

10 Things Your Organization Can Do to Vocationalize Today!



For some HIV/AIDS service providers, the idea of integrating employment assistance into their service menu may seem daunting—especially when resources are already stretched thin. But taking steps to “vocationalize” does not need to be costly or time consuming. Rather, it’s about adopting an employment mindset. There are several ways to get started. These early steps can be the seed for growing larger, more structured programs later. Early steps include:

1. [Add questions about employment to your client intake form.](#)

Sometimes, gathering basic information about a person’s current or past employment and gauging their interest in considering or changing work can spark a conversation that encourages them to pursue new opportunities. Expand upon this effort and adjust your agency policies and practices to allow for continued access to employment support services that could further assist in your clients’ successful transition to work (e.g., clothing needs, transportation support).

2. [Contact the local district office of your **state’s Vocational Rehabilitation \(VR\) agency.**](#)

Find out more about the services it offers. Ask to meet with someone there to discuss how to best refer clients and ideas for collaborative activities, such as staff trainings or client workshops.

3. [Visit your closest **American Job Center \(AJC\).**](#)

Set up a meeting with the administrator of your closest AJC, and/or its Disability Resource Coordinator (if it has one), to learn more about their services so that you can better advise clients on what to expect if they go. Also discuss ideas for partnering to better educate your staff and/or clients on its services.

4. [Organize a job searching workshop.](#)

This could be a one-time event or a recurring program, perhaps once a month. Topics might include networking, resume writing, and interviewing skills. Sources for facilitators include your own staff members or representatives from your local AJC or VR district office.

5. [Hold a weekly “employment open hour.”](#)

Reserve a regular time once a week when clients can come in to get one-on-one assistance filling out job applications, searching for job opportunities online, or preparing for upcoming interviews. An open hour could be staffed by a member of your team, or someone from your local AJC or VR district office.

6. [Stock a “dress for success” closet.](#)

Gather professional attire, including shoes, in a range of styles and sizes that clients may need for job interviews or networking events. Sources

for such items might include donations from staff members, the local community, or local department stores.

7. [Visit your local community college.](#)

Learn more about the courses of study offered at your local community college, as well as resources for students with disabilities. If there is a disability student services office, make friends with those who staff it so you can make warm referrals for clients interested in enrolling.

8. [Start a job club.](#)

Host a weekly meeting where clients can learn from others’ experiences and expand their network of contacts. This can be professionally facilitated or peer facilitated; the goal is simply for people to have the opportunity to ask questions, share information, and gain support in their job search.

9. [Contact local **Employment Networks \(ENs\) and Work Incentives Planning and Assistance \(WIPA\) sites.**](#)

Learn about the ENs (other than your local AJC) and WIPA program sites in your area and contact them to discuss best processes for linkages and referrals, especially for clients who have concerns about how working would impact their benefits.

10. [Create a display.](#)

Maintain a bulletin board of job openings, local job fairs, and resources such as your local American Job Center and Vocational Rehabilitation local district office. This is also a place to display posters with positive images of people with HIV/AIDS and other disabilities working—perhaps even clients who have successfully transitioned to work.