

Office of Developmental Disabilities Services

Worker Guide

Title	Date
ODDS Employment Services and DSA for Transition Age Individuals and Youth	June 5, 2025

Summary of changes

Changes effective May 29, 2025, are made to clarify:

- When transition age students may access Employment Path Services.
- Moving the guide to the new Worker Guide template and other general clean up.

Description

This worker guide outlines the availability of Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS) employment services for transition age individuals and youth while special education and related services are available through the school under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Purpose or rationale

Transition-age individuals and youth may access a Medicaid-funded employment service through ODDS when the service is not available through the local educational agency, as part of special education and related services under IDEA¹, and when the service is not available through Vocational Rehabilitation (VR).

¹ Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §1400 (2004). ODDS Employment Services do not include special education and related services which otherwise are available to the individual through a local educational agency. See 42 U.S.C. 1396n(c)(5)(C)(i); and 42 C.F.R 440.108(c)(3)(i). Additionally, ODDS Employment Services do not include vocational rehabilitation services which are otherwise available to the individual. See 42 U.S.C. 1396n(c)(5)(C)(ii); and 42 C.F.R 440.108(c)(3)(ii).

This policy clarifies the circumstances under which services are considered not available through VR or under IDEA, and therefore available through ODDS. This is in alignment with Oregon's Employment First policies under which employment is the first priority option when planning services and supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).²

Procedures that apply

Employment Services for Transition Age Individuals and Youth

Individual Employment Support – Job Coaching

Job Coaching includes support to maintain or advance in competitive integrated employment. Under the following circumstances, individuals eligible for ODDS-funded employment services may access this service while also eligible for services under IDEA:

1. The individual has obtained competitive integrated employment, at minimum wage or above, and expects to continue working in complete integrated employment after completing school.
2. The competitive integrated employment is not part of a high school transition service or program such as a paid work experience for students, an internship or a similar activity that is generally available to other students and designed to prepare students for long-term employment.
3. Job coaching is no longer available through VR.
4. The individual's Individual Support Plan (ISP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be coordinated and document how the ODDS Job Coaching service complements any services the individual receives through the local education agency. This coordination of the Individual Support Plan should also include the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) completed with VR.
5. All other requirements for ODDS-funded Job Coaching must also be met.

Discovery

Discovery includes a series of work, volunteer and other community-based experiences to inform the individual and the job developer about the strengths, interests, abilities, skills, experiences and support needs of the individual, as well as identify the conditions that will contribute to an individual's success in

² Oregon's Employment First policy is codified under ORS 427.007(1)(b); see also Oregon Administrative Rule 411-345, Oregon's Executive Order 15-01.

competitive integrated employment. It is a short-term service that presumes approximately 40 hours of 1:1 service but may take up to three months. This service is provided to youth or transition students in limited circumstances in which there is insufficient information for VR Job Development.

A person must be actively seeking employment. Also, the person must complete the Discovery Pre-Referral Process with their ISP team to determine whether Discovery is needed.

Under the following circumstances, a person may access ODDS Discovery while eligible for services under IDEA:

The individual must express interest in actively pursuing competitive integrated employment within the upcoming ISP year.

The person and their chosen Employment Team members must determine Discovery is needed after reviewing all employment documentation available. The Employment Team includes the individual, the case manager, a VR counselor, the school case manager and other Local Education Agency representatives, and any other person invited by the person. A VR counselor may not yet be identified for the person; however, a VR counselor may be available to provide input on a consultation basis.

The recommendation process includes the following:

The person and their Employment Team review all available information including but not limited to:

- The individuals' IEP (including post-secondary goals)
- The Summary of Performance
- Work experience evaluations, vocational assessments and all available information from VR
- All available relevant information from ODDS records
- Information regarding the individual's preferences, interests, needs and strengths (PINS)
- All other information regarding the individual's skills, experience, interests and conditions that will contribute to their success in competitive integrated employment

After reviewing all available documentation, the person and their Employment Team will determine whether Discovery is the right service.

The case manager must document in the person's Career Development Plan why Discovery is the right service that is needed and why the available information is insufficient.

