

8.36 WORK EXPERIENCE TRAINING

Introduction

Work experience is training provided by an employer (including not-for-profit employers such as community rehabilitation programs and independent living centers) to a CBVH consumer who is not currently employed and has not been promised a job by the employer. A work-study program is a type of work experience which can be developed for high-school or college students. Work-study program enable high-school and college students to gain work experience prior to completion of college training.

Purpose of a Work Experience

The purpose of a work experience is to provide:

1. the consumer with an understanding of the work environment and job responsibilities
2. the consumer with specific work skills and experience
3. information on how the consumer performs in the work setting.

Work experience differs from on-the job training (OJT) in that it is not intended as specific training in a particular position and does not require a commitment by the employer to hire the consumer at the end of the training program. Generally, a work experience is a time-limited experience that contributes to the consumer's overall career development and aspirations.

Examples of Work Experiences

Examples of work experiences are:

1. an employer who trains a high school student during summer break to be a receptionist/typist;
2. an established vending stand operator who provides a brief exposure to employment in the Business Enterprise Program;
3. an employer who trains a recent college graduate as a market researcher performing market analysis.

Selecting a Work Experience Site

When selecting a work experience site, the counselor, employer and consumer should

consider the consumer's skills, interests and any functional limitations that may have an impact on the training, the need for any disability related accommodations and any safety factors in the particular work environment. In addition, the training should be job specific and meaningful, with a clear description of job duties and training objectives.

Duration

There are no durational limitations for work experiences that do not requiring payment by CBVH. However, the counselor and consumer should closely monitor the work experience to ensure that it is contributing to the achievement of the vocational goal.

Work experiences for which CBVH provides payment must not exceed a total of 1040 hours.

CBVH Financial Support for Work Experiences

Work experiences may be supported by CBVH through the authorization of:

1. adjustment training to a community rehabilitation program;
2. job coaching services in support of a work experience (See Section 8.38 for further information);
3. reimbursement to the employer for training expenses (wages);
4. a training stipend to the consumer to cover work related expenses (e.g. maintenance/transportation) when a consumer is not paid wages by the employer.

Wage Reimbursement

Whenever possible, efforts should be made to provide a paid work experience where wages are paid by the employer or through a comparable benefit such as workforce development funding sources. If these options are not available, the counselor may arrange to reimburse an employer for wages paid to a consumer during a work experience.

Wage reimbursement can be arranged directly with an employer or through a community rehabilitation program that is providing work experience services to CBVH consumers. CBVH counselors must not authorize wages to be paid directly to consumers during work experience training.

Work Experience and Job Coaching

Wage reimbursement and job coaching services may be authorized simultaneously in situations where the counselor has determined that job coaching services are necessary for the individual to benefit from the work experience. The counselor must clearly distinguish between the training role of the employer and the training role of the job coach. The job coach should be used to support the employer and consumer during the work experience but must not serve as a substitute for the training and supervision responsibilities of the employer. For example, the employer may provide a consumer with regular training sessions during initial weeks on the job. The job coach can assist the employer with an understanding of adaptive equipment or reasonable accommodations needed by the individual.

Work Experience Agreements

When wage reimbursement is authorized by CBVH, the following information must be documented in a case note:

1. a clear description of the consumer's job duties and a plan for training the consumer.
2. agreement from the employer to allow the CBVH counselor to monitor the work experience and receive to send periodic written progress reports for inclusion in the consumer's record of services).
3. the employer will place the consumer on their payroll and pay the consumer at the current hourly rate received by other employees in the same job. The employer will assure that the consumer will be covered under Workers' Compensation, Social Security and Unemployment Insurance;
4. the employer will assure that all Federal and State standards for wage hours and safety are met.

Progress Reports

For all work experiences, the employer must agree in advance to prepare interim and final reports on the consumer's progress during the work experience. A schedule for interim progress reports will be jointly developed by the counselor with the employer. The report should contain the following information: the dates of training; tasks performed; performance observations; problem areas (if any); and, recommendations or conclusions.

Impact on Social Security Benefits

Earnings from OJT typically have an impact on a consumer's Social Security Disability (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Earnings from an OJT will count toward a trial work period and toward a determination by SSA of whether the individual is earning at the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level. Consumer must be advised to inform Social Security that the monies received during OJT include a subsidy (percentage contributed by CBVH) and that portion is not considered earnings from productive activity.

Each determination made by SSA is made on an individual case basis. Counselors should assist consumers in determining the impact of the OJT on their benefits through contact with the Social Security Administration (web address www.SSA.gov) or through benefits advisement services provided by Independent Living Centers.