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# SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT in Catalonia

**Framework Protocol**



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# **SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT in Catalonia**

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**Framework Protocol**

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# INTRODUCTION

**THIS DOCUMENT** establishes the technical and methodological coordinates that characterize and form the basis of SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT in Catalonia, a key strategy for integration in the competitive job market of a significant and growing number of people with disabilities and mental disorders who find it particularly difficult to find a job.

This project forms part of the 2008-2010 Strategy for Labor Integration of People with Disabilities in Catalonia, which is supported by the Ministry of Employment. The project is based on the belief in two basic concepts. The first is that there is a need to establish a unique, shared benchmark framework for SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT in Catalonia that clearly defines the purpose, scope and features of this methodology in relation to other strategies supporting labor market integration of groups with special difficulties. At the same time, it should be a shared benchmark framework that defines the common elements of a reality that is necessarily diverse, given the different characteristics and conditioning factors of the people and groups addressed by the project.

This document therefore springs from the desire to define a benchmark framework that provokes thought, generates motivation for action and constitutes a solid basis to guide the action of the government, organizations, associations and companies. In short, it aims to reflect the fact that many agents and institutions with different perspectives and responsibilities are involved in this reality. At the same time, we would like to contribute to the consolidation of SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT as a key strategy to improve labor market integration, maintain employment, increase on-the-job quality and promote the professional careers of people with disabilities and mental disorders. In the process of drawing up this document, the aim was to be coherent with these objectives to ensure that the document is based on the current reality of SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT in Catalonia. The document was prepared bearing in mind the process of working, consulting and speaking at the individual and group levels with decision makers and professionals with significant experience in the development of programs of this kind. Ultimately, the aim was to take advantage of, systematize and disseminate the analysis, reflection, knowledge and practical experience of the professionals who deal with these issues on a daily basis.

We would like to express our thanks to these people for their involvement and collaboration on this group project.

**Sara Berbel Sánchez**

Director General of Equal Employment Opportunities

# MAIN IDEAS AND CONCEPTS

## **SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT as a strategy for integrating people with disabilities and mental disorders in the competitive job market**

**SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT IS ONE OF THE METHODOLOGIES FOR INTEGRATION IN THE COMPETITIVE JOB MARKET** and is aimed at people with disabilities and special difficulties. It first appeared in the United States in the 1980s and reached Catalonia at the end of the 1980s. / the end of the first decade of the 21st century.

Initially, SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT was a methodology used with people with intellectual disabilities and learning difficulties. Over time, it was successfully expanded to other groups with special difficulties that need the support of the program to become integrated in the competitive job market.

In the current reality of SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT in Catalonia, there are many programs and initiatives for different groups that offer a wide range of activities and services.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT is currently being applied in Catalonia for:

- ▶ people with intellectual disabilities.
- ▶ people with mental disorders.
- ▶ people with sensory disabilities (e.g., hearing and visual impairments).
- ▶ people with physical disabilities (especially in cases in which the obstacles for accessing the job market are not derived from the lack of mobility, but from formal and informal communication problems).

These different programs and services have one thing in common: they play a key role for people (and, as applicable, for their families) throughout their employed life by facilitating and expressing the commitment and support required to help people achieve full integration in the competitive job market.

## THE MAIN IDEAS THAT DEFINE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

### Supported employment is

- ▶ A strategy for integration in the competitive job market.
- ▶ Aimed specifically at people who form part of groups with special difficulties when it comes to finding competitive employment in the job market, and who can find and keep a job in the competitive job market if and only if they have support from the program.

### It is characterized by

- ▶ The active involvement of companies in the integration process.
- ▶ Intermediation and providing support to the person and the company to guarantee the satisfaction of all parties in the labor relationship.
- ▶ Providing support that:
  - is diverse.
  - is flexible.
  - is shared with the company.
  - anticipates and reacts to specific needs.
  - is available throughout the worker's employed life.

It shares the following with other integration programs and strategies for people with special difficulties:

- ▶ The belief that each person is the most important part of his or her own process: individualized attention and follow-up.
- ▶ The belief that maximum personal independence should be the norm and the main guiding principle of all intervention.

### It is unique in that it

- ▶ Plays a role as a benchmark for people in terms of employment so they can find a competitive job in the job market that fits their abilities and interests and, above all, so they can keep the job over time and consider new labor and personal objectives.

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT is...

### A strategy for integration in the competitive job market

Therefore,

- It is established based on a direct contractual relationship between the company and the employee.
- It provides for job and salary conditions that are similar to those of any person in an equivalent job.
- It takes place in the same employment context as that of the other people in the company.

**It is aimed specifically at people who form part of groups with special difficulties when it comes to finding competitive employment in the job market, and who can find and keep a job in the competitive job market if and only if they have support from the program**

There are different support methodologies and strategies for the integration of people with special difficulties in the competitive job market and SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT is one of them. All the methodologies used on groups of people with special difficulties for integration in the competitive labor market provide support to achieve this objective. However, not all support activities in employment and support for labor integration are SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT is a strategy for integration that calls for intense intervention that is not always necessary to achieve the integration of all people with mental disorders or people with sensory or physical disabilities. Moreover, given that it is a strategy aimed at gaining access to jobs in the competitive labor market, it establishes the need for minimum abilities and skills that guarantee that, with the support and intervention provided through the program (adaptation to the job, training and coaching on abilities and attitudes, and guidance and advice), the person will be able to get and, above all, keep the job.

In line with these considerations, the assessment of the suitability of applying the methodology of SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT to achieve the labor integration of a specific person is considered an important part of intervention.

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT is characterized by...

### Active involvement of companies in the integration process

Company involvement and collaboration are key for the success of the integration process. One of the basic parts of the program is working on the motivation process and companies' commitment to ensure that they actively participate in the process of job integration as a way of facilitating:

- The suitability of the job (the company is prepared to adjust a job to fit the candidate or redefine it: the job is created or modified based on the interests, abilities and needs of the candidates and the company).
- The capacity of the people in the job environment (co-workers, supervisors) to make relations easier.
- On-site preparation to ensure the person can do the job well.

### Intermediation and providing support to the person and the company to guarantee the satisfaction of all parties in the labor relationship: a three-part commitment (company, person and agency)

The methodology of SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT aims to ensure there is a commitment between the person, the company and the agency to guarantee the person and the company are satisfied throughout the labor relationship:

- by finding a job that is right for the right person.
- by identifying, facilitating and implementing the support needed.

### Different kinds of support

Support can be provided in different ways and through different activities. It may include such things as training to learn the tasks involved in the job, strategies for communicating and relating with co-workers, and guidance on decisions linked to the development of the person's professional career.

## SUPPORT

	For the person:	For the company:
<b>Before</b>	To choose an occupation; identify/find a job that suits the person's skills, interests and preferences.	To discover the advantages of collaborating with the program. To find the right person for a job (existing or new): to ensure that the person achieves a suitable level of performance, handles the process of forming relationships and adapts to the job.
<b>During</b>	To get a job, learn to work; learn the tasks and/or learn to have a positive relationship with the job environment.	To learn to work and deal with the new employee: be a co-worker, leader, supervisor.
<b>After the job integration process, hiring</b>	To keep a job over time; take on new responsibilities / adapt to change; handle conflict; foresee and intervene in crisis situations; set and achieve new labor and personal goals.	To facilitate the person's adaptation to change: new needs/situations; follow-up/support to take on new responsibilities/tasks/functions; positively take in change and conflicts.

Some of the most common forms of support are:

- on-the-job accompaniment and support.
- training on the specific tasks of the job.
- training and coaching on abilities and attitudes.
- coaching on compensatory strategies.
- guidance and advice.
- action involving information, training and changing attitudes addressed at the people in the job environment to facilitate support and the company's natural resources.
- contact with other workers, family, friends and organizations.

### **Flexible**

The intensity of support can vary throughout the process and only the amount strictly necessary at each time is provided.

