

Chapter 12

EMPLOYMENT, VOCATIONAL RESOURCES & WORK

Employment can be a significant part of any individual's life. Employment provides for the financial support of the individual and/or their family. It can assist a person in realizing a level of financial freedom as well as achieving a certain degree of self-satisfaction.

Many people with disabilities have great difficulty finding employment. It is critical to have the skills such as writing a resume and going on an interview; looking at what your interests are and understanding the laws such as the ADA and knowing how to look for employment you will enjoy. The Appendix has some of the "how to's" in many of these areas.

There are many factors that may influence the employment outcomes of persons with SCI. Current studies report five years status post injury only 14%-28% of individuals with spinal cord injuries are employed. However, the more education a person has, the more likely they are to find work.

Employment is a reasonable goal for the majority of persons who have been paralyzed by a spinal cord injury. This chapter is a guide to meaningful employment resources. The chapter is lengthy because a person with SCI will need to be his/her own advocate. Career exploration and contact with community resources must begin as soon as possible. Please take a few moments to review the Addendum (p. 10) to locate additional information that may be helpful to you.

The most successful person will be the one who has taken advantage of all resources, mapped out a career strategy and acquired the necessary skills to work. Determination is the foundation upon which vocational planning builds. Hopefully, this section will be a support and a starting place wherever and whenever you find yourself ready to begin. Good Luck!

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

Modeled after Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the ADA provides civil rights protection against discrimination for individuals with disabilities similar to the protection provided in other legislation on the basis of race, gender, age, nationality, and religion. The ADA defines *disability* functionally as any condition that impairs major life activities such as seeing, hearing, walking, or working, and it covers nearly 900 specific disabilities. Under separate sections, it mandates accessibility and accommodation requirements in public facilities, employment, state and local government services, transportation, and communication. The law intends to break down the barriers that exist in these five areas and to provide equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities.

DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES (DRS)

55 Farmington Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105
www.ct.gov/dors/
800-537-2549

Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) PA 11-44 created the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services, bringing together the programs that were formerly known as the Department of Social Services' Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, the Board of Education and Services for the Blind, the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired, the Workers' Rehabilitation Program and the Driver Training Program for People with Disabilities. Based on recent legislative changes, the Bureau is now recognized as the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS).

The new Department creates the opportunity to better align existing resources and will improve services to Connecticut citizens with disabilities. DORS will continue, without interruption, to provide high quality services to support individuals with disabilities to work competitively and live independently.

DORS mission is to maximize opportunities for people in Connecticut with disabilities to live, learn and work independently.

BUREAU OF REHABILITATION SERVICES (BRS)

55 Farmington Avenue 12th Floor
Hartford, CT 06105
1-800-537-2549 (Toll-Free)
(860) 424-4844 (voice)
(860) 424-4850 (Fax)
860-920-7163 (Video Phone)
brs.dss@ct.gov
www.ct.gov/brs

BRS assists persons with significant physical or mental disabilities to prepare for, find or keep a job. The vocational program serves eligible individuals who have a physical or mental condition that has a significant impact on their ability to enter or maintain employment. This includes persons with all types of physical and mental conditions. You may want to go to the following or look at the Frequently Asked Questions below: Applying For Services, Driver Training Program, Employment Division, Personal Assistance Services, School to Work Transition, State Rehabilitation Council, Connect-Ability and the Connecticut Tech Act Project (CTTAP). The website provides a lot of information on each of these programs as well as other information for individuals to return to work or school. Some of the information you can find online is BRS Office Service Area List, Contact Us Form, Office Information & Directions and Staff Telephone Directory.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Vocational Rehabilitation Program?

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is a program of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services which assists persons with significant physical or mental disabilities to prepare for, find or keep a job.

Who is served by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program?

The VR program serves eligible individuals who have physical and/or mental conditions which have a significant impact on their ability to enter or maintain employment. The VR program serves persons with all disabilities except legal blindness. Individuals who are legally blind receive vocational rehabilitation services through the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB), 184 Windsor Ave., Windsor, CT 06095; (860) 602-4000 or 1-800-842-4510.

How do I know if the Vocational Rehabilitation Program can assist me?

Contact the BRS office closest to your home, or call 1-800-537-2549. You will talk to staff that can discuss your situation and answer your questions about vocational rehabilitation. Some BRS offices offer orientation sessions which provide more detailed information about the VR program. It is important to understand vocational rehabilitation before you apply for services.

How do I find out if I am eligible for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program?