The individual's ISP and IEP must be coordinated and document how the ODDS Discovery service complements any services the individual receives through the local education agency. This coordination of ISPs should also include the IPE completed with VR.

The employment team should also ensure that referrals have been made to both VR and DD services to ensure a seamless transition from ODDS to VR services. It is considered best practice for the referral to occur 30 days before Discovery ends. If VR is in Order of Selection, then ODDS may fund job development in lieu of a referral to VR for job development.

Additionally, all Discovery requirements in the Discovery Worker Guides apply. Refer to the [Discovery Guidelines](#) and [Discovery Experiential Components](#).

Small Group Employment Support

This service includes support and training provided in regular business, industry and community settings for groups of two to eight individuals with disabilities. This service is provided in a manner that promotes integration into the workplace and interaction between participants and people without disabilities in those workplaces. The optimal and expected outcome of this service is competitive integrated employment.

Under the following circumstances, individuals eligible for ODDS-funded employment services may access ODDS Small Group Employment Support while also eligible for services available under IDEA:

The individual intends to continue pursuing competitive integrated employment and has active steps in their IEP, ISP and Career Development Plan (CDP) toward obtaining competitive integrated employment.

After exiting school, the individual intends to continue working and moving toward competitive integrated employment.

The job must pay minimum wage or better as outlined in OAR 411-345.

The individual's ISP and IEP must be coordinated and document how the ODDS Small Group Supported Employment service complements any services the individual receives through the local education agency. This coordination of individual service plans should also include the IPE completed with VR.

All other requirements for ODDS Small Group Employment Support service must also be satisfied.

Employment Path Services

Transition age youth may access Employment Path Services in the circumstances described below.

Time limits must be specified in the person's ISP. Best practice and guidance regarding internships and community work experiences is a rotation of multiple (2-3) community work experiences to give the person an opportunity to explore their interests related to employment before launching into a job search.

Additionally, to clarify already stated policy, schools and local education agencies, ODDS and VR are not permitted to use state public funds to contract with or fund vocational assessments or placements in Sheltered Workshop settings. Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) may not be used if available under IDEA or through VR. Therefore, as described below, the case manager must document how the service is being used to complement and not duplicate services through school or VR.

Career Navigation (1:1 Employment Path Solo)

The case manager must document in the ISP how the service is being used to complement and not duplicate services and supports available through school and vocational rehabilitation. This includes documenting how VR services, school services and ODDS services are all being used to complement one another.

Work experiences may **not** be at a provider business or in a small group setting.

Employment Path Community

This service may be used for support during Project SEARCH. ODDS review and approval is required. Please email ODDS at employment.first@odhs.oregon.gov for more information.

Employment Path Facility

Not permitted for transition age youth or individuals under 18.

Employment Path – Benefits Counseling

Transition age students and youth may access Benefits Counseling. All requirements for Benefits Counseling must also be met.

Day Support Activities (DSA)

DSA may be used when IDEA services are not available. Transition age youth may access this service in the circumstances outlined below. The case manager must document in the ISP how the service is being used. The case manager must also document services available through the school and VR and include in the ISP how DSA services are being used to complement and not duplicate services through the school and VR.

Other requirements (in addition to all other ODDS requirements related to DSA):

- Department approval is required to authorize DSA for individuals under age 18.
- Day service must support a person to achieve their personal goals related to community integration and participation.
- Day services offered at a provider facility or site must be used to plan and coordinate going out into the broader community. Learn more about [HCBS setting requirements for DSA](#).

Employment Services for Individuals Under the Age of 18

Individuals under the age of 18 may use ODDS Employment and DSA services under certain circumstances that align with this policy with an ODDS approved exception.

Exceptions

Job coaching must have an ODDS approved exception for individuals under the age of 16.

All other employment services must have an ODDS approved exception for individuals under the age of 18.

DSA must have an ODDS approved exception for individuals under 18.

Additional exceptions are documented in the [Exceptions Guide](#).

- **Under 18:** exception required for Employment Path, Benefits Counseling, Small Group, Discovery, Job Development and DSA
- **Under 16:** exception required for Job Coaching

Form(s) that apply

- [Request for Employment Path Services](#)
- [Exceptions Guide](#)

Contact(s)

[Regional Employment Specialists](#)