

**Multiple Job Placements & Retention: A New Paradigm for Outcome Measurement**

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## Reasons for Job Change

Through a ten-year period, data was collected on any client who obtained more than one job placement at CVES. The reasons for each job change were compiled along with the possible positive and negative side effects. The following categories of reasons for losing or changing a job were identified. At times, two or more reasons apply to a single client or job change.

### Client Desires Another Job

The reasons clients want to change jobs are the same reasons that any employee may have. Most people change jobs multiple times in their work history. Clients, just like anyone else, may want to increase pay, benefits, status, responsibilities, or job satisfaction. For some clients, decreasing stress in the work environment is a motivating factor or finding a more compatible work schedule, employer, or co-workers. Preventing burnout or rust-out is an effort to keep from putting too much into a job or avoiding boredom if the job is not challenging. There could be influence from significant others in the client's life or a transportation or child care issue. A client's interests may have changed or there may be a desire to learn new skills.

### Poor Performance

The client's skills or work behaviors may be inadequate to meet the demands of their job. There may be no possibility to improve skills to the level of being able to perform essential job functions. It could be motivation or interest that is lacking. Perhaps the client did not realize the actual demands of the job. Sometimes a change occurs in client's skills or work behaviors due to a new injury or progression of illness. A client may recognize poor performance and voluntarily resign or an employer may follow their company policy to let the employee go involuntarily.

### Necessary Supports Are Not Present

Necessary supports in the work environment may be missing. Some clients need accommodations such as the ability to flex work schedules, co-workers who can provide prompts, or a routine that can be learned so the client can do the job independently. There may be extra break or rest times that need to be scheduled into the day. Clients may need a work environment free from distractions or more time with the job coach than funding will allow. Necessary supports should be identified prior to job placement when possible. If the supports are not present and the client is unable to perform the job, the job coach may initiate the job change. The job coach is an advocate for the client but should also have the best interest of the employer in mind and assist in making job changes when necessary.

### Performance Merits a New Position

If the client performs their job well, the employer may be ready to promote him or her to a new job. The client may have increased abilities or completed an education course that entitles them to move up to a new level or job title. A promotion may mean moving up the corporate ladder or the change could be a lateral move. The client may or may not like the change. Sometimes a change can be stressful even if it is a change for the better.

### Reduction in Force or Lay-off

Business fluctuates with demand. When business is slow, clients may be laid off or have work hours greatly reduced. Companies downsize to save money and may terminate job positions or out source whole divisions. Clients may not receive a lot of notice before their job is terminated.

### Poor job match

A client may have had a Vocational Evaluation that recommended a specific job that does not turn out to be suitable. Perhaps the job did not match the interests or values of the client or of their significant others. The job placement program may have encouraged clients to take the first available job without careful consideration whether a good job match had been found. The client may have had an unrealistic goal that needed to be explored in order to move on to more realistic choices. The client may have taken the first job available without being fully qualified.

### Positive and Negative Consequences

The positive benefits or negative consequences of each job change can be examined upon termination of the job. Feedback from the client, employer, referral source and job coach can be utilized. Client characteristics and job environments, client feedback about job satisfaction and self-esteem, as well as information gained by the job coach can be examined. There could be either positive or negative benefits or consequences of job changes and multiple job placements.

### Positive Benefits for Clients

As clients change jobs, whether voluntarily or not, there is an opportunity to gain awareness of abilities or interests and to experience increased motivation to make the next placement work. The client may become more able to accept and incorporate feedback from job coach, employer or referral source. Self-esteem could increase with increased work experience of multiple placements. The client has an opportunity for paid career exploration experience. This could be helpful if the client has not had much exposure to the world of work. There could be increased chances to maximize

ability, benefits, and/or pay through a better job or work environment.

Clients get repetitive practice in using job-seeking skills as they change jobs. They can learn from their mistakes what is acceptable or not acceptable and have exposure to various personalities in their supervisors and co-workers. They may gain new work skills or develop compensatory strategies that will carry over to the next job. Realistically, the client may only be able to maintain a job for short periods. With continued job placements and support, the value of working is emphasized as opposed to what type of job or length of job.

