JOB SEEKERS AND FAMILIES

Working with Connect

work | grow | belong
CONNECT Employment Services offers placement services, job search assistance and training support in a community-based setting to adults with intellectual disabilities. Any adult who has an intellectual disability as their primary disability is eligible to apply for services. Regardless of a person's level of ability, we can help.

Our services are available to a wide range of people with intellectual disabilities, including:

- People who are very independent and require minimal support to find a job and train for a job
- People who require a significant amount of support to find and train for a job
- People who require one-to-one support to work and participate in the community.

People interested in becoming involved with CONNECT must first talk to their social worker and request a referral. A personal interview will be arranged and if a person meets the requirements of one of our programs they will be placed on a waiting list.

CONNECT receives funding primarily from the Province of Manitoba, through the departments of Family Services and Consumer Affairs, Supported Living and Vocational Rehabilitation Training. Neither clients nor employers pay any direct fees to use our services.

Advantages of Community-Based Employment

The clients and families who use our services share an important connection – they all believe that people with intellectual disabilities should be fully integrated into community life.

All clients of CONNECT work in integrated work environments in the community. All clients work for a business, in a job of their choice, with a diverse group of co-workers. Regardless of an individual’s level of ability, it is possible to participate in integrated work in the community. A person’s abilities, experience, goals and support requirements will guide the type and nature of work they participate in.

Working in the community enables people to experience life to its fullest. It provides opportunities to learn about the world, develop relationships with people from a variety of backgrounds, and build self-esteem. It can also provide an opportunity to earn a wage, and to contribute to the community. Regardless of the level at which a person can participate in work, all people can benefit from participating in work in a community setting.
When an individual applies to CONNECT their support needs are determined and their interests explored. Each person is matched with the program that best suits their needs. Some programs may have limited access.

**Competitive Employment Program**

Designed to assist job-ready individuals to find and maintain paid work of at least 15 hours per week, within one year. Ongoing support is provided to successful participants to encourage job retention and assist with career development.

**Competitive Employment Transition Program**

Designed to assist individuals who require further skill development to become job-ready. Participants are expected to find and maintain paid work of at least 15 hours per week, within two years. Ongoing support is provided to successful participants to encourage job retention and assist with career development.

**Community Placement Program**

Designed for individuals who have demonstrated an interest and ability to work independently in the community, but are not able to meet the demands of paid employment. Participants are not required to achieve paid employment within a predetermined time limit; however, paid employment may be a long-term goal. Training sites with on-site staff are available to a limited number of participants who demonstrate a need for more intensive supervision.

**Individualized Program**

Designed for individuals who have demonstrated an interest in working in the community, and who will require intensive support to facilitate their participation and safety in the community. Participants will be provided with a staff person who will assist them to participate in work and life-skills activities in the community.

**Summer Work Exposure Program**

Designed for high school students who have demonstrated an interest in developing job skills and gaining exposure to community-based employment. Students will participate in 7-8 weeks of work experience during July and August. Paid employment may be pursued on an individual basis.
Transition Planning

By invitation, CONNECT can attend transition-planning sessions with social workers and teachers, to help identify and plan for appropriate support services after school ends. We also offer a Summer Employment Exposure Program, which allows people with intellectual disabilities an opportunity to “test out” our services, while gaining meaningful work experience in the community.

Workplans

When a client joins CONNECT, we assist them to develop a workplan. The purpose of the workplan is to identify the individual’s choices, potential opportunities in the community, and the supports required to realize those choices. Support networks, which could include family members, advocates and friends may be included in the planning process, in recognition of the important role they often play in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities. Work plans are reviewed on an annual basis.

Employment Preparation

Finding a job is a job in itself, and requires specific preparation. Our staff assist clients to prepare a professional resume, teach them about employer expectations and the realities of the labour market. We also help clients prepare for interviews, and are available to coordinate and attend interviews with potential employers.

Job Search Assistance

CONNECT employs knowledgeable staff with extensive experience in developing employment and work placements for a wide range of clients. We market each individual to employers in the community, and assist them in finding a job that meets their needs. Our staff encourage and nurture relationships between clients and others in the community, and promote awareness of each persons’ abilities.

Transportation

The majority of CONNECT clients use public transportation to get to and from work. We provide assistance to clients in planning transportation routes to and from work, as well as providing transportation training to learn the bus route. Clients in the Individualized Program will be accompanied by a staff person when using public transportation. The majority of CONNECT clients qualify for financial assistance for transportation through Employment and Income Assistance, Vocational Rehabilitation or Supported Living.
Training

CONNECT’s services continue at a person’s place of work, where a Connect staff will work with the client and employer to develop a training and support strategy. Our staff will support a client in learning their job, understanding the policies of the workplace, and developing effective and meaningful relationships with co-workers and supervisors. Once working successfully, CONNECT staff decrease their support to encourage independence and the development of natural supports in the workplace. When required, we will negotiate with the employer for necessary accommodations.

