



## Customized Employment (CE) Services Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)s

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# Customized Employment Certification Training

## **1. When is the application for CT CE Certification Course available?**

The application for fiscal year 2024-2025 will open in late Summer/early Fall 2024.

## **2. Will one trained/certified staff person be providing all aspects of CE (discovery, job development, and post-employment supports)?**

Yes, one trained/certified staff person will provide all phases of CE. Different CE Certified staff can provide separate phases of CE if the provider has capacity and this is the best option for the job seeker. As the number of CE Certified staff grows, staff may become an “expert” in one phase of service, making this an option for the provider. Providers are encouraged to team when initially implementing and on an ongoing basis if capacity allows.

Working together on cases allows the CE team to share ideas, connections, and experiences. CE Certified staff working as a team can play off each other’s strengths. One may be best at developing the rapport and uncovering the best support strategies for the job seeker. Another CE team member may be the “expert negotiator” who can use their strengths to achieve a win-win customized position.

## **3. Who within the agencies are trained in CE, staff level or management/director level staff?**

Both management/director level employees and staff level employees have been certified through the CT CE Certification. The ADS-DDS team takes into consideration the applicant’s position in terms of if they provide direct service as it remains our goal to expand provisions of the service in CT.

## **4. If a manager is certified – will this allow for the line staff to practice and offer these services, or must they also be certified to offer this service?**

CE Services can only be provided by staff with an active certification for the component in which they are providing. The ADS-DDS team in review of the CE model has determined that in order to assure the integrity of the service the ability to allow training via a Mentor approach will not be permitted at this time.

**5. Pay scale for staff varies amongst providers. Are providers able to determine salary for these positions? Are providers with certified staff expected to give a COS for pay increase?**

Pay increases or a differential for the individual CE Certified staff are up to the employing Provider Agency.

**6. Can certified staff participate in Train-the-Trainer so they can certify coworkers and other employees?**

No. Only staff with an active CE Certification can offer the service. At this time, there is no Train-the-Trainer program. Staff must complete the CT CE Certification Course or an ACRE CE Certification Course to perform this service.

**7. If all training seats are not filled can an agency add another one of their employees?**

Unfilled training seats will be offered at the discretion of the ADS-DDS Team to interested agencies based upon provider coverage needs for our job seekers statewide.

**8. Our agency selected one region in the CT CE Certification Course application. Can we now accept referrals from any region after staff certification (based on the staff's location)?**

Yes! The ADS-DDS CE team considers the catchment area staff can serve when reviewing applications to the CT CE Certification Course. Training seats will be offered at the discretion of the ADS-DDS Team to interested agencies based upon statewide coverage needs for CE job seekers.

CE Certified agencies keep open lines of communication with the ADS-DDS CE team and can adjust their CE catchment area at any time.

**9. Are the synchronous classes scheduled to take place during the typical workday hours?**

Yes, all live, synchronous sessions are offered during weekdays. Live sessions start at 9:00AM and are scheduled until 12:00PM for a total of 3 hours.

## **10. What is the schedule for trainings? Are they a fixed date and time that would take time away from work duties?**

Yes. Live virtual trainings are scheduled in advance for each session of the course. To qualify for certification, provider staff learners must attend and participate in all synchronous/live classes and complete homework by established deadlines. Academic calendars and state holidays were accounted for when establishing calendar dates. The timeline and specific live training dates for each session of the course will be posted to the [CT CE Certification Course Webpage](#).

This course is comprehensive and time-consuming. Session dates are released in advance to allow provider agencies adequate time to plan. Provider staff learners are required to sign a CE Provider Training Agreement with their supervisor before attending the course. This document reviews course dates, responsibility, and attendance policy. **Provider agencies are encouraged to thoughtfully consider the time required to fully participate in the course and qualify for certification.**

## **11. What is the difference between CESP & Customized Employment certification?**

CE certification courses are accredited trainings specific to the CE Services and the aspects of service delivery within the nationally CE model. CE occurs in three stages, Job Discovery; Job Development, Negotiation, & Placement; and Post-Employment Supports. CE certification trainings allow provider staff members to become CE credentialed in line with accreditation standards. Standards are set by the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE).

The Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) recognizes individuals who have demonstrated a sufficient level of knowledge and skill to provide integrated employment services to a variety of populations. The CESP is accredited through the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).

CE certification and the CESP credential are not the same. An active CE Certification allows a staff member to provide CE Services to individuals in CT. A CESP Credential validates and supports training currently provided in the field of Employment Support Professionals. CESP is a different educational credential available to employment professionals, but it does not allow staff to provide CE.

