



WWW.AHEDD.ORG
1-866-902-4333 ext. 63001



Choose Work...Choose AHEDD!

Pre-Employment Transition Services

AHEDD is excited to expand its pre-employment transition services for in-school youth through a partnership with the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

We want to assist youth in exploring their interests, identifying the services that are available to help them find and keep employment, understanding more about the income they can generate to achieve their dreams, and effectively managing government benefits as they move toward greater independence.

Participant Services

- Pre-Employment Services including Community Based Work Assessments, Job Shadowing, and Work Based Learning Experiences
- Job Development and Placement
- Job Coaching
- On-going Support for Job Retention
- Work Incentives Counseling

Visit us on the web and/or within Facebook and Twitter to learn more!

**Meeting the Employment Needs of People with Disabilities
and the Business Community Since 1977**

Services AHEDD provides

Information and 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: Community based work assessments (CBWA) – hosted at employment sites within the community, job seeking and interview skills, resume development, job shadows, paid work based learning experience, etc.

Job Development: As a component of AHEDD's community employment program, AHEDD regularly canvases the business community to identify diverse types of job opportunities.

On-site/Off site Job Coaching: 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.

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.

For more information about AHEDD services in your area contact:

Jennifer Betz

Area Manager

570-622-9711 x63001 ~ OR ~ 1-866-902-4333 x63001

jennifer.betz@ahedd.org

Mission & History

The mission of AHEDD is to serve the community as a catalyst in the employment and development of people with disabilities. Our passion for community employment includes support for youth and adults with all types of disabilities, physical and cognitive, and those that come from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and varying levels of academic achievement and work experience.

Prior to incorporation in 1977, our organization was a demonstration project under the auspices of what was then known as the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (today known as the Arc of PA), a statewide advocacy organization. PARC was instrumental in spearheading landmark Right to Education legislation (PL 94-142) that ensured access to a free and appropriate education for every individual with a disability.

We were initially an alternative to the segregated training programs available for people with developmental disabilities. Our employment approach of the 1970s was described as a "work station in industry". This approach bore resemblance to today's enclave model, where groups of individuals carry out work within a business but are not employed by the business. By the early 1980s, our model evolved to a one-on-one place and train job coaching model and we began expanding to a larger target group of people with disabilities.

Responding to a severe economic recession, AHEDD established an independent for-profit company called Red Rose Services in 1980. This custodial contracting firm based in Lancaster, PA later expanded to York, PA and Wilmington, DE. Red Rose Services not only provided jobs to people with severe disabilities, but these workers all owned this company.

It was not until 1985-86, with the advent of Supported Employment, that our agency's community employment model was officially accepted throughout the vocational rehabilitation system. Around the same time (1985), the Social Security Administration (SSA) engaged AHEDD in a Transitional Employment Training Demonstration (TETD) project that eventually led to the development of specific work incentives for persons receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

In 1994, our agency developed a school-to-work program focused on the transition of students with disabilities. Initially sponsored by a federal grant, the effort has continued to expand through the direct financial support of school districts.

To expose human resource personnel to our program participants and assist these job seekers in preparing for job interviews, we developed the Volunteer Interview Network of Employers (VINE) in the 1980s and were later (2000) selected to coordinate the PA Business Leadership Network (PA-BLN). The PA BLN is a business-to-business initiative that allows companies to learn about and promote the employment of persons with disabilities.

In 2001, AHEDD began to contract with SSA under the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program (WIPA) and Ticket to Work Program (TTW). Our participation in these programs has been an effort to address the common employment fears of SSA beneficiaries and to offer these individuals greater choice on where to get employment support.

For further information about AHEDD's Mission and History, contact AHEDD at 1-866-902-4333 or inforequest@ahedd.org



A Specialized Human Resource Organization

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

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program (WIPA) & Work Incentive Counseling

Persons with disabilities continue to experience underemployment and unemployment at an unacceptable rate. Beneath the surface of this issue there are complex federal-welfare and long-term disability programs administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA). While intended to provide basic income and health insurance for persons with disabilities, they have evolved as a major obstacle to employment and economic progress. Many beneficiaries do not understand the interactions of earned income from employment and its impact on SSA cash benefits and health care. As a result, beneficiaries may avoid work, or be discouraged from pursuing their maximum earning potential. Wrong or incomplete information combined with fear of losing benefit eligibility is quite common.

In 1999, Federal legislation called "The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act" provided an array of efforts by and on behalf of SSA to improve the employment of persons with disabilities. This included the development and delivery of local work incentive counseling programs known as Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program (WIPA). WIPA Providers operate under cooperative agreements with SSA, and are provided certification training and ongoing technical assistance to ensure quality service to beneficiaries and related parties. For further information visit <http://www.ssa.gov/work/WIPA.html>. In addition to SSA's WIPA program, agencies have expanded the availability of work incentive counseling as a recognized best practice to promote employment among SSA beneficiaries.

Work incentive counseling, often referred to as "benefits counseling", has been recognized as an essential service to promote and support the employment of people with disabilities who receive SSA benefits. The complexity of the benefit programs, including Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicare, Medicaid, and other government programs such as SNAP (AKA Food Stamps), has emerged as a significant and fundamental barrier to employment. Work incentive counseling complements efforts by other organizations including Ticket to Work Employment Networks, State Vocational Rehabilitation, Supported Employment programs, and special education Individualized Education Plans for transition aged youth. The expectation is that this service actively supports employment and leads to increased earnings, savings, use of work incentives, and minimizing the likelihood of overpayments.

Since 2001, AHEDD has been providing work incentive counseling to SSA beneficiaries. Funding from SSA has allowed AHEDD us to offer this Work Incentive Planning Assistance throughout Western PA. In addition, we have also expanded our service reach to other areas of the state through sponsorship from counties, foundations and other resources, including Ticket to Work.

AHEDD is a specialized human resource organization with a mission is to serve the community as a catalyst in the employment and development of persons with a disability. AHEDD provides community employment services via a network of field offices throughout Pennsylvania. For further information about work incentive counseling or WIPA, contact Joy Smith, at (412) 829-0818, ext. 62001 or joy.smith@ahedd.org.

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 people with disabilities. AHEDD provides community employment services through a network of field offices throughout Pennsylvania. For further information about our Services in your area:

Jennifer Betz
Area Manager
570-622-9711 x63001 ~ OR ~ 1-866-902-4333 x63001
jennifer.betz@ahedd.org