The person's needs and development process determine when support is provided, its intensity and duration. These factors are continuously assessed so they can be adjusted to achieve the goals set.

### **Together with the company**

The success of integration is achieved by identifying and combining the company's natural support (co-workers, supervisors and other relationship networks) with the support provided by the labor-integration agent.

Natural support is particularly effective because it helps with social integration and acceptance of the person. This kind of support also tends to be more permanent and available over time, which makes it possible for the person to keep the job longer.

The group of people who will provide natural support (supervisors, co-workers, etc.) must have the necessary guidance and knowledge to perform their roles naturally (as leaders, co-workers, etc.). This can be achieved by helping change attitudes and through information and training activities.

### **Foreseeing and reacting to needs**

Support is proactive (it detects needs and makes support available) and reactive (it responds to any new needs that arise). It is continuously assessed so it can be adjusted with regard to the goals set.

### **Available throughout the person's employed life**

Support goes beyond looking for a job and the job integration process. One characteristic that distinguishes SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT from other services that provide support for labor integration is the availability of support designed to make it possible for the person to keep a job over time.

- For the company, while the labor relationship is in force.
- For the person, throughout his/her employed life.

The availability of support means that, even when the person no longer needs support (the person's needs and development process determine when support is provided, its intensity and duration), the relationship may effectively begin again at any time.

Moreover, SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT programs provide not only continuous support so the person can keep the job, but also provide support to help the person develop his/her own professional career (promotion, changing companies).

Therefore, support can potentially cover the person's entire employed life.

## **SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT shares the following with other labor integration programs and strategies used for people with special difficulties when it comes to finding a job...**

### **The belief that each person is the most important part of his or her own process: individualized attention and follow-up**

This involves acknowledging the following, among other things:

- That each person is unique and has different interests, preferences and conditions.
- That support must be provided to the person so that he/she can make his/her own decisions and become fully involved in planning, assessing and developing the process.
- That people are active subjects, protagonists and decision makers when it comes to defining and implementing their own vocational projects. The working methodology places the emphasis on motivating and stimulating the ability to establish goals and achieve milestones based on the alternatives available.

- That each person's speed and ability to adapt to change should be taken into account.
- That information should be provided so each person can decide bearing in mind his/her preferences and with an understanding of the consequences of his/her choices.

**The belief that maximum personal independence should be the norm and the main guiding principle of all intervention**

The aim of SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT is to achieve the independence of people by integrating them and keeping them in the job market over the long term, based on the acknowledgement of the role of work in people's lives.

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT is unique in that...

It plays a role as a benchmark for people in terms of employment so they can find a competitive job in the job market that matches their abilities and interests and, above all, so they can keep the job over time and consider new labor and personal objectives.

There is a commitment to the person (and, as applicable, to the family as well) for support and follow-up in the area of employment:

- Support in the process of the transition to employed life or going back to the job market with the aim of discovering, analyzing and identifying the person's own abilities, skills and preferences, as well as other work-related tasks and activities.
- Support finding a job and starting/restarting employed life with everything that is involved in labor integration: the process of looking for, finding and, as necessary, adapting to a job. Support is also provided with learning the abilities required to perform a specific job and in the process of adapting to the organizational culture and relationships in the work environment (relationships, communication with co-workers and supervisors).

It is specifically characterized as follows:

- It provides continuous support to help the person keep the job and adapt to any changes that arise, foresee and avoid crisis and breakup situations (maintaining integration) and facilitating adaptation to any changes that arise. Keeping the job is considered one of the key challenges, given that a number of very different factors are usually involved, such as personal aspirations, changes in the relational context (new bosses, different co-workers, new locations and schedules) that require an intense adjustment process and the definition of new realities.
- It provides support for the development of the person's own professional career (follow-up) and to facilitate support over the medium and long terms for planning and developing the person's own professional career.

The ultimate purpose of SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT programs is not only labor integration, but also to help people attain the skills they need to lead an adult, responsible and independent life by giving them access to a professional role and financial freedom. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT programs consider people based on their roles as workers and based on a global, holistic approach, with the understanding that personal and social factors have an effect on professional development.

A significant percentage of people who need to participate in SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT programs also need support in other aspects of their lives that are not related to employment, such as housing, free-time activities and organizing different parts of their lives, i.e., the ability to lead an independent adult life.

In the methodology of SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT, work is done for labor integration based on the knowledge of the person as a whole and by helping him/her express his/her needs and aspirations (even those not related to the job market), and figure out how and when to satisfy them. In this regard, playing a role as a benchmark in the job market is just as important as networking and coordinating with other programs and services that work in this area (emancipation, housing, independent life, leisure and personal growth) to address all the different aspects of life.

## WHO THE PROGRAM IS FOR

**THE METHODOLOGY OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT** specifically addresses people who form part of groups with special difficulties when it comes to finding competitive employment in the job market, and who can find and keep a job in the competitive job market if and only if they have support from the program.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT is an integration strategy that requires intense intervention that is not always necessary because there are many people with disabilities and mental disorders who can successfully join the job market without the intervention of a labor integration service, or for whom support involving mediation between the worker and the company is enough. Moreover, given that it is a strategy aimed at gaining access to competitive jobs in the labor market, it establishes the need for minimum abilities and skills that guarantee that, with the support and intervention provided through the program (adaptation to the job, natural support, expert support, etc.), the person will be able to get and, above all, keep the job.

In line with these considerations, the assessment of the suitability of applying the methodology of SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT as a strategy to achieve the labor integration of a specific person is considered an important part of intervention.

Different organizations use different strategies and criteria in this assessment, but for the most part there is agreement on some initial criteria and conditions that should be taken into account when making decisions.

**There is considerable agreement and consensus on some initial criteria and conditions that should be taken into account when making decisions that can be summarized in four basic statements about the person:**

- he/she has to be able to work.
- he/she has to want to work.
- he/she has to be aware of his/her situation and accept help.
- he/she has to need support; it is understood that he/she can find and keep a competitive job in the job market if and only if he/she receives support from the program.

**Most of these conditions are dynamic and will be worked on and improved during the process, especially in the first phase.**

For example, when filling out the application, few candidates are fully aware of their situation or accept their disability, or have a clear understanding of the difference between a vocational center, a special employment center and a company in the competitive labor market. It is therefore necessary to focus on the analysis of the person's potential and assess his/her chances of achieving the conditions that will allow him/her to move forward toward integration, once the training process has begun.

**Assessing these general criteria is a job that should be done by professionals. The quality of the professionals and their expert knowledge is therefore key when making this assessment.**

## **ASSESSING THE SUITABILITY OF APPLYING THE METHODOLOGY. CRITERIA TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT**

### **The person has to be able to work.**

- ▶ Minimum skills.
- ▶ Sufficient level of cognitive functioning.
- ▶ Sufficient level of communication skills (understanding spoken orders, knowing how to ask for help).
- ▶ Sufficient level of acceptance of authority.

### **The person has to want to work.**

- ▶ Real motivation to work (shows interest).
- ▶ Work in a company in the competitive labor market (not in a sheltered environment).
- ▶ The person has to want it (the person makes the request, not the family).

### **The person has to be aware of his/her situation and accept help.**

- ▶ The person has to be aware and accept his/her disability, illness and limitations from a positive perspective.
- ▶ The person has to be aware that he/she needs support for labor integration (he/she has to acknowledge the need for help and has to show an interest in being helped and receiving the support he/she needs during the process).

### **The person has to need support; it is understood that he/she can find and keep a job in the competitive job market if and only if he/she has support from the program.**

- ▶ He/she understands there will be a need to adjust to the job and the environment. The need to adapt to a “regular job”.
- ▶ He/she understands there will be a need for intense intervention to improve the necessary personal aspects, such as training, to be able to respond to the requirements of the job.

