job coaches will observe the behaviour of 5 candidates at three different hospital environments (laundry, offices, and gardens).

Observation sessions will be individual and will last 2 hours.

We must ensure that all candidates are observed by the two job coaches, passing through the three areas of work, and at least once make an afternoon shift. It is also important to observe how they have lunch in the cafeteria/self-service of the hospital.

SCHEDULE OF ASSESSMENT SESSIONS					
Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9 - 11					
11 - 13					
Lunch					

15- 17					
17- 19					

Note: Remember you should write down the name of the candidate and job coach, and the area of observation.

5. 3. COLLECT ALL THE INFORMATION IN A VOCATIONAL PROFILE FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT.

After analysing the information contained in the technical reports, after making enough interviews with the main character and the most significant people in his/her environment, and after observing him/her in different employment and community situations, it's time to gather all information in a protocol or candidate assessment form for supported employment. Some prefer to use a technical term, *vocational profile*². Actually this profile is being completed gradually, as relevant information to the matching of a candidate is detected throughout the duration of this phase.

The goal of gathering all relevant data of the candidate in a single and non-transferable profile is for us to have all the elements that provide us light to the difficult task of getting the best possible job matching. Therefore, the profile becomes a critical piece of the puzzle and should be reviewed and updated whenever the knowledge of the individual provide us data relating to his/her profile, even if the candidate is already working. It is, therefore, an alive tool.

If the candidate is uncommunicative or has a poorly developed language, or we cannot understand him/her, it is essential to conduct interviews with him/her, but accompanied by a family member or professional acting as an interpreter and assisting in the accurate translation of his/her interests and realities. The profile must be truthful and useful for the matching of the candidate. The consistency of the

² EUSE (2014): *Tool-kit for Diversity, How to Guides n° 1 & 2- Client Engagement and The Vocational Profile*. (recommended reading).

data collected can be obtained by comparing the information provided by the various interlocutors throughout the process.

REFERENCES

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