## **12. Can organizations be reimbursed for staff training?**

The CT CE Course is offered cost free to providers that intend to contract with both ADS and DDS for CE Services. Providers have the option of obtaining other [external ACRE approved CE Training](#), however DDS will not authorize reimbursement for cost associated with outside CE training.

DDS will make retro payments for replacement staff during the learner's enrollment. Payment is requested via one-time funding and is contingent upon successful completion of the CT CE Certification Course.

## **13. What is the status of the waiting list for the next iteration of the CT CE Certification Course? How do providers inquire about updates or acceptances?**

Four iterations of the course were offered in the 22-23 CT Fiscal year and four more were offered in the 23-24 CT Fiscal year. Each session had its own respective application. If someone did not receive a spot last time their name needs to be resubmitted when the application for the next iteration is released.

The application asks providers to indicate the number of staff they plan on sending to the course in the future. This will allow the ADS-DDS team to plan for future iterations. The timeline and specific live training dates for each session and the application links will be posted to the [CT CE Certification Course Webpage](#).

## **Service Implementation**

## **14. If the service delivery team cannot answer my question, who can I reach out to for support?**

The CT Customized Employment team is always available to support CE Certified staff. This team is made up of members of the Department of Aging & Disability Services (ADS) and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). You can reach the team at any time by reaching out the [CT CE email](#).

**15. Is there a packet of standard forms and report templates for a cohesive and unified process?**

Yes, there are deliverable documents for all phases of CE Services. Documents are currently in the pilot phase and were created by the ADS-DDS CE Team. Documents are unified across agencies and are identical other than the agency logo and verbiage. i.e. Case manager versus Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

**16. What should I do if I have questions or need help with certain aspects of CE Services?**

The ADS-DDS project team is committed to supporting our provider agencies and staff in the implementation of CE Services. Staff are encouraged to ask questions; project team members are more than willing to assist. The ADS-DDS CE team welcomes staff to the Customized Employment (CE) Community of Practice (CoP). The CE CoP meets quarterly, [email the CT CE Team to join!](#) A Microsoft Team has been created for all CE Certified Staff in CT to share resources, ask questions, and connect between CoP meetings. CE Certified Staff can [request access here](#).

**17. Can DDS job seekers access other day supports while going through the CE process?**

Yes, other day & employment support options may be utilized within the individuals budget limits. Customized Employment will be paid through non-annualized, one-time funding. This allows the individual to maintain their current activities while participating in CE. Some days the job seeker will engage in the CE process with their CE Certified staff member and other days they will participate in their regular schedule.

**18. Who makes the initial referral of a job seeker for CE? Is it the DDS Case Manager? Is there an initial inquiry packet submitted to agencies from a particular individual?**

The Case Manager/Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors will initiate the referral with a provider and send the Job Seeker Information Agreement and CE Provider Referral form to the provider of choice. If a provider identifies an individual in their programs who is a good candidate for CE Services, they should discuss this with the individuals Case Manager or Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.



**19. Will we be able to utilize CE as incentive dollars, with the trained staff doing that work in addition to the individual remaining in their current program, while we are still able to be reimbursed for the DSO or Transition program time, even if the individual is pulled out to work with the CE staff?**

Customized Employment will be paid through non-annualized, one-time funding. Individuals can keep their full budget allocation and apply the services needed beyond CE but limited to day service requirement. This allows the job seeker to maintain their current activities while participating in CE. As always, two services cannot be billed for the same time. Some days the job seeker will engage in the CE process with their CE Certified staff member and other days they will participate in their regular schedule. The number of hours engaging in CE per week may vary as the job seeker engages in the different stages of the process.

**20. Does job seeker need to give up their Day Service Option (DSO) or Group Supported Employment (GSE) to utilize CE services and thereby lose their spot?**

No, the job seeker does not need to give up their DSO or GSE to utilize CE services. Customized Employment will be paid through non-annualized, one-time funding. This allows the individual to maintain their current activities while participating in CE. Some days the job seeker will engage in the CE process with their CE Certified staff member and other days they will participate in their regular schedule.

**21. Can an individual in CE also do a training program such as Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs (ISTPP)?**

No. Typically, the job seeker referred has not had success finding competitive integrated employment through traditional employment placement models. This is inclusive of programs that may include a structured training program such as Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs (ISTPP) and/or Project SEARCH.

**22. Is there a list of providers who are currently using this model?**

There is a list of provider agencies qualified to provide Customized Employment Services with their provider profiles linked [here on the DDS Website](#). This is not a list of agencies who have capacity to accept Customized Employment cases at this time, just a list of those that have qualified staff to provide the service.