#### Positive Benefits for Employers

The employer becomes more knowledgeable about disabilities, accommodations and networking with supported employment resources. If possible, when one client does not work out on a specific job, the placement program could try to place another more qualified client. When a placement must be terminated because of a poor job match or poor performance, the job coach could offer the employer assistance and support by helping to facilitate the job change. The job placement program can benefit the employer if they are able to develop more realistic picture of the type of worker the employer needs. Employers often want to work with people with disabilities. They may have had personal experience with a family member or feel it their community responsibility. They are already accustomed to the fact that some employees do not work out and usually will not hold a "failure" against a job placement program. The employer could take advantage of a tax credit available for employing a person with a disability or benefit in a public relations area.

#### Positive Benefits for Referral Sources, Job Coaches, or Placement Programs

Multiple job placements can be a cost-effective way of providing career exploration, enabling everyone to become more aware and realistic about the client's abilities, and of providing further skills evaluation and development. Everyone can gain insight into the client's wants, needs, and abilities. There is an opportunity to gain new respect for the client or placement agency. Evaluators and job placement staff can learn more about the client to improve the next placement or the services they provide to the next client. Placement programs can utilize information in their program evaluation and continually look for opportunities for improvement in service delivery.

#### Negative Impact on Client of Multiple Job Placement

When a job terminates, a client can experience lowered self-esteem or decreased motivation or initiative. The client could become discouraged or become less committed to making a job work or develop the habit of leaving a job

whenever the “going gets rough”. It could be negative to be seen as a job hopper. Funding benefits or Social Security trial work benefits could be used up before the client is able to find a stable job. When job changes occur, there is usually reduced possibility of moving up in pay, benefits, or status due to shortened longevity.

#### Negative Impact on Employers

Employers will find it expensive to keep replacing employees if clients move on and change jobs. Individual employers may develop less interest in hiring the disabled or in working with a particular placement program.

#### Negative Impact on Referral Source, Job Coach, or Placement Program

Multiple job placements increase the cost of job coaching and job placement services. This is costly. Referral sources could change their opinion of the client or placement program. The job coach may become discouraged and feel the failure to maintain the job by the client as a personal failure. Employers may be hesitant to utilize a program if clients do not work out. The placement program may lose the cooperation of the employer, client, family, or referral source. How many placements can be supported when funds are limited?

### Case Studies

#### Client Held One Job for a Long Time and Chose to Change Jobs and Learn New Skills

Nancy had worked successfully at a Nursing Home in Environmental Services for over five years (1/20/1992-3/19/1997). Her starting rate of pay was \$5.06 and before she left was \$6.60. She was working full time with benefits of medical, dental, paid vacation, and 401K. The location was convenient to her house. She felt that her position was not allowing her new opportunities to learn new skills and satisfy different interests. Therefore, her Long Term Support Job Coach helped her approach her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to obtain support to search for a new placement. She continued working at her first job until a new position was obtained. She chose a position at a grocery store that allowed her a variety of duties such as stocking, working in the bakery and helping on the line. Nancy lost nothing in benefits, hours worked or convenience and made even more money starting at \$6.90 (and now currently making \$7.70.) Her family, employer, and referral source all felt that it was a win-win situation. The cost of job placement/coaching services has been \$5,890, which has been paid by the state vocational rehabilitation program. She has earned almost \$100,000 during the seven years and two jobs and she has paid taxes to repay some of the money spent on her. She has retained the second job for two years now and there was no unemployed period between the first and second job. Her job retention has been over seven years now if you add the time at both jobs together.

