

# Customized Employment Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)s

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## **Customized Employment Certification Training**

### **1. When Is application for CT Customized Employment available?**

The application for fiscal year 2023-2024 Certification Courses will open in late Summer/early Fall 2023.

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

Yes, one trained/certified staff person will provide all phases of CE: discovery, job development, and post-employment supports. 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.

**3. Pay scale for staff varies amongst providers. Are providers able to determine salary for these positions? Is it expected of each agency that has a staff that becomes certified, that there be a COS for pay increase?**

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

**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. Can the staff that attends do train the trainer with coworkers and other employees?**

Only staff with an active Customized Employment Certification can offer the service. At this time, there is no train the trainer program. This option may be explored in the future as capacity to provide the service increases in CT.

**6. 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.

**7. If a provider works in all three regions of CT, will attending in one region's slot only allow referrals from that region, or can they accept referrals from any region after staff certification (based on the staff's location)?**

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. The total coverage area of the provider agency will be considered.

**8. 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.

**9. What is the exact schedule for the trainings? Are there trainings that are at a fixed date and time that myself or employees would have to 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 for the sessions. The timeline and specific live training dates for each session of the course can be found [here](#).

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

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

Customized Employment certification courses are accredited trainings specific to the Customized Employment 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. Customized Employment certification trainings allow provider staff members to become credentialed in the service delivery of Customized Employment in line with accreditation standards. Accreditation standards are set by the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE).

The Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) credential 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).

Customized Employment certification and the CESP credential are not the same. An active Customized Employment Certification allows a staff member to provide Customized Employment Services to individuals in Connecticut. 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 Customized Employment Services.

## **11. Is there a recertification process? Who is tracking recertification?**

Certification lasts three years, recertification will occur online in the same format as original certification. According to the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Department of Aging & Disability Services (ADS) and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), ADS will track certification and provide access to DDS. ADS will also send DDS a list of expiring certifications so DDS can track provider certifications.

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

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. 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 sources.

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.

## **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?**

There are four separate sessions of the CE Certification Course between September 2022 and July 2023. Each session has its own respective application linked below. Names on wait list need to be resubmitted. 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 also 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 application for staff is open now, apply here: [CT Customized Employment Training Application](#).

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

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.

## Service Implementation

### **15. What should I do if I have questions or need help with certain aspects of Customized Employment Services?**

The ADS-DDS project team is committed to supporting our provider agencies and staff in the implementation of Customized Employment Services. Staff are encouraged to ask questions; project team members are more than willing to assist.

The ADS-DDS CE Project team welcomes staff to the Customized Employment (CE) Technical Assistance Community of Practice. All provider agencies are welcome to join: those curious about Customized Employment, those currently in a CE Certification Course, and those currently providing CE Services. The final two meetings of the 2023 calendar year and the RSVP links are listed below. Providers are encouraged to submit questions when they RSVP. These questions will be discussed in the meeting and may be added to future iterations of this FAQ document.

August 14th, 2023 | 9:00AM to 12:00PM | Job Development, Negotiation & Placement | [RSVP Here](#)

November 13th, 2023 | 9:00AM to 12:00PM | Post-Employment Supports | [RSVP Here](#)

### **16. 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.

### **17. Who makes the initial referral of a job seeker for Customizable Employment? 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 individual's Case Manager or Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

### **18. 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. 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. As the job seeker engages in the different stages of the process, the number of hours engaging in CE per week may vary. By making CE one-time funding, individuals will be able to keep their full budget allocation and apply the services needed beyond Customized Employment but limited to day service requirement. As always, two services cannot be billed for the same time.

### **19. Will DDS job seekers be able to access other day supports while going through the CE process?**

Yes, other day & employment support options may be utilized within the individual's 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.

**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 for CE 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](#). 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 ISE 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 program as an 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.

**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. 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.

**27. 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: Connecticut Small Business Development Center, Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) Volunteers, and the CT Community Providers Association (CCPA).

**Phase 1: Job Discovery**

**28. 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*

**29. 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.

**30. 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.

**31. Regarding the Activities Log in the Discovery Report, do I use this time 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, your time as it pertains to documentation does not need to be recorded in the Discovery Activities Log. The Activities Log is utilized to record the specific types of engagement with the job seeker, family, friends and others during the Discovery phase. Actual time spent with the job seeker and other individuals in the job seekers' life is recorded.

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

No- The visual resume is an option deliverable that is only necessary for job seekers that require this service to assist with job negotiation and placement. This can be discussed during the CE Planning Meeting. The visual resume should be developed to assist the job seeker with the next phase of Customized Employment and created in such media that is practical for their interests.

### **33. 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 [here](#).

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

### **34. 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 CE process, including informational interviewing, job shadowing, and mock interviewing are included in the CE rate either as part of the Discovery process and/or the Job-Development process (based on the job seeker's individual circumstances).

### **35. 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 CE 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). CE deliverables; the Discovery Report and CE Plan, reviewed with the service delivery team prior to being finalized, are expected to identify potential need for Post-Employment supports as well as the strategies or approach to support both prior to the job development phase and during.

### **36. 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 hours of the 40 hours allocated to Job Development may be indirect.

### **37. Must a job seeker have to already have tried other services to utilize CE?**

Customized Employment 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 Customized Employment 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.



**38. Is there a pool of employers available to hire individuals who utilize CE services? If not, how will CE job developers sustain placements without a pool of employers?**

No, a pool of employers is unnecessary for this service model. Customized Employment 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.

**39. The CE Job Negotiation & Development Contact Log has 20 rows. Am I supposed to contact 20 different potential employers or am I supposed to be using 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 as 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, then use the next line following it 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.

**40. If a job was created for an individual, like is done during CE (most of the time), doesn't the employer have to open the position internally for all other employees in the organization?**

To clarify, this question is asking 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. I have seen company's create entire training programs exclusively for people with disabilities and I have also seen 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. I would also offer to connect companies with some of our existing partners so that they can provide recruitment advice.

### **Phase 3: Post-Employment Supports**

**41. 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 Customized Employment 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. Customized employment 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.

**42. Is the 6-Month Job Retention (180 days) payment available to ADS only job seekers? It is not in the contract?**

No- If the job seeker is only working with ADS, the 6-Month Job Retention payment is not available. There are 3 tracks for CE referrals:

- ADS unique CE Job Seekers
- DDS unique CE Job Seekers
- Mutually served Job Seekers

In most cases DDS will fund Discovery, ADS will fund Job Development, Placement and Initial Post Employment. If Supported Employment (SE) is necessary, DDS (or another funder) will pick up following the ADS 90 Day Retention and any additional job coaching until the Job Seeker is ready to transition to Extended Services.