

Community Living in the Kootenays

Pamphlet # 5

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Access to meaningful daytime activity is an important component to most individuals' well being. While working is a means to secure money, it is also a way to make contact with people, contribute to the community, and find purpose and self-satisfaction. Many people with developmental disabilities are not able to work full-time. However, given the many benefits of being employed, it is valuable to explore other ways that interested individuals can engage in work activities. Even when a person is only able to work a couple of hours per week as a volunteer, the value of this type of activity should not be discounted.

Employment settings for individuals with developmental disabilities have changed in recent history. Where once either no employment was available or the only employment was in "sheltered workshops", increasingly more and more people with developmental disabilities are working in a community setting.

Below is a list of some of the employment and day activity options available to adults with developmental disabilities:

- ❖ **Supported Employment:** Specifically, the term is used to refer to an integrated community work experience where the individual receives on-site assistance and/or support. "Supported employment" is also used broadly to describe a variety of training, paid employment and volunteer programs where support staff are available.
- ❖ **Volunteer Work/Employment:** Work type activities, performed either in an integrated or a segregated setting, where individuals are not paid a wage for the work they are doing, but may receive an honorarium.
- ❖ **Training Programs:** Programs providing an opportunity to learn employment based skills. Participants of training programs are not paid a full wage but may be paid an incentive benefit/allowance.
- ❖ **Day Programs** Programs that offer recreational, leisure and/or training activities to groups of individuals with developmental disabilities.

PLACES THAT OFFER HELP WHEN YOU WANT TO WORK

Currently there is only one program specifically designed to provide a full range of supported employment services to individuals with disabilities. The Nelson-based program offers career planning, interest and skill assessment, job readiness training, resume preparation, job search, on the job training, and follow-up support to individuals with disabilities.

While no other program of this type exist in the Kootenay region, there are other services and some creative initiatives that are aimed to meet people's employment needs. Some of these services may be able to support an individual in a search for suitable employment, while others may also be able to provide support on the work site.

- ❖ Day programs, either run through community-based organizations or pri-care operators, may help individuals secure employment and provide support with employment activities.
- ❖ Training consultants at Employment Services Centres in Cranbrook, Golden, Trail and Nelson provide individuals with disabilities with a range of support services related to their employment interests.
- ❖ Employment resource centres, training centres and skills centres typically offer a range of support services aimed to assist people who are seeking employment.
- ❖ Youth centres sometimes have employment programs aimed at youth in the community.
- ❖ Colleges may have employment programs, employment courses, links to employers, and offer training and support in developing employment skills (*See Education pamphlet of this series for more information*).
- ❖ Individuals who have been in the job market for long enough to qualify under the Employment Standards Act, may be able to access support and benefits including target wage subsidies, support to self-employment, and skills and loans grants.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) assist in removing barriers to training and employment for individuals with permanent disabilities. The services available through VRS include assessment, vocational counselling, career planning, technical aids, training, and other disability related goods and services. VRS services are typically offered through employment centres and other community-based organizations. In order to be eligible for VRS, individuals must be assessed by a VRS Consultant as having a "realistic potential of benefiting" from the service.

"Disability Benefits II is a lifelong designation. If you chose to work, you will not lose your Disability Benefits II designation. Your monthly BC Benefits allowance will be paid according to your income and assets. If your income falls below what you would get under BC Benefits, you can get a "top-up" from the ministry." http://www.sdes.bc.ca/PUBLICAT/db2_work.htm

"You can quickly get back on BC Benefits if you leave a job and still meet BC Benefits asset and income requirements." http://www.sdes.bc.ca/PUBLICAT/db2_work.htm

Recipients of Disability Benefits II who are interested in volunteer work may be entitled to a number of benefits. To find out more about these benefits, contact a consultant at an Employment Services Centre, a Training Centre or an Employment and Benefits Centre in your area.

Volunteer/Training Incentive Benefit: A benefit intended to provide an opportunity for Disability Benefits II recipients to develop their employment skills. The six month benefit covers expenses while a person is involved in a volunteer work program.

Community Volunteer Benefit: A monthly allowance for individuals unable to enter employment or training. This benefit is intended to cover the costs of clothing, transportation and other expenses incurred by an individual volunteering with a non-profit organization.

Travel Benefit: Funds available for transportation to attend a government approved achievement centre.