### Client Gains Work Experience in One Job, Gets Training, and Gets Job of Her Dreams

A client's first job can be a stepping stone that provides experience or education that leads to a job with increased pay, benefits, challenges, duties and job satisfaction. The car accident that caused Roberta's brain injury interrupted graduate school where she was majoring in Business Marketing. Her first job after her rehabilitation was with a large department store. She worked 30 hours a week as an Expediter making \$6.00/ hour. This job allowed her to gain professional experience, develop her skills and stamina, and learn more about her abilities as she entered the world of work. It was not her ultimate job of choice and after seven months at that job she entered a training program called Careers in Banking at Goodwill Industries. Upon graduation she obtained a job as a full time Lockbox with a full benefits package and a starting rate of \$7.50 an hour. Currently she makes \$9.00/hour and works full time and has vacation, medical and 401K benefits. She has had the job for 40 months, over three years. Altogether she has worked 47 months at the two jobs, almost four years. She has also worked her way off of SSDI benefits after taking advantage of the nine months of trial work period. Multiple placements have helped her to find the job of her dreams.

### Client Continued to Change Jobs and Improve Skill Level after Brain Surgery

Prior to his brain tumor, Art had been a successful manager. His brain surgery left him with memory and executive functioning deficits. His self-confidence was devastated. Therefore, he was placed in a paid Work Adjustment position at the Charlotte Institute of Rehabilitation Hospital Copy Center while still participating in other rehabilitation therapies. This allowed him to develop and practice compensatory strategies while in a real working environment. He gradually assumed supervisory skills that exercised his management skills while building his self-confidence. He stayed four months and earned \$6.95/hour for 20 hours/week. From there, he was placed in a clerk position at a local Copy Business. He worked full time at \$6.72/hour and maintained this job for 8 months. He had to work rotating shifts, which stressed him physically, and he also had to deal with pressure that came with long lines and impatient customers. Art desired better pay and benefits, more challenges, and he wanted a job that would provide a more compatible working environment.

He debated returning to school to learn more about computers, but opted to enter a hands-on paid apprenticeship with the Recycled Equipment Program at CIR in which he learned to refurbish computers and clean donated pieces of assistive technology such as wheelchair or walkers. He worked 20 hours/week at \$6.00/hour for five months in this training job. From there, he obtained a job as Sterilization Technician at Carolinas Medical Center and now works full

time at 40 hours/week at \$8.05/hour with full benefits and he has held the job for 21 months to date. The cost of the job placement and job coaching services has totaled \$6,606 for the four placements. The money for job placement services came through the state vocational rehabilitation program. During this time period, Art has earned \$43,521 in income and has paid taxes on his earnings. There were no months in between any of the four job placements. The placements lasted 4 months, 8 months, 5 months, and 21 months for the current job so far. Therefore his job retention would be over three years because he has worked for 38 of the last 38 months that he was employable after his surgery.

#### Three Unsuccessful Jobs of Short Duration Followed by Successful Long Term Job

Clyde wanted to work after he had completed his rehabilitation program following an accident and brain injury. Prior to his injury, he had been a transient person with no stable job or residence. At first, the state vocational rehabilitation program was reluctant to fund extensive services for Clyde and wanted to see his ability to follow through. He attended a sheltered employment workshop for several months and demonstrated good attendance and participation. His first job placement was with a small frame shop business for \$4.75/hour in 9/92. This job did not last long because the business moved and laid off employees. He then was placed as a lawn mower repairman at a small family-run lawnmower business. He stayed in the job only one month and left because he could not learn to do the job duties. Three months later, he tried a job as dining room attendant. He left that job after one month due to a blood clot forming in his leg. It required surgery, a leg brace, and the need for a more sedentary job. Three months later, he obtained a position as frame assembler at a large frame shop and has kept that job from 10/94 to the present, 53 months so far. He started at \$4.25/hour and now makes \$5.55/hour. His work hours per week vary. At times, this client is not very reliable and cannot work a regular schedule. His employer has been willing to work with him because the employer values his skills and experience. The employer is compassionate, patient, and believes in the abilities of people with disabilities or disadvantages. Clyde likes his job. He has suffered no real consequences for his unreliable work attendance which is influenced by his drinking behavior. Clyde's job placement and job coaching support services for the four placements have cost the state vocational rehabilitation program \$6,752. He has earned approximately \$31,500 in his current job over a four year period. His SSI goes up and down depending on his reported earnings. Clyde has showed that the investment in him was worth the effort of the four placements to find one that fit him.