### **Other criteria considered.**

- ▶ The family and/or relational context should be prepared to participate and get involved in the process.
- ▶ Strong points, potential, skills.
- ▶ Responsibility for what the person does.
- ▶ Regularity in working speed.
- ▶ Family relations: roles and dynamics.
- ▶ Personal maturity.
- ▶ Control of impulses.
- ▶ Reaction to change.
- ▶ Social skills and development, use of free time.
- ▶ Level of personal independence, how careful he/she is, mobility, need for supervision when performing a task.
- ▶ Functional academic abilities: verbal and written expression and comprehension, reading, arithmetic (knowledge of numbers), computers.
- ▶ Initiative. This is particularly a factor when the opposite is found: absolute passivity, extreme dependence on orders given, inability to provide information or ask for help.
- ▶ Patients with severe mental disorders:
  - must follow psychiatric and pharmacological treatment.
  - must be stable, have a certain level of awareness of the disorder and its symptoms.
  - must be sent from a social or medical service (hospitals, open centers, social workers).

## APPLYING THE METHODOLOGY TO DIFFERENT GROUPS

**SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT IS BASED ON** the characteristics and needs of each person in terms of the assessment and diagnosis carried out. Determining the kind and intensity of support that is needed involves considering each person and his/her context individually, especially the kind of job the person could do, based on his/her skill profile.

Factors associated with the specific situation and timing of the life cycle should also be considered, as should the abilities, potential and characteristics of each individual person so they can be related to that person's vocational project.

However, it is also true that the barriers and obstacles people face are often common to different reference groups (people with intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy and mental disorders, as well as people with a high degree of physical or sensory disability), and will therefore determine common features in the application of an intervention methodology.

### **It is difficult to establish general criteria or parameters for providing support.**

The abilities, potential and characteristics of each individual person should be assessed so they can be related to that person's vocational project.

### **The kind and intensity of support can therefore not be generalized in terms of groups or based on the degree of disability.**

In a single group, the degree of similarity of personal situations has an influence on the intensity of support and the form of intervention, because the acknowledged degree of disability is not as important as the specific situation of each person when it comes to defining the level of support needed.

### **Some of the parameters linked to the characteristics, background and interests of the person that should be taken into account when personalizing the programming of SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT are:**

- Any previous job experience in the competitive job market, at special work centers or no job experience.
- The length of time the person has been unemployed.
- The person's job motivation.

- The kind of family support.
- The person's life project: his/her interests and expectations.

Many of these factors can be more important than a psychiatric diagnosis, the current situation of the disease or disorder, or the results of intelligence, personality and aptitude tests. Although these factors should be taken into account when personalizing the programming of SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT, establishing standard criteria should be avoided.

As with the person's characteristics and background, individualization of actions and the kind of support also depends on the particular nature of each person's vocational project and the requirements of each job.

In many cases, the possibility of consolidating job experience depends more on the person's ability to adapt to the workplace than to his/her skills.

**The barriers and obstacles people face are often common to different reference groups and will therefore determine common features in the application of an intervention methodology.**

The main differences in terms of methodology and the intensity of intervention in relation to different groups and people can be found in:

- The intensity and scope (duration, frequency) of support in the different phases, especially in the transition process to employed life / rejoining the job market.
- The distribution of the different amounts and kind of support: training / learning tasks and guidance and relational mediation.
- The specific form of support in the process of looking for a job (intermediation, support in the process, support in the interview, whether or not there is a need to use practice activities as a way of providing significant job experience).

## People with intellectual disabilities

### CHARACTERISTICS

- ▶ They have often not worked before and do not have specific training.
- ▶ They see work as an opportunity for full integration in society. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT is viewed as a tool to help people with intellectual disabilities assume an adult role.
- ▶ Work is approached as something that is stable and long-lasting.

### POINTS EMPHASIZED WHEN APPLYING THE METHODOLOGY

- ▶ The support phase is considered essential in the process of the transition to employed life / rejoining the job market. Many of these people are not aware of what it means to work, either at a special work center or a company in the competitive labor market. Their motivation and expectations do not match reality.
- ▶ It is necessary to provide support and accompaniment in person and place the emphasis on cognitive and instrumental learning, the development of functional independence and a preliminary training period.

- ▶ The people in this group have a considerable need for training in instrumental and social abilities: this is the case if they come from a school environment or are adults.
- ▶ The constant presence of the labor-integration agent during practice activities is key.
- ▶ Working with family members is very important (e.g., so they stop overprotecting the person and to help increase the person's independence), but this point will depend on each person.
- ▶ When people with intellectual disabilities first join a company, they need more time (presence of the agent on site) in order to learn and adapt. Once the person is familiar with the company and has learned the job (and with the understanding that the person does not have any other disorders and is stable in terms of behavior), the time between the agent's follow-up visits can be progressively increased.

## People with mental disorders

### CHARACTERISTICS

- ▶ This group is made up of people with a wide range of conditions: different degrees, diseases, and with or without a legal certificate of disability.
- ▶ These kinds of pathologies do not directly affect the level of intelligence or vocational skills, but they do directly affect job motivation, how quickly the person becomes tired, and the level of independence, anxiety, decision-making ability and communication. Habits required for job integration and keeping a job.
- ▶ The main difficulties are:
  - adaptation.
  - social skills.
  - cognitive deficits.
  - those derived from the loss of health, which have a negative effect on many life expectations.
  - those derived from symptoms of the disorder that interfere with the development of vocational skills.
  - the adverse effects of psychiatric medication and the frequency of episodes when the person stops taking his/her medication (because of the adverse effects) and the resulting problems.
  - those derived from saturation of social-healthcare systems.
  - those that occur as a result of the job market itself, such as the increase in the technical content of the job and the amount of part-time work.

- The main barrier is basically social because this group is highly stigmatized and rejected by society. It should be borne in mind that the person's success on the job depends on his/her relations and the tendency toward social isolation hinders the success of integration.

#### POINTS EMPHASIZED WHEN APPLYING THE METHODOLOGY

- When making decisions, it is necessary to assess the following when applying the methodology:
  - the need to maintain contact with the mental health network.
  - the need to continue psychiatric and pharmacological treatment.
  - the need to be stable and have a certain level of awareness of the disorder and the symptoms.
  - the presence of other factors, such as drug addition, the adverse effects of medication, etc.
- Action taken prior to integration (skills training, psychological preparation for work, motivation) is not always necessary, but will be more intense the longer the person has been unemployed.
- The link with the labor-integration agent is a key factor. It is important for the agent to know the person well, and for the person to trust him/her and feel confident. The agent should remain the same, given that changes are not well received by the people in this group (changes in the person they deal with in the healthcare network occur often).
- In the analysis of the workplace, it is very important to identify each person's stress factors. The person may show great interest and eagerness to obtain a job, but become more hesitant when the time comes to start working.
- Providing support and accompaniment on the job is voluntary, because the employee is responsible for him/herself and can refuse to receive support. With this group, an effort is always made to provide intense support outside work hours and to avoid providing support on site whenever possible. The only person who is told that the worker has a mental health disorder is the worker's immediate supervisor or the person in charge of him/her at the company, so as not to have a negative effect on the worker's integration in the group. This point is highly relevant because of the high level of marginalization suffered by people in this group.
- Less need for training on tasks and more guidance when looking for a job, adapting and support for anticipating needs.
- Continued support while the person has the job is key: systematic monitoring based on a schedule of tutoring sessions and interviews as least once a month.
- Foresight is basic. Constant attention should be paid to any change that might affect the person's condition so that action can be taken through individual tutoring sessions before a relapse occurs:
  - change in the contract, change in the person at the company the worker deals with, change in workplace or tasks, a promotion, etc.
  - monitoring should be done of medication and psychiatrist appointments.
- It is considered important to encourage collaboration from family members and/or the relational context so that these people see job integration as a therapeutic measure for social integration and health.
- The intensity of support will vary based on the disease and each person. This depends to a great extent on the moment in life when the person started experiencing the disease and started having difficulties (childhood, adolescence, in the development of an itinerary, etc.).
- Coordinated action from the job-guidance and integration services and social and healthcare services monitoring the persona is necessary for successful integration.