GETTING THE SUPPORT YOU NEED

For individuals who are interested in working in an integrated community setting one of the main barriers, aside from securing employment is securing on the job training and support in the employment setting.

- ❖ A community support worker may be able to provide initial or ongoing support in an employment setting, particularly if it is part-time.
- ❖ Natural networks, such as family and friends, may be willing to assist someone on the job.
- ❖ Volunteer programs that match up a person with a disability with a person without a disability may be able to provide a volunteer interested in supporting someone at a job site.
- ❖ A work mate who can either provide support on the job, or who can complete the more difficult components of the job, could offer support and mentoring if the individuals are able to work well together.

SO MANY DIFFERENT PROGRAMS?

Community -based employment support services are typically funded through a range of provincial and federal ministries including the Ministry for Social Development and Economic Security and Human Resource Development Canada. In the case of services aimed at individuals with developmental disabilities, support services for employment are also funded through the Ministry for Children and Families. Each community has a different set of services based on which funder funds the programs, the community's needs and interests, and the organizations that are contracted to deliver the services. If you are unclear about the services available in your community, speak to the Ministry for Children and Families social worker or contact one of the services in your community to ask for a list of others.

RESOURCES

Employment Services Centres:

There are five Employment Services Centres available in the Kootenay Boundary region. Only a portion of employment services is offered through these centres. Other services are offered through community-based organizations, such as training centres. The consultants at the Employment Centres will be able to direct you to other services in your community.

Cranbrook:	(250) 426-1281	Trail:	(250) 364-0704
Nelson:	(250) 354-6865	Golden:	(250) 344-7758
Grand Forks:	(250) 442-5374		

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS): While Vocational Rehabilitation Services are available to eligible individuals throughout the Kootenays, the VRS Consultant is based at the Cranbrook Employment Services Centre. The consultant will travel in the region as necessary. (250-426-1281), <http://www.sdes.gov.bc.ca/publicat/vrs.htm>

E.R.N./P.A.C.E.: Nelson-based programs that provide a full range of supported employment options to recipients of Disability Level 2 Benefits. (250-354-3888)

Other Employment and Day Programs for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities:

Trail Association for Community Living	368-3504
Career Development Services, Trail	364-1104
Kootenay Society for Community Living, Castlegar	365-2624
Creston District Society for Community Living	428-2296
Cresteramics, Creston	428-7412
Cranbrook Society for Community Living	426-7588
Windermere District Social Services Society, Choices	342-0014
Fernie Home Support	423-6528
Striving Towards Independent Living, Grand Forks	442-3386

* Additional programs may be available in your community. Ask workers from the Ministry for Children and Families and the Ministry for Social Security and Economic Development about these.

HRDC Partners: These community organizations offer HRDC funded services for individuals seeking employment. While in most cases, these services are not specific to individuals with disabilities and on the job support may not be available, other support services related to employment may be offered.

Career Development Services, Nelson	354-3888	Nelson and District Youth Centre	352-5656
Job Seekers, Cranbrook	489-5117	Job Links (for youth), Cranbrook	426-8302
Greater Trail Community Skills Centre	368-6360	Ashland Training, Castlegar	365-0966
Nakusp Employment Outreach	265-3318	Kootenay Employment Services, Creston	428-5655
Golden Community Resources, Golden	344-2311	Career Seekers, Invermere	342-4464
Community Futures Dev., Grand Forks	442-2722	Alpine Employment Resource Centre	427-7720

A variety of Web sites addressing employment issues and employment of individuals with developmental disabilities exist. Below is a selection of two B.C. based web sites that offer useful information. These are only start.

BC WorkInfoNet: A B.C. based web site concerned with employment issues in general.

<http://workinfonet.bc.ca/default.htm>

WorkInk: A virtual employment resource offering information and services for individuals with disabilities who are seeking employment. <http://bc.workink.com/default.asp>

Bus Pass Program: Provides recipients of Disability Benefits II with an annual bus pass at a reduced fee. (1-888-661-1566)

This pamphlet series was produced by the **Kootenay Society for Community Living Board of Governors**. KSCL offers networking, information, referral, advocacy and education for people with developmental disabilities and their families in the Kootenays. Tel: (250) 352-1600 / Fax: (250) 352-7748, (kscl@direct.ca) 4/2001