### **23. When should CE be utilized vs the DDS 1X Employment Incentives?**

CE is a good strategy for those who need more intensive support than typical individualized or group models and need to utilize more intensive discovery strategies for career and job direction. The job seeker, with support from their team, should determine the best service and supports to reach their goals. CE requires a more intense amount of time, effort, and training and should be considered only after other less rigorous services have been explored.

### **24. Can a person who is hired by someone in the Self-Determination (IDV), go through this program to provide their individual with a better job or do they have to be connected to a qualified provider?**

Customized Employment services can only be provided by someone with an active CT CE Certification or another ACRE accredited CE Certification. If a self-hired staff through Self-Determination has an active CE Certification and is on the CT CE Staff Registry, they are qualified to provide Customized Employment Services through either ADS or DDS.

### **25. What is the protocol should CE certified staff choose to leave a provider in terms of services for individuals served?**

If the only certified CE staff leaves a provider, the provider will be given priority status for being provided a slot in the next training session. The job seeker has the option to stay with the provider or switch providers to continue receiving Customized Employment services. Each circumstance will be determined based on the unique factors of how far along the job seeker is in receiving CE.

### **26. What kind of resources and supports are available for DDS for private providers to start a CE program from the ground up?**

The CT CE Course is offered cost free for initial CT CE certification to providers who intend to contract with both ADS and DDS for CE Services. DDS will make retro payments for replacement staff during the learner's enrollment. Payment is requested via one-time funding and is contingent upon successful completion of the Connecticut Customized Employment Course. Providers are encouraged to reach out to various groups who may have supports available including: CT Small Business Development Center, Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), and the CT Community Providers Association (CCPA).

**27. How do we handle someone that either by words or actions tells us that they really do not want to work? Some jobseekers say they are interested because parents and/or staff tell them they should work but they really do not want to work.**

If the provider and/or the job seeker are reflecting and find that the job seeker is not interested in employment, a service delivery team meeting should occur. This should include the referring/funding agency meaning the Case Manager or Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. CE is a job seeker driven service, ADS and DDS serve the individual, not their family, parents, spouse, or siblings.

We understand that this is a hard decision and can be a difficult conversation. When this scenario arises, please act as soon as possible to ensure the individual's needs and choices are leading the actions of the service delivery team. [The ADS-DDS CE team](#) is available for consult at any time.

**28. How is payment impacted if services are not completed; job seeker chooses to discontinue, etc.?**

ADS will fund the service, even if the job seeker is no longer interested in completing the service. Invoicing must be accompanied by deliverables for the portion of services completed.

**29. Will there be any additional trainings on PASS plans and or resource sharing?**

Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) is an SSA provision to help individuals with disabilities return to work. Providers can reach out to the ADS Benefits Counseling staff for support. There are multiple resources on benefits throughout the CT CE Certification Course. Student learners have access to the course curriculum for three months upon graduation. More information and resources related to benefits can be found [with this link to the ADS Benefits Counseling Webpage](#).

## Phase 1: Job Discovery

### **30. Is transportation provided for job seekers to participate in the Discovery process?**

No- The Discovery process should occur at the job seeker's home and in their community. Transportation barriers should be assessed and explored during this process. Natural supports that could assist with transportation barriers should also be explored during the Discovery process.

\*\*DDS Transportation options may be considered individually as needed

### **31. Does ADS expect all items on the Discovery checklist to be completed during the Discovery process?**

No. The Discovery checklist is a resource or tool of options that a Provider can use to provide a comprehensive Discovery Report and draft CE Plan for the job seeker. Tools selected should match what is necessary to gather information required to help develop a strong draft CE Plan. Every discovery process is individualized based upon the job seeker's family makeup and natural supports, community, and previous exposure to the world of work.

### **32. Are the Information Interviewing and Job Shadowing options on the tool kit comparable to that of the ADS Work Readiness Training Program (WRTP) Information Interviewing and Job Shadowing service?**

No- Information Interviewing and Job Shadowing during the Discovery process can be a step down from what ADS authorizes in WRTP. If a job seeker has no work experience and is not aware of various employment opportunities in their community, the Provider may want to meet them at a place of employment and narrate what staff are doing in the job with the intent of helping the Job Seeker identify their interests. We do not expect a comprehensive interview with an employer or for the employer to take the job seeker under their wing for a day of job shadowing.