## People with sensory disabilities (hearing, visual or communicative)

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### CHARACTERISTICS

- The barriers for this group are communicative and are therefore very important because “work is communication”. The measures applied are thus designed to improve accessibility and the technological means to increase the person’s independence (and not so much to improve skills).

### POINTS EMPHASIZED WHEN APPLYING THE METHODOLOGY

- There is a focus on facilitating communication and providing support to the company to learn to communicate with the person (e.g., by encouraging attitudes such as keeping a written communication channel open, vocalizing and speaking slowly), while encouraging the person to be independent.
- Simultaneously working with the person and on his/her integration in the job and the new setting.
- Adaptation at the company so the person receives the same information as all co-workers: in terms of minor logistics and training for people with hearing disabilities.

## People with physical disabilities

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### CHARACTERISTICS

- Physical disability is a very broad concept. The application of the SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT methodology is highly suited in cases in which the disability affects communication and relations (affects speech) and in the case of sensory disabilities.
- There is a high incidence of multiple deficiencies in the group of people with physical disabilities. Mental-health problems and intellectual deficiency may also be present.
- It is very difficult to find the right job for people who have a physical and/or a sensory disability, as well as cognitive difficulties.

### POINTS EMPHASIZED WHEN APPLYING THE METHODOLOGY

- Based on the kind of disability (e.g., to facilitate communication).
- The SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT methodology is highly suited when limitations in terms of mobility, handling, effort and balance make it necessary to adapt and modify the tasks and functions of the job.
- The methodology is also suited when the person has to be helped in some aspects of his/her vocational development, either by co-workers, technological aids (mechanical or electronic) or by support personnel (personal assistance social services).

# PHASES AND PROCESSES OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT IN CATALONIA

Based on the analysis of different experiences applying the SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT methodology in Catalonia, it can be stated that the processes are quite similar and include a preliminary phase before the person starts the job, the moment of actually starting the job, and follow-up during the person's entire employed life. However, in many cases, the terminology, the content of the activities carried out and the order of the key processes in each phase are not the same.

Following is a list of the **key processes** carried out in each of these major phases.

## PHASE I. PREPARATION

### Objectives

- ▶ To provide support in the process of preparation for integration in the job market.

### Key Processes

- ▶ Welcoming and assessment of the suitability of the person joining SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT.
- ▶ Updating and preparation of the professional profile: support for the definition of an employment objective.

## PHASE II. INTEGRATION IN THE LABOR MARKET (HIRING)

### Objectives

- ▶ To provide support finding a job (start/return to the job market).

### Key Processes

- ▶ Personalized, active job search: prospecting and locating and/or creating a job made to order.
- ▶ Non-job-related practice activities.
- ▶ Analysis of the workplace.
- ▶ Adaptation and on-the-job training / advice for the job setting.

## PHASE III. ACCOMPANIMENT AT THE BEGINNING AND THROUGHOUT EMPLOYED LIFE

### Objectives

- ▶ To provide ongoing support to help the person keep the job / develop his/her professional career.

### Key Processes

- ▶ Initial accompaniment of the person and the company.
- ▶ Accompaniment throughout employed life: continuous.
- ▶ Accompaniment throughout employed life: incident and crisis management (support at specific moments).
- ▶ Monitoring throughout employed life: assessment and updating of personal and vocational objectives.

## Phase I. Preparation

One of the premises of the SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT methodology is finding the right job for each person based on his/her job profile.

The purpose of this phase is to identify the aspirations, personality, skills and professional interests of each person.

### The goals are:

- to discover, analyze and identify the person's abilities, skills and aspirations with regard to the job.
- to strengthen the person's position in relation to the job (motivation, attitudes).
- to identify interests, job preferences and abilities.
- to improve/update knowledge of the training context and job environment.
- to adjust the interests/expectations to possible occupations.
- to identify the person's deficits as an employee and assess different kinds of job and the tasks to develop a specific profile, etc.

**It is a process that can have different scopes and intensities. The differences are justified by the different initial situations of the people and groups.**

Three broad standard situations can be identified:

- integration in the real job market in a sheltered setting.
- reentry in the job market (after a situation of unemployment/sick leave).
- transition to employed life from school or a permanent/long-term situation of unemployment.

**Based on the initial situation (age, any previous job experience, any suitable training), the actual way support is provided in each case will be very different.**

Three broad kinds of support and intervention can therefore be identified, depending on the activities involved:

- Revision/updating of the professional profile based on an analysis of employability. People who have worked in the past or who come from a special work center need to have their professional profile updated.
- Preparation of the professional profile for people who have not worked before or who have been on unemployment and need more support and guidance when preparing their professional profile.
- Preparation of the professional project and introductory training for the job / non-job-related practice activities for people who have never worked before or who are in transition periods, such as young people. The objectives of this preliminary training phase are: to improve habits, socialization, acceptance of rules, adjusting expectations, accepting limitations, improving knowledge, etc.

This preliminary training can be considered SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT, given that it is working to learn how to work in the broadest sense of the word and this support can help the person gain experience, among other things. However, much of this training can be done at the company because it is the most similar situation to the future job. In fact, practice activities designed only for training are a good tool. The work itself is not as important as offering the person a real experience of what it means to work.

**One of the unique things about the application of the SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT methodologies in Catalonia by different organizations is that there are different levels of intensity and scope of this support phase in the transition process to employed life / rejoining the job market.**

These organizations have pointed out the following factors as a way of explaining this uniqueness:

- the deficits of vocational guidance services in the educational system.
- the need to bridge the gap between the education received in school and the world of work.<sup>1</sup>
- the need to work on transferring the knowledge learned at school to other situations in daily life.

<sup>1</sup> Monitoring of the debate and passing of the Education Act should be taken into account. One of the aims of the Platform for Inclusive Companies is to ensure that the act includes the commitment to design programs to help people acquire initial vocational qualifications (PQPI) so that the preliminary training experience provided by organizations and the public initiatives that apply the SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT methodology are included.

- the difficulties of the process of the transition to employed life and adulthood, a process that is difficult in and of itself and even more so for people with any kind of disability.

Indeed, the tasks that need to be carried out are not specific to SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT, but are a necessary condition. Therefore, if no one has done this, it should be done.

The objectives of this process are:

- to assess employability: the ability to get and keep a job.
- to identify an itinerary/strategies to improve employability (as applicable).
- to provide guidance: to give support to identify a suitable employment goal.
- to train and provide significant job experiences.

**In the case of people with mental health disorders, this phase is less intense.**

But it shows that difficulties often arise when mental health problems are combined with a sensory disability. In these cases, vocational disorientation can occur that affects the expectations and self-perception of abilities.

**The methodological tools used in this phase are:**

- Analysis of employability to detect the person's deficits and work on them through activities set out in the individual action plan.
- Individual action plan or individual itinerary. This is a basic tool for the intervention of the labor-integration agent and is the basis for the action taken to achieve the goals while respecting the individuality of each person and establishing a time frame and assessment during the entire itinerary.

To draw up this individual action plan, it is necessary to know the person well, not only in terms of his/her acquired or potential abilities and skills, but also his/her attitudes, interests, life project and expectations, etc. The goals to be worked on belong to the following groups of variables:

- curricular variables: training level, professional experience, job habits.
- personal variables: disability, self-knowledge, expectations, independence, hygiene habits, physical appearance, spatial orientation, self-control, social abilities.

- interaction variables: relationship with co-workers, collaboration, participation, integration in the company or training course, suggestibility.
- production variables: knowledge of work, amount of work, quality of work, organization of work, working under pressure.
- personal variables with regard to activities: learning capacity, grasp of ideas and instructions, concentration, discipline, responsibility, constancy, initiative, ability to do the activity, problem solving, capacity for adaptation, self-criticism, interest, assistance, punctuality, creativity.

To gather information, this process calls for the involvement of everyone who knows the person well.