#### Client has Five Placements and Continues to have an Unrealistic Dream Job as an Accountant

Mary was in a car accident at the end of her first year of college. Her parents helped her through a lengthy

rehabilitation program and she had attempted many part-time jobs such as handing out samples at food store, news stand sales, and fast food. She accepted a part time job with a grant designed to improve services for survivors of brain injury. Mary worked 15-20 hours/week for \$6.00/hour for three months from 4/94 to 7/94. She assisted with a job club for survivors and training on brain injury. She also worked at volunteer jobs in the hospital copy center and answering the telephone. She attended the local community college and completed a Multi skills class in general office skills. Her dream job was to be an accountant. Her grant job ended and two months later she obtained a job as Sales Associate for a clothing store. She maintained the job for 14 months, earning \$4.80-\$4.90/hour and working 15-20 hours per week. This was her first successful job that she had maintained over one year since her injury. She proved she could succeed if she had a work environment with the right kind of support. Mary had severe short-term memory difficulties. This affected her ability to find merchandise since it was rotated regularly and to operate the cash register or credit card check. Even though she had lists of reminders, she would repeatedly, at times, ask her co-workers and manager the same questions about how to do a certain function or where something was located. She would lose track of time during breaks or when smoking outside the door. This would be annoying to many people. Her co-workers and manager were very patient. Mary had good social skills most of the time and was always well groomed. Mary wanted to change jobs after 14 months to be closer to where she lived so the bus ride wouldn't be so long. Mary did not drive, and took taxis frequently which were expensive, or rode the public bus. She got another job immediately with no break between jobs.

She next worked as a Sales Associate for another clothing chain for 12 months, earning \$5.50-\$5.60/hour working 20-25 hours per week. All problems from the last job were eliminated because she did not operate the cash register and merchandise was not rotated. She liked the job until the management changed. There was a personality conflict with management. Another problem was that her boyfriend spent large amounts of time in the store and had to be asked frequently to wait for her some place else. She left this job to work in the same location as her boyfriend and took a job as Fitness Room Attendant for Adam's Mark hotel making \$5.60/hour working 15-20/hours per week. This lasted two months. She could not do the job and the relationship between her and her boyfriend interfered in both their jobs. Job coaches learned that Mary really needs guidance in choosing a job to be sure it is realistic. At times, she does not want any help. Two months later, she obtained a job as store clerk for the Public Library in their used bookshop. She stayed on this job 20 months, earning \$6.00-\$6.55/hour and working 20-25 hours per week. She has some personality conflicts with co-workers. The bookstore closed and she is currently unemployed. Job placement and coaching services have



cost \$10,352. Mary continues to want to be an Accountant. In every job, she has demonstrated short term memory problems and asking co-workers and management the same questions over and over. She has maintained her SSDI benefits by working part time, and has taken college courses at the local community college to remediate English or Math. In the 57 months since 4/94, Mary has worked 51 months, which is 89% of the time. Our goal in our contract with the local Area Mental Health Authority is that we will assist long-term support clients to be working a minimum of 75% of the time, or at least 9 of every 12 possible months. She has been a success, even though she is unemployed at present.

#### Former Human Resources Manager Strives to Return to Professional Work

Ben had a lengthy work history as Teacher, Coach, and Human Resources Manager before receiving a brain injury in 1992. He retained a strong work ethic and desire to return to a professional career. He participated in rehabilitation and outpatient therapies as long as his insurance would cover services. He continued to have difficulty with information processing, memory, control of emotions, and confusion when too much information was presented at one time. The state Vocational Rehabilitation program funded additional services. Situational assessment and volunteer jobs gave Ben an opportunity to gain more insight into his current skill level and he came to the conclusion that he would be unable to return to his former job. He needed a lot more structure than his former professional job could offer. In 1994, he accepted a job as Consumer Advocate on a grant specializing in assisting survivors of brain injury. He conducted employer education sessions and training workshops on brain injury where he shared his personal experiences. He remained in this job for 12 months at \$6.31 per hour working 10 hours/week. He was able to do routine job tasks and was able to increase the diversity and number of tasks. He took a new job within the grant project as Vocational Service Specialist and was given new job duties of facilitating Circles of Support, Job Coaching, and tracking clients who received Respite services. He earned \$9.31 to \$10.61 in this job and worked his way up from 20 to 32 hours per week. The diversity of job tasks proved overwhelming at times and Ben was offered the job of TBI Project Specialist and given the responsibility of running a drop-in self improvement center for survivors of brain injury and assisting with a recycled equipment project. His duties were less varied. He required extra job coaching support as his duties changed. Ben has gained a lot of insight into his own abilities and his job coaches have also learned a lot about him. He has been able to accept that he will not return to his former employment while finding other areas of productivity. He is now president of the state brain injury association and continues to be involved in training others.