**33. Is the Activities Log in the Discovery Report to track the hours/time that it has taken me to do the paperwork and visual resume? Or is the Activities Log for recording meeting with others only?**

No, the Discovery Activities Log tracks actual time spent with the job seeker and other individuals in the job seekers' life. The Activities Log is to record the specific types of engagement with the job seeker, family, friends and others.

**34. What is/who makes up the CE Service Delivery Team?**

The CE Service Delivery Team is comprised of the job seeker, VR Counselor and/or DDS Case Manager, and significant individuals identified by the job seeker from their personal network/circle of support.

A balance of professional and personal supports should exist whenever possible with up to 5 – 7 members. The job seeker has final say in the members that make up their Service Delivery Team. Decisions of the team are driven by the job seeker.

**35. Can you show us an example of a visual resume?**

An example of a visual resume from the CT CE Certification Course can be found [online with this link](#).

**36. What if there are specific individuals in the job seeker's life who the job seeker is resistant to include in the CE process?**

The existing service delivery team should hold an in person meeting as soon as this issue is identified to review the potential impact on resources and networking opportunities during the CE process.

The service delivery team approach is crucial to the overall outcomes in Discovery and the entire CE process. It is important that the service delivery team have a balance of professional and non-professional (personal) representatives to provide a more holistic approach to service delivery.

### **37. With what frequency does the CE Service Delivery Team meet?**

Routine communication and regular meetings are best practice to assure the Job Seeker's interests remain the focus of service provision. VR Counselors and Case Managers should set expectations for communication at time of referral with the job seeker and CE Certified staff.

Throughout the CE process, the job seeker's service delivery team will remain job seeker driven and meet often. **Communication channels should be kept open.**

Essential Service Delivery team meetings include, but not limited to:

- An initial introductory meeting of identified members to set expectations.
- To review the Discovery Report draft and edit/finalize.
- To review the CE Plan & Visual Resume, each in draft form, and edit/finalize.
- To review placement opportunities, choose best fit, and discuss supports.
- Any other time necessary to determine how services will continue.

This is an all or nothing service. Lost time due to lack of communication/follow up harms both the job seeker and provider. **CE is Job Seeker driven.** If the job seeker and/or provider believe CE is no longer an appropriate approach, notify ADS and/or DDS and meet with the entire Service Delivery Team to make a decision.

### **38. Is a visual resume required for each job seeker?**

The visual resume is an optional deliverable. However, it is necessary for job seekers that require assistance with job negotiation. The Visual Resume format and any concerns should be discussed during the CE Planning Meeting. The visual resume should be developed to assist the job seeker with the next phase of CE and created in a form that is practical for their interests. The Visual Resume is not just to show strengths, interests, and contributions but also to identify potential work site supports that are already known.

In some cases, the team may agree that a traditional resume or a portfolio may better suit the job seeker. If after discussion, the Service Delivery Team and job seeker agree that a visual resume is not the best route, a traditional resume or other format can be developed in lieu of a "visual" resume. The final resume must be something the job seeker understands and can use when communicating with an employer about their skills. There is no change to the billing process but it must be documented in the CE Plan that the job seeker and service delivery team agree.

## Phase 2: Job Development, Negotiation, & Placement

### **39. Is informational interviewing a cost covered under CE Job Development, Negotiation, & Placement or is it an additional service not covered under CE?**

The CE Job Development rate is inclusive of any informational interview that may occur as part of that service. Informational interviewing is not a separate rate. All the aspects of the Customized Employment process, including informational interviewing, job shadowing, and mock interviewing are included in the CE rate as part of either the Discovery and/or Job-Development process (based on the job seeker's individual circumstances).

### **40. My agency usually provides a job coach for the first 20-40 hours of a job. Is BRS offering this? My agency also offers a working interview, where we pay for the first 20-40 hours and then the employer decides if they will hire them based on their observations. Does BRS offer this?**

Job coaching (Post-Employment Support) is available for Customized Employment job seekers following placement and/or as indicated in the CE Plan established as Discovery is completed and movement into the Job Development phase begins. During the Discovery and Job Development phases, identification of natural supports as well as the job seeker's strengths, which guide the job development and reduce the need for post-employment supports that traditional VR models offer (Job coaching).

The Discovery Report and CE Plan, reviewed with the service delivery team prior to finalization, are expected to identify potential need for Post-Employment supports as well as the strategies/approach to support both prior to the job development phase and during.

#### **41. Will job development require the individual to be with you for reimbursement?**

CE is an individualized service model intended to include the job seeker in all phases of the service that the job seeker is willing and capable to participate. Whenever possible, the job seeker should be included in tandem with the CE Certified staff when approaching the employer, and in some instances, the job seeker may take the lead to represent themselves when approaching the employer. The CE process is job seeker driven.