These plans are constantly being updated and reviewed by technical personnel to ensure they are based on real needs and aspirations.

**Training on basic, cross-cutting skills.**

It is necessary to combine this process with training action to strengthen basic and cross-cutting skills. This is an optional action based on the diagnosis and needs defined in the individual action plan.

**The vocational-guidance process can take different forms, can be done through a tutorial work process or can include:**

- visits to get to know and experience different work environments.
- gaining deeper knowledge of a specific job and its requirements.
- practice activities to get to know a specific job for a period of time and help define the most suitable job for each person. These activities are also a good tool to pinpoint strong and weak points and the areas that need improvement for future integration.

## Phase II. Job integration

The second phase covers actions designed to find a suitable job for each person based on his/her characteristics, skills, abilities, interests and expectations that allows him/her to begin or go back to employed life.

At this point in the process, it is possible for the person to do non-labor-related practice activities in a company. This will largely facilitate the process of job integration and hiring. This training and coaching can be done in real production jobs and is designed to improve the person's vocational qualifications in the job environment.

These non-labor-related practice activities can give company management information for making decisions about effectively hiring people with disabilities and/or mental disorders. Moreover, these activities give the employee a real opportunity to gradually learn and adapt before being hired for gainful employment. This opportunity also allows the labor-integration agent to identify and work on the dynamics of the job environment.

One of the common traits of the SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT methodology is to create work opportunities and provide training through work.

The support provided in the process of looking for, finding and, as applicable, adapting to a job will also be different for different groups. The way support is actually provided in the process of looking for a job can be very different.

**Precisely because it is characterized by its ability to adapt as much as possible to the needs of each person, SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT can concentrate on a wide range of different kinds of support in this phase of job integration, including assistance and intermediation in placement. It can therefore consist merely of support to successfully perform the activities required to pass through recruiting processes and selection barriers, or it can involve the creation of a job that is tailor made for a specific person.**

**The process can include the following actions:**

- Encouragement and support in the search for a job. Support for applying for a vacant position and performing activities such as:
  - identifying sources of information.
  - preparing a curriculum vitae.
  - preparing for an interview or the selection process.
- Adapting a job to fit a specific person or creating a new one: the job is created or is modified based on the interests, abilities and needs of the candidates and the company. The following is necessary:
  - To separate the tasks and obligations of different jobs and rearrange them efficiently to create a new job that matches the person's abilities and skills.
  - To explore the needs of a company with company management and create a new job that makes it possible to respond to needs that have either not been resolved or not on a regular basis.
- Support finding a job in the beginning of the employment phase in the competitive job market.
  - Assistance in the design, assessment and modification of the job so it fits the person.

**One of the key parts of this process is the analysis of the job.**

- The job description should be analyzed.
- The workplace environment should also be analyzed: safety and industrial risks, organizational culture and stress factors.

It is important to analyze the job on site, preferably with the person who does the job or who has the most information about it.

**In this phase, on-site support in the workplace or place of training is important.**

The goal of this intense, continuous intervention is to make a positive change in the situation when it is thought that the person presents a number of difficulties that make support from the labor-integration agent essential.

The duration of intervention will depend on how well the situation evolves. It can be estimated to last a maximum of three to six months with the aim of achieving consolidation.

This intervention can also occur at any time during the process (when looking for a job, training, working, keeping the job). Depending on the person, the variables to be worked on may be personal, involve interpersonal relationships or be related to the tasks to be performed.

**The methodological tool used in this phase is the adjustment plan.**

In the context of each personalized plan, an adjustment plan is prepared between the employee, the workplace and the job environment. Each time the person changes jobs and/or companies, a new adjustment plan is prepared.

This adjustment plan is dynamic because its aim is proper communication between:

- the employee: his/her characteristics, abilities and skills, current abilities and les those he/she may acquire in the future, his/her long-term expectations and interests.
- the workplace: the job requirements and the job to be done, the job conditions (schedule, vacations and salary), among others.
- the company and work environment: the chain of command, relations with co-workers and job interrelations.

One of the aims of analyzing the workplace is to ensure that the needs of the company and the employee are satisfied. Companies are partners in this process and it is important to establish positive relations and focus on the needs of the business and the company.

## Phase III. Accompaniment / monitoring

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This phase includes the support actions taken so the person can keep the job and develop his/her own professional career. It is necessary to distinguish between initial support (in the early part of the job relationship) and support throughout life.

Monitoring activities can vary in each case, based on the objectives and needs of the person and the company.

It should be remembered that support is proactive (it detects needs and makes support available) and reactive (it responds to any new needs that arise).

### INITIAL ACCOMPANIMENT

**The aim is to provide the person with the support he/she needs to successfully become integrated in the job market.**

The labor-integration agent accompanies and monitors the person, and gradually withdraws as the process becomes effective. This support can manifest itself through different activities, including the following:

- visits to the company by the agent.
- telephone contact with the company representative and supervisors for two-way information and advice.
- individual tutoring sessions for monitoring.
- continuous assessment to determine if support and monitoring should be changed or intensified: assessment of the person's professional development and readjustment (as applicable) of the modifications and adaptation initially introduced, as well as the implementation of new measures if a need is detected and identified.

## ACCOMPANIMENT THROUGHOUT EMPLOYED LIFE

**Continuous accompaniment with the company and the person is necessary to ensure the person keeps the job and both parties are satisfied.**

The aims of continuous support are:

- To proactively assess the needs of the person: job satisfaction, updating professional interests, objectives and preferences, adapting to organizational changes, etc.
- Updating and revising the support system in accordance with the changes.

**Permanent communication channels should be kept open.**

Contact should be made regularly with the person to provide support whenever needed so the agent's role as an employment reference is not lost.

**During monitoring throughout the employment relationship, crisis situations and incidents have to be handled as they arise.**

A number of different activities are carried out to help resolve these situations (and provide advice and guidance to handle behavior problems and attitudes that may arise): facilitating individual psychological care and interviews, as well as mediation in the job environment, etc. But, depending on the situation and the person, it may be necessary to refer the case to a specialist, as with any other employee.

**Personal and professional objectives have to be assessed and updated on a regular basis and at specific times.**

Getting a job is a big step forward toward integration, though it may also reveal other needs. The aim is to provide accompaniment during the person's process of reflection on his/her own goals and provide support to achieve new goals, make new decisions and become more independent.

## CROSS-CUTTING FACTORS OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

**THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMPANY, THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FAMILY** or the person's relational context and networking with other institutions and agencies are the so-called cross-cutting features of SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT. Highlighted here are the criteria, objectives and activities of each one that the agencies consider particularly relevant.

### The relationship with the company

When speaking about the relationship with the company, it is important to distinguish two levels:

- the relationship established with a specific company.
- the actions aimed at the business community in general to encourage the members to participate in these programs (prospecting, raising awareness, information).

#### KEY FACTORS IN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMPANY

**Establishing a relationship of trust between the company and the agency in all the different phases of the integration process.**

**Finding the right job for the right person and adapting the specific needs (adjustment plan).**

All the agencies do intense work with the person and companies to find the job that best fits the person's needs, interests and abilities.

**Ensuring (as far as possible) the success of job integration experiences as a key part of creating new cooperation opportunities with the company.**

Some agencies first make an agreement with the company on practical activities with specific goals and if these goals are not achieved, the person is not hired. This method gives companies a sense of certainty and trust.

**Special attention is paid to the assessment of whether or not the person is prepared to start the job, and whether or not the company is prepared to accept the person.**

From the company's perspective, this involves guaranteeing that the person will:

- achieve an acceptable performance level: care must be taken to ensure the person's entry does not have a negative effect on production (it does not always mean that the person will work at the same speed as others, but that he/she will work at the speed and quality level that has been agreed upon).
- go through a suitable job relationship and adaptation process: the person will not alter the workplace dynamics or atmosphere.