Long-term Support

Once the initial training period is complete, CONNECT staff continue to provide support to the client and employer to encourage job retention and personal development. In the event of a job loss, or a career change, CONNECT clients can access intensive supports to assist them in finding and training for a new job.

Career Planning

CONNECT is committed to continually reviewing a person’s goals, skills, interests and abilities, so that we can encourage personal and career development. We expect people will want opportunities to progress or make changes in their careers, so we will continue to look for opportunities to expand duties and responsibilities in existing jobs, or seek out new and challenging experiences.

Developing Social Connections

The development of personal relationships is an important part of everyone’s life, and can play a crucial role in the success of any work placement. CONNECT supports clients to develop healthy relationships with their co-workers. We do this by assisting them to understand their workplace culture, identifying company social events that they can participate in and helping them initiate and build relationships in the workplace.

CONNECT also hosts a number of social events for clients, families and employers throughout the year. In this way, we hope to strengthen our community and provide opportunities for people to expand and strengthen their personal networks.

CLIENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Client Advisory Council is composed of current clients of CONNECT. The Council meets to discuss issues of concern to agency clients, and provides feedback to the Board of Directors. The Council offers clients an opportunity to meet with peers to discuss issues of relevance to people with intellectual disabilities participating in the workforce.
People with intellectual disabilities are unique individuals with specific skills and abilities. Our goal is to match each client with a work placement that best suits their interests, skills and experience.

Some individuals may come to us “job-ready,” which means they have the skills, experience, attitude and motivation to find a paid job within a short period of time. The type of position these individuals can expect to start in is an “entry-level” job. Examples of this type of job might be dishwashing or bussing tables in a restaurant, stocking in a store or packaging or cleaning in a warehouse.

For those individuals who are not “job-ready” when they join CONNECT, the focus is on developing work placements that will provide an opportunity to build skills, strengthen work ethic, gain experience and develop references. These work placements are known as work experiences or volunteering. Individuals in these placements will not earn a wage, but we will attempt to negotiate recognition for the work being done.

EMPLOYMENT & INCOME ASSISTANCE

Many people with intellectual disabilities have concerns about the impact that working will have on their Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) benefits. CONNECT is very sensitive to these issues, and will work to develop opportunities that will enhance a persons participation in the community, while minimizing the risk to necessary benefits. In our experience, the vast majority of clients working and earning a wage enjoy a higher quality of living because of their participation in work.

For more information about Employment and Income Assistance, please visit: http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/eiafacts/iapd.html or contact your Social Worker or EIA worker.
The job search process is unique for each person. Because CONNECT works with people with a wide range of abilities, goals and interests, we believe that the job search must be customized for each person.

When a person joins CONNECT, they are assigned a staff. The role of the staff is to provide support to the person in finding work, training on the job, and retaining the job.

Initially, staff get to know a client through formal activities such as completing Work Profiles and Interest Inventories, and through less formal activities such as meetings over coffee. Through this process, the staff is able to gain a better understanding of an individual’s likes & dislikes, strengths & challenges, and personal communication style. Building this understanding will enable the staff to find appropriate and meaningful work placements in the community.

The client and staff will also consult with an Employment Coordinator, who assists with developing job placements and marketing clients to potential employers. The staff and Employment Coordinator will work as a team to identify and develop suitable employment opportunities for the client.

The length of time it takes to find a job or work placement will depend on a variety of factors, including:

- Type of job the person is seeking
- A person’s flexibility regarding location of a work placement
- A person’s hours of availability
- A person’s skills, abilities and experience
- A person’s short-term and long-term employment goals
- Current labour market trends

Our main priority is to match each client with a work placement that will best meet their current goals and abilities. We will do our best to place each client in a timely manner, keeping in mind that the job search process is unique for each person.
Mission

To support people with intellectual disabilities to work and participate in the community.

Philosophy

All people deserve the opportunity to work and participate in the community, where they are respected and rewarded for their efforts, skills and accomplishments.

Core Values

**Dedication** - CONNECT will demonstrate our commitment to the mission statement and philosophy by striving to provide superior services to our clients and stakeholders.

**Respect** - Through our actions CONNECT will demonstrate and encourage respect for our clients in the community.

**Advocacy** - CONNECT will act as a voice for our clients for fair and equal treatment at work and in everyday activities.

**Empowerment** - CONNECT will support our clients to recognize their rights and the value of their contributions increasing their influence in the community.

**Integrity** - CONNECT will demonstrate accountability and conduct ourselves in a professional manner that will inspire trust and confidence from our clients and stakeholders.

**Inclusion** - CONNECT will develop opportunities and natural supports to enable the client to become participating members of the workplace and community.

Contact Us

For more information call 204.474.1959 or visit www.connectemployment.ca