DDS will authorize up to 10 hours reimbursement for “indirect support” provided during job development component of CE. The reimbursement is a one-time authorization of 10 hours for “indirect supports” provided during job development only. Request for reimbursement beyond the 10 hours maximum for “indirect supports” will not be approved. Each provider is expected to submit a report summarizing development activities at time of billing. The 10 indirect hours are not additional hours; 10 of the 40 hours allocated to Job Development may be indirect.

#### **42. Must a job seeker have previously tried other services to utilize CE?**

CE is a good strategy for those who need more intensive support than typical individualized or group models and who may need to utilize more intensive discovery strategies for career and job direction. CE is effective for individuals with complexities that make it difficult to utilize traditional job search strategies. There is no specific path to CE Services. Rather, the service is an option that should be explored after the individual has tried other employment services and it has been determined that more individualized support is needed to achieve competitive integrated employment.

#### **43. Is there a pool of employers available to hire individuals who utilize CE services? If not, how will CE job developers sustain placements?**

No, a pool of employers is unnecessary for this service model. CE is a relationship between an employer and a job seeker that is negotiated to meet the needs of both parties. CE is based on an exchange of specific contributions by the job seeker for pay by the employer at or above minimum wage. Traditionally, job duties are set by employers prior to recruitment interactions with employment seekers. In CE, the job duties are set as a result of negotiations with employers.



**44. The CE Job Negotiation & Development Contact Log has 20 rows. Am I supposed to contact 20 different potential employers or am I supposed to use the other rows to record the follow-up calls also?**

The goal is to connect with as many potential employers as feasible with the job seeker. The more businesses visited the more potential job negotiation possibilities are identified. In an ideal scenario, you might have 20 potential businesses that could be contacted for a walk through, informational interviews etc., but not in all cases. Much depends upon the makeup of geographical area the job seeker is able to independently access.

In regard to completion of the form: List what you can in the fields provided. If a second row is necessary to record follow up with any one employer, use the next line to reflect additional follow up or comments. The document has provided 20 rows for each of 3 potential themes of vocational interest to be developed.

**45. If a job that didn't exist before is created for an individual, is a company legally required to post the job internally or externally to allow for other people to apply? If they don't post the job, does it open the company up to a discrimination claim?**

"The creation of jobs and posting jobs will vary depending on the company's policy. Some companies create entire training programs exclusively for people with disabilities while other companies require all positions to be posted internally and to the general public. The answer will depend on the individual company's policy. Being able to provide companies with examples of what other companies have done is always helpful. It is best practice to connect companies with some of our existing partners so that they can provide recruitment advice."

*The ADS-DDS CE Team developed this answer in consultation with the Principal Attorney at the Connecticut Department of Labor, Human Rights Attorney at the CT Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, Workforce Projects Coordinator at the CT Department of Aging & Disability Services, Legal Director at the CT Department of Developmental Services, and Staff Attorney Director at the CT Department of Aging & Disability Services.*

## Phase 3: Post-Employment Supports

### **46. Is a volunteer position a potential outcome of Customized Employment?**

No. The goal of Customized Employment is to find an individual a competitive, integrated employment position that best fits their interests and needs. In most cases, positions gained through CE did not exist beforehand. The job seeker and their customized employment staff member work with employers to create a customized position that fits the unmet needs of the employer and the likes, skills, interests, and abilities of the individual.

CE seeks to find a competitive integrated employment opportunity that works best for the job seeker. This may include full or part-time work as well as entrepreneurship or self-employment options.

### **47. When you place an individual in a job, what if they don't show up to the job?**

Customized Employment seeks to achieve a competitive integrated employment position that meets the job seeker's likes, strengths, and interests. The Customized Employment process is structured to ensure that job seekers are well prepared and satisfied with their employment placement. Throughout the CE process the CE Certified Staff will work to ensure the job seeker's interests, preferences, and needs are met. Certified staff will also work to ensure the job seeker is prepared for any emergencies that may occur and how to handle them professionally. Finally, transportation and benefits needs are all explored in the Discovery phase and any supports identified and planned prior to job start and throughout the CE process.

### **48. If after placement is made, new skills are observed at the worksite can you modify the CE Job Placement?**

Yes, of course! As the job seeker grows in their employment placement, they will likely uncover new skills and interests. When follow up occurs with your referring source, this information should be shared. Additionally, there may be potential for advancement opportunities over time.