From the person's perspective, this involves guaranteeing that the company will have:

- certain minimum organizational standards that provide for more or less stable contact people and tutors.
- tutors with a positive attitude (and not because management has given an order).
- functions and tasks that are clarified to a certain minimum level.

### **Guaranteeing the rights and image of people with disabilities as responsible, active adults.**

If intervention with the people from the company is necessary (co-workers, supervisors) to provide information, educate, correct attitudes or prejudices, this will obviously be done while completely ensuring that the image of the disabled person as an adult, responsible, active worker is not harmed. Therefore, in each case, the appropriateness is assessed of taking action with or without the presence of the disabled person.

### **Maintaining permanent contact with the company.**

Permanent contact with the company is necessary to obtain information prior to any change that may occur at the company, such as a change in shifts, tasks or contact person, which could involve a crisis situation or a step backward in the adaptation process.

### **Guaranteeing the availability of support through the training required to take on new responsibilities / tasks / functions.**

The agency may offer the basic training required to assume new responsibilities / tasks / functions, i.e., the agency may offer basic training for adaptation to the workplace, but when highly specific training is required, the agency may inform the worker and/or the company where this specific training can be found. Some examples of this support include:

- Help with incidents.
- Advice / guidance to handle behavior and attitude problems.
- Guidance and training for co-workers and supervisors.

## **THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HIRING COMPANY**

### OBJECTIVES

- To ensure the success of job integration by keeping both parties happy and performing mediation tasks:
  - during integration in the workplace.
  - during the person's entire employed life by detecting conflictive situations and applying corrective measures.

### ACTIVITIES

- Assessment and analysis of the workplace. Functions of the workplace, skills that are necessary to perform the functions, environment, level of accessibility, motivation, etc. This activity should be done jointly by someone from the company and the SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT agent. To do this activity, it is first necessary to gather information on company procedures, philosophy, personnel policies, salaries and benefits, and any services in the workplace and where they are located.
- Analysis of tasks. The different parts of the work should be identified to determine the abilities required, task sequences, their efficiency and the chances of modifying the design and proposing possible adaptations if necessary.
- Definition of the collaboration framework, such as the agreement on practical activities.
- Accompaniment and coaching at the workplace and in other natural places mentioned in the individual action plan. It is the kind of work that provides learning based on the practical activity and self-analysis with a demanding, responsible attitude.
- The search for natural support in work and social settings to achieve and maintain the integration objectives, i.e., people, resources, procedures and tools identified by agents when accompanying in integration that help the disabled worker adapt and become fully integrated in his/her new workplace.
- Legal advice for different company agents on kinds of agreements, hiring subsidies and other administrative aspects.
- Technical advice for different agents (co-workers, supervisors). Support on relationship-type aspects with the disabled person.
- Advice on adaptation of the workplace and financial aid.

## THE RELATIONSHIP WITH COMPANIES

Above and beyond the relationship established with a specific company, agencies highlight the work of prospecting, providing information and raising awareness that is done on a regular basis and that makes it possible to develop relationships with potential collaborating companies.

### KEY FACTORS

- ▶ Using different tools and strategies to deal with and attract collaborating companies: networking with business people, businesses, trade unions, employers' organizations, etc. Explaining the positive difference, the advantages for companies of hiring people who participate in SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT programs:
  - people who are completely ready to work.
  - people who meet the requirements of the specific workplace.
  - people who are committed to performing the tasks agreed upon with the conviction and commitment of staying at the workplace over the long term:
    - enthusiastic
    - more committed
    - loyal
    - trustworthy
- ▶ It is necessary to defend the employability and effectiveness of workers in SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT programs by referring to the results obtained in other experiences.

## THE RELATIONSHIP WITH COLLABORATING COMPANIES

### OBJECTIVES

- ▶ To attract collaborating companies by trying to raise their awareness and motivate them to participate in project of other companies.
- ▶ To improve knowledge, raise awareness and motivate companies about these issues.

### ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Prospecting and contacts with companies it is thought could participate:
  - Obtaining updated lists of companies (center database, industrial estate listings, yellow pages, etc.).
  - Mailings to companies with information on the project.
  - Telephone calls following up on emails to arrange interviews.
  - Visits.
  - Other.
- ▶ Marketing. This is the process of offering the company workers capable of performing production tasks through a support service that guarantees production is maintained and conflicts are dealt with. It is important to defend the employability and effectiveness of the workers in SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT programs by referring to the results obtained in other experiences.
  - Information on the project.
  - Specifying possible collaboration.
- ▶ Raising the awareness of companies.
  - Providing information on the project through forums of company associations and trade guilds, and organizing conferences on SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT to provide information on the methodology and its advantages.
  - Holding meetings with company decision makers and trade-union representatives to work on aspects affecting the group and matters related to hiring.
  - Actions of public appreciation to collaborating companies for the creation of a brand of "inclusive" companies (companies that have hired people with disabilities) as a stimulus for attracting other companies.

## WHAT COMPANIES GET FROM THE PROGRAM

### What the program offers companies that provide jobs

- ▶ The program helps contribute to compliance with the law by providing the necessary support and advice.
- ▶ It prepares the future worker.
- ▶ It informs co-workers at the workplace of the disability and how to deal with the person.
- ▶ It arranges for a labor-integration agent to train the person at the workplace during the specified period of practical activities.
- ▶ During the period of practical activities, it assumes all the legal risks derived from the person and the labor-integration agent.
- ▶ It does regular monitoring once the person has been hired and offers support when necessary.

### What the program asks of the company

- ▶ To collaborate on finding a real job that is suitable to the person's possibilities.
- ▶ To allow the future worker to be trained at the workplace with the project's labor-integration agent.
- ▶ To inform the other workers that an employee with a mental disability will be joining the company.
- ▶ To determine with the labor-integration agent the tasks that the participating person will do and how they should be done.
- ▶ To periodically assess the person's work with the people responsible for the project.
- ▶ To hire the person if his/her level of effectiveness and independence is positively assessed.
- ▶ To maintain regular contact with project professionals and ask for support when needed.

## The relationship with the family and the relational context

It is generally agreed that there is a basic need to understand that people's family and relational contexts are highly diverse. In many cases, the family can become a key factor for achieving and continuing to achieve the objectives of labor integration. At the same time, however, the vocational socialization process begins in the family environment, which is where information is received about training, employment and free time, and where basic concepts are learned.

The workings of the family system of people with mental health problems or disabilities has many factors that can limit, condition or hinder the process of vocational development and labor integration.

Some of the most common factors of this kind are:

- Overprotecting attitudes and behavior.
- Unrealistic expectations regarding the person or the requirements of the job market.
- Attitudes and behavior that shows a lack of understanding.

The attitude of the family and/or relational context is particularly relevant in processes involving the transition to employed life because it can encourage or hinder people's role changes, their ability to play a role based on independence, responsibility and identity as key parts of personality and interaction with the context. In keeping with these statements, many agencies point out that a collaborating attitude from the family is a determining factor when it comes to getting and keeping a job. Therefore, the family's involvement is very often crucial for success.

In the experiences analyzed, we find different levels of relationship and intervention. For some agencies, especially for people with mental disabilities, family involvement has been found to be basic. Some agencies have established that the family must collaborate as a requirement for the person to participate in the process. Others indicate that it depends on the person, the family and the person's age.

Working with families usually includes providing advice and accompaniment alongside that provided to the person working toward integration. The kind of intervention and a suitable time frame are specified for each family based on the individual action plan.

### KEY FACTORS

- Different levels of relationship and intervention can be proposed.
- It is necessary to consider and respect the fact that the person has the right to decide the level of involvement of his/her family in this process.
- It is necessary to inform the family about the labor-integration process and the person's job opportunities, establish channels for joint cooperation between the family and the labor-integration agent to arrange for and implement normalization alternatives at all employment and social levels.
- It is particularly important to be able to work with the family and the people in the person's immediate context in cases in which:
  - the person is highly dependent on the family.
  - the family is highly dependent on the person (over-protection).
- The family should be given tools so they can accept the change, tolerate it and change together with the person to favor the job-integration process.

