**Customized Employment and Transition**

**Discussion Questions**

1. **Describe what it means to ‘remove the need to be competitive’ in order to work. How will the strategy and philosophy of Customized Employment impact youth with significant disabilities in your school?**

**Answer: The philosophy behind customized employment is that everyone can make a contribution and therefore everyone can work if we match what a job seeker can offer to an employer who needs that contribution. Instead of competing against other applicants for jobs, and competing against existing job descriptions, each job seeker is represented uniquely based on their skills, strengths and aptitudes. For youth, this philosophical change would promote the belief that anyone can work. Instead of focusing on improving areas of deficit, the focus would be to identify where each individual is most skilled, can participate maximally, and make the most contribution.**

**Each school system would be impacted a bit differently.**

1. **If your school system adopted a Customized Employment philosophy that all students could work in the community as a post-school outcome, how would your work experience program change?**

**Answers will vary.**

1. **Sometimes when a student participates in a work experience the information that is collected is limited. Describe what information could be learned about a student within a work experience?**

**Answer: At the very least a growing list of tasks the person has completed at each work experience; skills and contributions; a description of the student’s performance and supports provided; characteristics of what worked and didn’t work for them in terms of: environment, tasks, work flow, supervision, social interactions and requirements; and questions or areas that you have identified that you want more information about regarding the student.**

1. **Introducing the concept of Customized Employment to youth will be different than asking them what they want to do for work after they graduate high school. Can you think of some strategies of how the concept that everyone can work in the community be introduced to families and youth?**

**Answers will vary.**

1. **How does Discovery concretely enable you to create a position for someone with multiple physical barriers to employment?**

**Answer: Part of what you learn in the process of Discovery is how someone’s disability impacts them, how they get things done regardless of the impact of the disability, and what supports or conditions enable them to contribute and participate. The conditions will help you clarify the situation you are looking for, and the task list will be what you know the person can do In the work environment, and the list of contributions will be what you offer an employer.**

1. **How would the strategy of Customized Employment help you rephrame a perceived barrier to employment into a condition for the individual to be successful?**

**Answers: will vary. Examples for discussion could be around behavioral issues, such as an individual will sometimes become quite anxious when his familiar routine is changed. When he becomes anxious he will occasionally break things around him. If we assumed that he needed to get ready to work, we would require him to get his behavior under control before he went to work. Another option would be to identify work environments that have a really predictable and consistent routine so it is unlikely to change. And when identifying work environments look for ones that are sturdy with fewer breakable items.**

1. **When an individual’s ideal conditions for employment are identified and met in a work setting their performance and need for formal supports will be minimized. How does information learned about ideal conditions of employment impact transition to adult services?**

**Answer: If they are in the process of being referred to agencies for employment services sometimes the extent of the person’s ongoing support needs will influence whether they will get services now or if they wait for services. Adult service agencies will benefit from having a clear picture of what support strategies work for people, what types of environments, tasks and work lead the person to work most independently. Additionally, knowing what someone needs to work enables the support team to be fairly creative in meeting those needs, tapping into natural supports along with formal agency support.**