

The Arc of Cumberland County

Supported Employment Services

Soft Skills Training Module

July 1, 2014

Derek H. Nye

Director of Employment Services

First Revision

July 2015

Consumer Name

Start Date

Arc Cumberland Employment Specialist Signature

End Date

Arc Cumberland Employment Specialist Signature

The Arc of Cumberland County has a long standing commitment to persons with disabilities who reside in southern New Jersey and require professional assistance in order to obtain and maintain competitive employment in their community of choice. We have provided this assistance through our Supported Employment Services since 1998. In July, 2014, through the generous support of the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey, we were able to provide case management services in our Supported Employment Services through the creation of a coordinator level staff position. Additionally, we developed a *Soft Skills Training Module* that is used to assist our consumers in understanding some of the not so obvious daily requirements of their work position. It is the intent of this training exercise to assist our consumers of service to better cope with the challenges they will face at their job every day.

Our *Soft Skills Training Module* is divided into the following components:

A. Know Your Workplace (***The Orientation Game***)

1. Drug testing issues
2. Orientation time and place
3. Be well rested
4. Dress for success
5. Policies & procedures
6. Safety first
7. Know your supervisor

B. Connect With Your Stakeholders (***You Can't Have Too Many Friends***)

1. Clean up your act
2. Establish effective communication skills
3. Make friends at work
4. Talk to those at home
5. Keep your employment specialist in the loop

C. Build Bridges Every Day (***Don't Get Too Comfortable***)

1. Don't be a complainer
2. Go to work every day
3. Get the job done
4. Take the initiative
5. Be a flexible team player

Know Your Workplace

The Orientation Game - New employee orientation can be a long and tiresome process. You will meet many people and be given a lot of information in a short period of time. It is important that you not only receive all of this information but also that you understand what is being presented to you. Your Arc of Cumberland County employment specialist has been trained to assist you during this very important phase of your job training. They *may* ask to accompany you to the orientation session(s) and possibly stay for a good portion of it. If they ask to go, let them. They will help you stay focused during the orientation and to organize the information that is presented so that you will be able to effectively use it when you are working at your job.

1. Know the specifics about any drug testing that might be required. This procedure is usually done before the actual orientation meetings. Are there timelines that you have to follow? Let your employment specialist help you map out your drug testing needs. □
2. Confirm the time and place of your orientation. If you are uncomfortable with the idea of going through the orientation by yourself, ask your employment specialist to accompany you (before they ask you). □
3. Get a good night's sleep the night before your orientation and eat a meal before the orientation start time. □
4. Dress for success and make sure you groom appropriately. This is the first time you will meet some of your co-workers and you want to make a good first impression. □
5. You will be given detailed (and hopefully written) information regarding many company policies, including their attendance and employee call out policies. Make sure you and your employment specialist have written copies of all policies that are presented to you. □
6. Confirm whether you need any safety equipment and ask questions if you do not fully understand any safety policies and/or procedures that are presented to you. You may not receive this information until you actually start work but it is important that you understand all safety related training whenever it is presented to you. Again, make sure you go over this information with your employment specialist. □
7. Make sure you identify every supervisory staff at the company that you will work with and meet as many as you can during your orientation. It is important that you know the ways in which they may supervise your work activities (the HR Manager versus your shift supervisor). □

Connect With Your Stakeholders

You can't have too many friends – Stakeholders are people who either can or will support you in your job. They can be members of your family, your personal friends, work supervisors, co-workers, your DVRS counselor, or your Arc of Cumberland County employment specialist – to name a few. It is important that you identify all of these individuals to your Arc of Cumberland County employment specialist when you first meet and that you allow these stakeholders to help you as you learn your job and the rules and regulations associated with the business where you are employed.

1. Clean up your act. Co-workers don't like working near someone that is not well groomed. You should bathe daily, including washing your hair. Men should be clean shaven if their employer does not allow facial hair. Use deodorant daily and brush your teeth at least twice a day – one time being prior to your work shift. Keep your fingernails trimmed and clean (toenails if you are wearing open toed shoes). Make sure that your uniform or work clothes are clean, in good shape, and not wrinkled. Don't take a day off from cleanliness. All it takes is one bad day to make a lasting impression on your co-workers and supervisors. □
2. Use good communication skills at all times. Look people in the eye when they are talking to you and you to them. Always use your eyes and ears first (stop, look, and listen) and think about what has been said to you. Then speak – with a smile on your face. If you are not sure what is expected of you – ask the person speaking to you to please repeat the information. □
3. Make friends at work. Be positive and show your co-workers your best side at all times. Be polite – don't interrupt your co-workers – and learn to take your turn in group conversations. Ask your co-workers how ***they*** are doing before they ask you. □
4. Keep your family and friends involved in your job activities. Most of them have work experiences that can be helpful to you – especially if you are having any problems. □
5. Talk to your Arc of Cumberland County employment specialist. They will be available to assist you on a routine schedule that the two of you will develop and they are also available if you get in a crisis that demands their immediate attention. Keep them in the loop at all times with the “good” news as well as the “not so good” news. □

Build Bridges Every Day

Don't get too comfortable – Working with new people can be tricky but it doesn't have to be unpleasant. In fact, growth in your new job should be an enjoyable experience that will require dedication and some hard work on your part. But you have lots of support available to you – let's start with what you bring to the table in the way of your skills, your attitude, and your dreams.

1. Don't be a complainer – no one likes that person. You may think people are interested in all of your problems but they are not. They are just being polite and waiting for you to stop. Chances are there are others who have considerably more problems than you do. Show everyone your best side instead – they want to work with that positive and enthusiastic person they met at orientation or on your first day on the job. Try to be that person every day. You can do it. □
2. Try to be at work every day. Personal emergencies occur and people do get sick. That's a fact of life. If you take care of yourself – eat right, get plenty of sleep, see a doctor on a regular basis, and avoid some bad habits – you will reduce your chances of having to miss work time. Arriving on the job ten minutes early each workday wouldn't hurt either. □
3. Get the job done. It's that simple. Do your job and don't leave your responsibilities to your co-workers. Don't leave for lunch when you have 5 minutes left on a work assignment. Finish the job. Again, if you are not sure what is expected of you, ask questions. □
4. Take the initiative. If you know what has to be done, be the first person to get started. When you have that job completed, ask for another one. And another. Take charge of your day ...all day ... every day. □
5. Be a flexible team player. Things don't always go as planned for you – or for your boss. Sometimes you will be asked to do things differently (or even new assignments) in order to get the overall job done. When the work is done, go home and enjoy the rest of the day. Tomorrow will be a new challenge and you may be asked to do more new things. Be ready for change and be positive when you see it. □

Work is rarely easy and it is sometimes hard, but it allows you to make new friends, become a stronger person, and gives you the personal power through earning a paycheck. It doesn't define you but it certainly helps you figure out who you are; including those things you like and those that you don't. Take advantage of every opportunity and always believe in yourself. Many other people believe in you also. If they didn't, you probably wouldn't have this job. Good luck.