

# Questions You Can Ask When Shopping for Adult Vocational Services

*--Adapted April, 200 by the Arc of Mecklenburg and the Exceptional Children's Assistance Center from a questionnaire originally developed by Wendy Wood, Ph.D., University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

***As families and individuals with Down syndrome consider providers of vocational/employment services, it can be helpful to have some interview questions to help you determine which provider will most likely meet your needs.***

***As you ask your questions, make notes on the responses you receive to help you make your selection.***

1. Can you describe the people whom your program serves? (Here you are trying to determine if the service provider has a track record of success with meeting the needs of individuals whose needs are similar to yours or those of your family member.)
  
2. How do you identify and choose a job for a person served by you agency? (You want to hear that the provider uses assessments that identify the person's interests and skills when considering the person's potential capability. Keep in mind that with supported employment, the person does not have to be able to perform the duties of the job when he/she starts the job. The goal is for the job coach to have a sense that with training and appropriate supports, the individual can eventually perform the duties of the job to meet the employer's expectations. Ask the provider if they are willing to explain to you how they get to know what the individual's interests, preferences and capabilities are. Research on effective practices indicates that formal or standardized evaluation procedures tend to screen people OUT of services, whereas more informal and personalized approaches uncover strengths and find ways to meet individual needs.)
  
3. What tools does your agency use to market job candidates to prospective employers? (You want to know whether the provider is willing to use creative strategies, such as a portfolio or DVD resume.)
  
4. About how long does it take for you to place an individual in a job? (You are looking for an average amount of time. Each person is different; some people may take very little time; others may take as long as six months to a year. It depends upon the needs and preferences of the individual AND the job development capacity of the service provider.)

5. What different types of jobs has your agency found or helped create? (You want to be sure that the provider has the willingness and capacity to move beyond fast food/food services, landscaping and janitorial positions—particularly if you or your family member does not have a combination of skills and interests that are a match for jobs in those areas.)
6. What is the average wage earned by people served by your agency? What is the salary range of people supported by your agency? (Since the purpose of agency services is to get people jobs, it is reasonable to find out about the pay ranges that people receive. It is legal for people to be paid at level below minimum wage if they are unable to perform their work at a work at a rate within about 80% of the industry standard. This way people with more complex disabilities can be employed in jobs in the community and yet not cause undue hardship to the employer.)
7. What is the average number of hours worked per week by people for whom you find jobs? What is the range of hours worked by people whom you support?
8. How often and in what ways do you follow up with people you place to assess their satisfaction with their employment?
9. What specific kinds of follow up supports can your agency provide after the person becomes employed?
10. If a person gets into a job and then decides that he or she doesn't like the job, what is involved with making a change? (In fact, most people try a variety of jobs before finding something they are good at and enjoy. Even then, it is unlikely that first jobs match ultimate career goals. This is why it is so important to explore paid and volunteer work options during transition years. Feedback from real work experiences is valuable information in search and development.)
11. How long do people typically stay employed in the positions that you help them secure?
12. Do the jobs that you help people secure come with benefits? What are some of those benefits? (Sick leave, holidays, meal discounts, health insurance, vacation days, retirement, product discounts. --Others?)