### OBJECTIVES

- To assess the opportunity / need for contact with the family and/or the relational context and its scope (and who and what is "the family" in each case).
- To inform the family and guarantee that the family has basic information on the service and the significance and implications of either being in a sheltered environment or not.
- To create a line of contact with guidance counselors and get their collaboration.
- To get the family to collaborate in the process:
  - By informing about any warning signs of relapse observed in the family environment.
  - By informing of family changes and events that may cause the worker stress.
  - By informing of changes / reductions in medication.
  - By communicating all information they receive about the job from the person that may affect the process, such as comments made to family members on difficulties at work, relationship problems and distorted perceptions.

- To raise awareness about the importance of family members' involvement in the process. To encourage their connection with the process, as well as thought on the changes the person has to go through and the change in the role they play as a family as the person adopts the role of worker.
- To provide advice and guidance to promote the process of looking for a job, keeping it and improving at the job, and to create motivation for accompaniment during the change. The idea is to encourage changes in the attitudes and patterns of family relationships that affect the psychosocial situation of the person and his/her chances of implementing his/her job and training itinerary.
  - To promote the person's independence by providing any kind of support the person needs.
  - To get the family to have a positive attitude toward work and to ensure they are able to have a positive approach in the light of difficulties, negative comments, complaints about day-to-day work, etc.
  - To prepare them to assume certain risks by getting rid of fears that arise in some cases. To work on their anxiety and fear about assuming risks. Many things about the labor market make families nervous. For example, some families of people with severe mental disabilities are very afraid that the labor market will make the condition worse, will upset the person's stability, or that they will lose the benefits they receive, etc.

### ACTIVITIES

- Individual interviews with members of the person's family or relational context.
- Meetings at the beginning of the project and a commitment to support the future worker.
- Encouragement sessions with the family to work actively and dynamically on subjects such as the role of an adult, independence and future plans.
- Contact and monitoring by telephone.
- Information, advice, guidance and support regarding the mental disorder in the person's training and labor-integration process.
- Intervention to encourage the modification of dysfunctional relationship patterns.

## Networking

Networking is a key factor for success for agencies working in SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT. There are three kinds of networking:

### Psychosocial intervention.

Different programs that take place at the same time for the same group of people should be jointly coordinated with the other resources and services at work to agree on the best strategies for each individual action.

### The cooperation of agents in employment in the same region.

- Contact and coordination with agencies and services connected to the integration of disabled people in society and the labor market.
- Actions to raise awareness and prospecting action in the business community: spreading news about SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT programs, carrying out practical activities and accompaniment in integration and monitoring.
- Collaboration with the Catalan Employment Service and labor-integration companies.

### Cooperation and networking with other programs and services that provide support mainly in areas such as housing, emancipation and free time help ensure that care is well rounded and that the different areas of adult life are addressed.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT programs should consider the person not only in terms of his/her role as a worker, but globally and holistically, with the understanding that personal and social factors can have an effect on professional development. This makes it essential for there to be coordination with social services, mental-health services and the educational system.

A significant percentage of the people who need to participate in SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT programs also need support in other areas of their lives. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT programs are a reference point in the working world, but it is important for them to be coordinated with other programs that address areas of adult life in which disabled people who have participated in job-integration programs often need support. These areas include:

- emancipation
- housing
- free time
- personal growth and training throughout life

## KEY FACTORS FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTION

**It is important to establish relations with institutions, services and agencies that deal with and refer people: networks of social services, the educational system, mental-health services, other agencies and services linked to integration into society and the job market of the disabled.**

During the preparation phase to improve the person's knowledge, it is important to gather as much information as possible to improve knowledge in addition to direct exchange with the person and the family (as applicable).

Information can be requested from other professionals that is in any way related to the integration of the person in the working world and that could have an effect on it. The exchange of information about the person between agencies and/or services is always done within the framework of the legislation on personal data protection and is carried out with the consent of the person (in all cases, especially regarding information on mental health).

**During the integration phase, which attempts to provide support to find a job that matches the person's preferences and abilities, regular contact between the agency and temporary employment centers, special work centers, job-integration companies, the Catalan Employment Service and other agents is key.**

**During the continuous support phase to help the person keep a job or develop his/her own professional career, networking with other services can help with strategy changes and avoiding crisis situations.**

**Coordination with the professionals at mental-health services who deal with people with mental disorders is essential to guarantee pharmacological, psychological and social support with all the changes implicitly involved in the integration process.**

Coordination is necessary throughout the process for different reasons:

- To be able to jointly define the itinerary the person should follow and the kind of support and monitoring required. It will provide a source for consultation and advice on the person's possibilities and characteristics in relation to the factors that are important in his/her job integration.

- To agree on the objectives and the action plan, and to provide information on the person's development. Coordination with the mental-health center, referring center and therapist in charge will be maintained during the entire process.
- To avoid any deficits and ensure intervention is effective at the most critical moments, care should be taken with this coordination at times when there are changes in the itinerary, which may call for changes in visits or pharmacological treatment to guarantee the person's emotional stability.
- To help the person keep the job after he/she is hired. Guaranteeing the person's emotional stability is key and it is necessary to carefully assess the person's needs for support and the care possibilities of the service that may have to take action regarding psychological and pharmacological issues.

## OBJECTIVES

Regarding psychosocial intervention:

- ▶ To improve knowledge about the person: advice on the person's possibilities and characteristics regarding factors that are important to his/her job integration.
- ▶ To agree on the best strategies for each individual action: to agree on the objectives and action plan, and to contribute information on the person's development.
- ▶ To ensure the approach is coherently presented to the person to ensure that all the professionals are striving to achieve the same objectives.

Cooperation between agents working in employment in the same region allows for:

- ▶ Optimization of resources, taking advantage of specialized fields and experience.

Cooperation with other programs and services that provide support in other areas (housing, emancipation, etc.):

- ▶ To ensure that care effectively covers all the different areas of life.

## ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Outside support and coordination on psychosocial intervention with each person, jointly with other resources and services that also work in this area (mental-health resources, social services of city councils, private psychiatric practices, etc.).
- ▶ Referral to and coordination with other resources.
- ▶ Continuous contact between the agency and temporary employment centers, special work centers, job-integration companies and the Catalan Employment Service.

# SUMMARY OF PHASES AND PROCESSES OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

## PHASE I. PREPARATION

- 1. Welcome / assessment of the suitability of the SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT methodology**
- 2. Updating / preparation of the professional profile: support defining the objective of employment / training in basic and cross-cutting skills:**
  - ▶ Review / updating of the professional profile (analysis of employability).
  - ▶ Preparation of the professional profile (analysis of employability).
  - ▶ Initial training in the workplace and strengthening of basic and cross-cutting skills.

## PHASE II. JOB INTEGRATION (HIRING)

- 3. Active, personalized search for a job:**
  - ▶ Prospecting and locating and/or creating a tailor-made job.
  - ▶ Non-labor-related practice activities.
- 4. Analysis of the workplace**
- 5. Adaptation and training in the workplace / advice in the workplace**

## PHASE III. ACCOMPANIMENT / MONITORING

- 6. Initial monitoring (for the person and the company)**
- 7. Monitoring throughout employed life (continuous)**
- 8. Monitoring throughout employed life: management of incidents and crisis situations (support at specific moments)**
- 9. Monitoring throughout employed life: assessment / updating of professional and personal goals**

## Phase I. Preparation

- 1. Welcome / assessment of suitability of the SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT methodology**

### OBJECTIVES

- ▶ To ensure that SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT is the ideal methodology to achieve the applicant's integration in the competitive job market.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ To ensure that the person receives all the information necessary to decide if he/she wants to use SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

### ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Interviews and information sessions with candidates to inform them of the SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT process, how the project works and what it means to participate in the project, and to clear up any questions.
- ▶ Assessing compliance with the criteria and analyzing the person's skills, including:
  - information gathered in interviews with candidates.
  - information gathered in interviews with the family and references from prior training centers.
  - curriculum vitae.
  - any other selection tests (group tests, qualifying juries, etc.).
- ▶ Meetings with members of the family and the significant relational context. Interviews with members of the family and close context to clear up questions and gather information on the candidates and their environment.

