Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs)

A guide for workforce community organizations who help youth with disabilities find employment.
Overview

**Part One:** Why is an IRT Important?

**Part Two:** How to Create an IRT

**Part Three:** Promising Practices to Support Job Seekers with Disabilities

**Part Four:** How to Strengthen Your Role
1 Why is an IRT Important?
Integrated Resource Teams (IRTs)

An Integrated Resource Team (IRT) is designed to help a job seeker with disabilities create long-term, sustainable, living wage employment plan along a career path.

An informal team comprised of schools, workforce systems, community-based organizations (CBOs), and members of the job-seeker's family or friends come together to coordinate services and supports, such as transition planning, career counseling, work-based learning experiences, workplace readiness training, and more.
IRTs - Benefits for Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

- Fosters cross-agency collaboration among workforce agencies, vocational rehabilitation agencies, community-based organizations, schools, and social services.
- Leverages resources to meet the needs of job seekers with disabilities.
- Reduces duplication of services supporting youth with disabilities while reducing the workloads of case managers and agency expenses.
- Braids funds and leverage the expertise of each service provider.
- Organizations can have shared employment outcomes.
When to Create an IRT

- When a job seeker with disabilities has an employment goal.
- When the job seeker gives consent to share information between intended partners.
- When the job seeker is clear that they need support resolving barriers or challenges to employment.
- When the job seeker’s basic needs are met or they are willing to communicate that these needs are not being met.
## Workforce CBO’s Goals in an IRT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>OUTREACH</strong></td>
<td>Perform outreach on behalf of the local workforce system to bring job seekers with disabilities into the customer flow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRAMMATIC ACCESS</strong></td>
<td>Ensure that customer flow is accessible to job seekers with disabilities. Once fully engaged, ensure that all outcomes are accessible to the job seekers as well.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PHYSICAL ACCESS</strong></td>
<td>Ensure the design of products, devices, services, or environments are usable by jobseekers with disabilities. This could include assistive technology or access to benefits.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SUPPORT</strong></td>
<td>Ensure that staff have the capacity to provide services to job seekers with disabilities. Support entails comprehensive onboarding, ongoing training, counseling, and mentorship required to succeed in their role.</td>
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2 How to Create an IRT
How to Create an IRT

- Job seekers can create an IRT by bringing other members with them (such as family members or school professionals).
- Other times, a Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC) or career counselor will help the job seeker identify who else should join.
- Job seekers can create an IRT during any stage of the career journey.
- Keep in mind that members of the IRT may change throughout the journey.
IRTs Support the Job Seeker

1. Create a welcoming and trusting environment. Develop rapport and work with job seeker with disabilities by using “person-first” language.

2. Listen to the job seeker’s needs. Ask clarifying questions to ensure you and the IRT members are understanding the job seeker’s goals and challenges correctly.

3. Provide coaching and support to the job seeker.
IRTs Coordinate Services

1. Foster collaboration among partners. Identify if there is any duplication of services and ensure efficiency among agencies.

2. Consider blending funds.

3. Use an action plan to hold partners accountable for deliverables.
Blending Funds

Questions for CBOs to Consider

• Can I clearly articulate the scope of my project to relevant stakeholders and what I am trying to achieve?
• Have I identified stakeholders whose funding would be a more appropriate fit to the job seekers needs?
• Have I verified that sufficient resources will be available to assist the job seeker accomplish what they want to achieve?
• Have I identified potential barriers or challenges to implementation and determined how different types of funding can assist the job seeker in overcoming them?
• Have I established how I will know whether the job seeker's goal has been achieved?
First Intake Meeting

Job seekers meet with a Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC) or career counselor at a Career Center to explore whether they are ready to create an IRT.

1. Job seeker shares their work history and career goals.
2. Decide whether future career exploration or assessments are required.
3. Support the job seeker with required paperwork as needed.
4. Help them create an action plan.
5. Identify who will be invited to the first IRT meeting.
Who is Part of an IRT?

Key Members

• **Youth with Disabilities** - Motivated job seeker with a desire to create a long-term career goal

• **Team Helper** – A Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC), case manager, employment counselor, or school guidance counselor
Who is Part of an IRT?

Additional Members

- **Personal** – Family, friends, community
- **School Representatives** – School counselor, special education teacher, etc.
- **Work Representatives** – Employment specialist, work supervisor
- **Financial Representative** – Benefits Counselor
- **Health Representatives** – Case manager, rehabilitation sponsor, etc.
- **Skill Building Representatives** – DRC, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, etc.
First IRT Meeting

**Use an agenda** to guide the meeting. A counselor or DRC provide support as the team helper.

Discuss how each member of the IRT will be able to help. Include notes on an **action plan**.

Create a **communication plan** so everyone knows how to send updates and when they meet next.
Planning Checklist

✓ Confidential meeting space

✓ Binder to save all paperwork and notes

✓ Meeting Agenda

✓ Contacts sheet and communication plan

✓ Facilitator – someone who leads the conversation

✓ Follow up email with IRT members
Skills You Are Teaching the Job Seeker

- Facilitation
- How to be organized
- How to navigate the system and understand their public benefits
- Self advocacy
- Networking
- How to fill out required forms and paperwork
- Professional skills
- Soft skills
What Makes an IRT Successful
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**Person-Centered Approach** – IRTs focus on the needs and goals of the job seeker.

**Trust** - The job seeker has to trust the Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC) and share their challenges. This helps the DRC figure out who are the right people to invite to the IRT.

**Honesty** - All IRT members agree to share any concerns and challenges openly.

**Collaboration** - When organizations come together and fully participate, they are able to improve career outcomes for job seekers.

**Accountability** - The IRT helps hold many partners responsible for doing what they say they will do. Response times improve, collaboration gets better, and everyone works together to help the job seeker succeed.

**Frequent Communication** - In some cases, only one IRT meeting is required. Other times the situation requires multiple meetings over three to six months or more to help someone advance along their career journey. The most important thing is that job seeker send regular updates to their IRT.

**Outcome Oriented** - There is no one-size-fits-all approach because every job seeker comes with a unique set of goals and challenges. It's important to create solutions based on the specific needs of the young person.
Promising Practices Supporting Job Seekers with Disabilities
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These key practices help community-based organizations achieve the best outcomes possible when supporting youth with disabilities to find employment.

• Competency-Based Leadership
• Quality Assessments
• Capacity Building

Additional Information
Your Dream, Your Team
Promising Practices
Competency Based Leadership

Maintain ongoing awareness and development of these key competencies that guide your work supporting youth with disabilities along their career journey:

• Belief that people with disabilities can work.
• Flexibility and adaptability to change.
• The ability to facilitate and lead conversations effectively.
• An ability to devise creative and collaborative solutions by being resourceful and leveraging partnerships.
Quality Assessments

• **Evaluation Toolkit** - This toolkit created by the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition assists transition educators and service providers to improve their programs and services by determining what is working, what is not working, and what needs to be changed or replicated.

• **WIOA Performance Indicators and Program Specific Performance Measures** - The U.S. Department of Labor’s performance accountability indicators and performance reporting requirements that assess the effectiveness of states and local areas in achieving positive outcomes for individuals served by the workforce development system.
Capacity Building

Who can deliver trainings

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability | NCWD for Youth

National Disability Institute

Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center | Workforce GPS

Lead Center

National Organization on Disability
Ways to Strengthen Your Role

- Professional development on Social Security Administration Benefits
- Understanding WIOA
- Communication and courtesy for job seekers with disabilities
- Understanding transitioning
- Community mapping
- Networking
- Learning the best strategies to braid funds
“Team work makes the dream work!”