## Conclusion

In many cases, the benefits of multiple job placements outweigh the costs. The end result of examining case studies that spanned over a ten year period led the authors to propose a new paradigm for evaluating outcomes related to job retention. Rather than a client's success being solely judged on how long they kept one job, it can be based on the percentages of months worked over number of months that the client was considered employable. Job placement and support agencies need to recognize that some clients are not able to maintain a job long term. Clients can be taught to keep on getting a new job. The goal is to work at some job with as little down time between jobs as possible.

The possible negative effects on the client's self esteem and motivation along with costs to the funding source must be considered. Some employers are going to be prejudiced against applicants with a work history of multiple short jobs. The staff's investment and follow through could be compromised. Therefore precautions and necessary supports must be anticipated, developed and utilized.

Even a poor match can be a learning experience for the client and job coach that facilitates a better placement the next time. Viewing multiple placements as a learning tool allows the job coach to document teaching preferences, learning style, and useful compensatory strategies. Job coaches may need training and extra support in seeing multiple placements as positive and necessary steps toward eventual job stability. The client becomes more knowledgeable as to their strengths, weaknesses, and job tasks preferences. Such varied experiences facilitate functional career exploration, value clarification, skill development and personal adjustment.

Job Placement programs and funding agencies should be aware that people without disabilities also change jobs for a variety of reasons. It may take several jobs to find the right employer and work environment for any individual. When clients request a new or different job or if they are re-referred to a program after losing a job, every effort can be made to look beneath the surface for opportunities to learn more about the client to assist them in reaching their dreams. Funding sources or placement programs are encouraged to look at each client's individual needs and not have an arbitrary maximum number of job placements. Placement programs and funding sources are encouraged to search each terminated placement for opportunities for improvement, not to give up on any one client, and if at first they don't succeed, let them try another job.

CLIENT \_\_\_\_\_  
Total # of placements \_\_\_\_\_ Job Coaches involved \_\_\_\_\_  
Total # of months worked \_\_\_\_\_ Possible total # of months could have worked \_\_\_\_\_  
Total # of hrs: VE \_\_\_\_\_ SE \_\_\_\_\_ LTS \_\_\_\_\_ WA \_\_\_\_\_ Total cost of services \_\_\_\_\_

PLACEMENT HISTORY

1<sup>st</sup> employer \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

# of months employed in this position \_\_\_\_\_ # Hours worked per week \_\_\_\_\_

Client liked job? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Client chose the job? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Rate of pay at start \_\_\_\_\_ Rate of pay at end \_\_\_\_\_

Benefits? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Did they reach LTS? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Did they come off SSDI? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Or lower SSI? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Reasons for leaving job \_\_\_\_\_

Positive consequences \_\_\_\_\_

Negative consequences \_\_\_\_\_

Valuable information learned \_\_\_\_\_

# of months between jobs \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> employer \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

# of months employed in this position \_\_\_\_\_ # Hours worked per week \_\_\_\_\_

Client liked job? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Client chose the job? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Rate of pay at start \_\_\_\_\_ Rate of pay at end \_\_\_\_\_

Benefits? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Did they reach LTS? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Did they come off SSDI? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Or lower SSI? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Reasons for leaving job \_\_\_\_\_

Positive consequences \_\_\_\_\_

Negative consequences \_\_\_\_\_

Valuable information learned \_\_\_\_\_

# of months between jobs \_\_\_\_\_

(Use more sheets if needed)