<sup>1</sup> See the criteria on page 10.

## 2. Updating / preparation of the professional profile: support defining the objective of employment / training in basic and cross-cutting skills

### OBJECTIVES

- To identify the aspirations, personality, skills and interests of each person:
  - To discover the potential of each person with regard to his/her skills and to assess personal resources and the person's degree of independence.
  - To define the factors to be worked on to help the person develop in an ordinary setting (in terms of training, education, relationships, etc.).
- To consolidate the cross-cutting skills required to fill the role of employee.
- To assess (at the end of this phase) the suitability of applying the SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT methodology on this person (see the criteria) and make decisions on going to the next phase or referring to other programs.

### ACTIVITIES

- Guidance tutoring sessions and individual sessions.
- Group techniques.
- Coordination with families and the immediate context.
- Networking: gathering as much information as possible on the person, and coordination with the educational system, mental-health services, speech-language pathologists, social services and others.
- Preparation of the program or individual action plan.
- Training action to strengthen basic and cross-cutting skills at the service itself or by referring to other resources, and referral to vocational training when necessary.
- Assessment of the suitability of applying the methodology.

## Phase II. Job integration (Hiring)

### 3. Active, personalized search for a job: Prospecting and locating and/or creating a tailor-made job

#### OBJECTIVE

- To find a job that matches the person's abilities and needs.

#### ACTIVITIES

- Looking for a personalized job and analyzing the compatibility between the candidate and the job.
- Determining possible collaboration.
- Practical activities.
- Assessing available jobs / modifying a job or creating a new job.
  - Support when applying for a job. Support when carrying out activities such as:
    - identifying sources of information
    - preparing a curriculum vitae
    - preparing for an interview or the selection process
  - Creating a tailor-made job.

### 4. Analysis of the workplace

#### OBJECTIVE

- To analyze and design the support, techniques for providing help and suitable training, bearing in mind the internal factors of the workplace, as well as the external factors that directly and indirectly affect the proper development of employed life.
  - Internal support and workplace-specific support, including all kinds of services for guidance and learning, advice on sociability, assigning a tutor, etc.
  - External individual and community support, including support not connected to the workplace but of great importance for job stability, such as financial support, transport, support with personal relationships, etc.

## ACTIVITIES

- Gathering information through observation at the workplace and interviews with the people who currently perform the tasks about:
  - the characteristics of the workplace.
  - the relationship atmosphere.
  - the profile of the workplace.
  - the difficulties that the person may find / possible support the person will find.
- Establishing a work routine: identifying the areas in which the job tasks will be carried out / determining the essential and nonessential functions.
- Advice and possibility of doing activities with company personnel after informing the other workers that a new person will be taking part in practical activities. Advice to facilitate integration by:
  - designing social interaction models.
  - chatting with the entire company staff before the disabled person joins the company about integration, expectations and conflict situations. It is important to get them to participate in the integration process before the process begins.
  - techniques for employees and supervisors.

### 5. Adaptation and training in the workplace / advice in the workplace

#### OBJECTIVES

- To get the person's technical and professional skills to match those of the job and to get the person to do the job on his/her own. To make the technical and technological adaptations necessary to facilitate communication and the tasks of the job.
- To create a positive atmosphere between the future employee and the work environment.
- The key goal of this phase is to formalize hiring (or the agreement on practical activities in those cases where it is a prior requirement).

## ACTIVITIES

- Formalizing the work agreement or formalizing the agreement on practical activities.
- Drawing up an adjustment plan and putting it into effect.
- Daily accompaniment on the job by the job-integration agent in which the level of support may vary. For example, the sequencing of task procedures, detailed learning of what is involved in each task, help in communication and relations with the context.
- Advice for the company and mediation with the context:
  - working with the most immediate context (working team that includes the person) on how to relate with the person, what can be demanded of the person, how to react in certain situations.
  - working with company works committees and employees' trade-union representatives.
  - working with company management and personnel on motivation for hiring the person: based on his/her current situation and the skills acquired.
- Carrying out individual tutoring sessions for monitoring.
- Implementing adaptations in the company to improve mobility and ensure communication.

## Phase III. Accompaniment / monitoring

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### 6. Initial monitoring (for the person and the company)

#### OBJECTIVES

- For the agent to accompany and monitor the person and then gradually withdraw as the process becomes effective.
- To provide continuous monitoring and support in the company (high intensity): monitoring the level of satisfaction of the company and the person and how the person performs the task, and offering adjustment mechanisms when necessary. Or having the person go back to the preliminary phases when significant changes take place or the job is lost.

## ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Visits to the company by the job-integration agent.
- ▶ Telephone contact with the contact person at the company and with supervisors for two-way information and advice.
- ▶ Continuous assessment to determine if support and monitoring should be changed or intensified.
- ▶ Assessment of the professional development of the disabled person and adjustment (when necessary) of the modifications and adaptation initially introduced, and implementation of new measures if the need is detected.
- ▶ Carrying out individual tutoring sessions for monitoring.

**7. Monitoring throughout employed life (continuous)**

## OBJECTIVES

- ▶ To proactively assess the needs of the person and the company:
  - Satisfaction at work.
  - Job responsibilities.
  - Updating professional interests, goals and preferences.
  - Adapting to organizational changes.
- ▶ Updating and reviewing the support system in accordance with changes:
  - Providing the required training to take on new responsibilities / tasks / functions.
  - Providing guidance and training for co-workers and supervisors.

## ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Continuous advice and assessment for the company. Telephone contact and visits to the company by labor-insertion agents.
- ▶ Continuous assessment of the process to determine if support should be varied and intensified.
- ▶ Keeping permanent communication channels open.

**8. Monitoring throughout employed life: management of incidents and crisis situations (support at specific moments)**

## OBJECTIVES

- ▶ To help resolve incidents.
- ▶ To provide advice / guidance to handle any behavioral problems and attitudes that arise.

## ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Dealing with incidents.
- ▶ Mediation in the job environment.
- ▶ Individualized care and interviews.

**9. Monitoring throughout employed life: assessment / updating of professional and personal goals**

## OBJECTIVE

- ▶ To provide accompaniment during the reflection process on the person's professional and personal goals, and to provide support to achieve new goals (e.g., emancipation, job changes, etc.).
  - To develop the ability to recognize these options and make new decisions on the road toward greater independence.
    - To improve working conditions.
    - To change expectations and jobs.
    - Etc.
  - To help people express their needs and aspirations above and beyond the world of employment, and to guide them toward resources and programs that can give them support in these areas (housing, free time, organization of different parts of life) and, ultimately, to prepare them to lead an independent adult life.

## ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Periodic analysis and assessment by the person of his/her situation, job, the activities that allow him/her to express his/her professional desires, etc.
- ▶ Referral to / coordination with other programs and services that provide support in non-labor-related areas (emancipation, housing, independent life, free-time activities, personal growth).
- ▶ Public recognition by the agency of the employment success of each person: meetings, ceremonies, diplomas, etc. for people who keep a stable job.

## AGENCIES AND PEOPLE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE PROCESS

### AGENCIES

### PEOPLE

**ACAPPS. Catalan Association for the Promotion of Deaf People**

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Head of the SAES Job Integration Service

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Founder and Manager

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**Immaculada Pinar**  
Co-director of the Joia Association and Technical Director for Integration

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Director and Technical Team

**Citizens' Platform for Inclusive Companies**

**Margarida Saiz**  
Secretary

**TRESC. Association of Support Services in Employment for the Disabled**

**Mercè Auquer**  
Founder and Director