If you apply for vocational rehabilitation, you will be asked to provide information about your medical condition and how it affects your ability to find and/or keep a job. With your vocational rehabilitation counselor, you will also review your employment and educational history. This and other information you provide will help your counselor determine if you are eligible for the VR program. To be eligible:

(1) **You must have a disability**, that is, you have a physical or mental condition which poses a substantial barrier to employment; AND

(2) **You must require VR services** to prepare for, find and succeed in employment, with a priority on a paid job in the competitive labor force.

When resources are limited, the law requires that BRS first provide services to persons with the most significant disabilities. This is called an Order of Selection. The significance of a person's disability is determined by looking at the limitations caused by the disability, and the services the person needs as a result. If your disabilities are not considered "significant," you may not receive services, even though you meet the eligibility criteria above. Your VR counselor can give you more detailed information about how this decision is made.

If your counselor needs more specific information about your disability and its impact on your ability to work, you may be asked to participate in medical, psychiatric, psychological or other types of evaluations. If you are asked to have such tests, your counselor will explain why they are necessary, and BRS will pay for them. Your counselor will tell you in writing whether or not you are eligible for vocational rehabilitation. If you are not eligible, you will be told why, and you will receive information on how you may appeal the decision, if you disagree with it. BRS tries to make the eligibility process as speedy and simple as possible. The law requires that your eligibility for VR be determined within 60 days. If this time

frame must go beyond 60 days because important information needed to determine your eligibility is not readily available, your VR counselor will ask you to sign an agreement to extend the time period to determine your eligibility for services.

If you are receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and want to work, your counselor may be able to determine your eligibility for VR services immediately.

What will happen to my benefits if I go back to work?

If you receive disability cash or medical benefits (such as Social Security Disability Insurance, Supplemental Security Income, State Supplement, Medicare and/or Medicaid), you may qualify under rules that would allow you to work and still receive benefits. It is important that you get accurate information, so that you can make good decisions about your vocational goals, your potential earnings and your health insurance needs. You will need to report your earnings to Social Security if you receive a benefit from them. If you have a state benefit like Medicaid or State Supplement, you need to report your earnings to the Department of Social Services. If you receive benefits from both of these programs, you will need to report your earnings to both. For more information on Work Incentives go to the BRS website at www.ct.gov/brs.

CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is an independent advocacy program located at the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities. **CAP** provides advice, advocacy, and, if necessary, legal representation to individuals who have concerns about the services they are receiving from BRS, BESB, independent living centers, and other community rehabilitation programs. **CAP** is located at 60-B Weston St., Hartford, CT 06120; (860) 297-4326 or 1-800-842-7303.

CONNECTICUT TECH ACT PROJECT (CTTAP)

The Tech Act provides federal funds to assist in developing easily available, consumer-responsive systems of access to assistive technology, technology services, and information. The law requires that state-developed systems must, at

a minimum, have in place a process for evaluating and responding to the concerns and suggestions of citizens with disabilities. The mission of the organization is to increase independence and improve the lives of individuals with disabilities through increased access to assistive technology for work, school and community living. The Tech Act focuses on eliminating barriers that prevent consumers of disability services from gaining access to assistive technology. The contact for persons in Connecticut is www.ctrechact.com.

The Tech Act provides a definition of assistive technology that became the standard definition used in all subsequent federal legislation and regulations. In the Tech Act, assistive technology includes devices that are not necessarily computer-based. The definition is broad enough to include “any tool or item that increases, maintains, or improves functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities” in such areas as seating, mobility, daily living, and environmental control. In addition to “high-tech” devices, it includes “low-tech” and “no-tech” devices such as mechanical page-turners, custom-molded seats, single-switch-activated toys, and hand-held magnifiers.

THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY LOAN PROGRAM

The Assistive Technology Loan Program: is administered by the State of Connecticut, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, in partnership with People’s Bank: 860- 424-4871 or 1-800-537-2549 (V/TDD). Assistive technology can give people with disabilities greater independence on the job, in school and in the daily activities of community living. If carefully chosen to meet individual needs, equipment and devices now available can enable persons with disabilities to participate more fully in work, school, and home, recreational and cultural pursuits.

To qualify for a loan, a person must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The amount of a loan depends on the cost of the equipment and the person’s ability to repay. Loans may be repaid over the anticipated useful life of the equipment, up to a maximum of five years. In addition to the new loan program, *The TECH ACT Project* provides other services, including a single point of entry at any one of Connecticut’s five independent living centers (see below) where people can find out more about available technology and get other services to help them acquire it. At these

centers, trained peer technology counselors will work with consumers to obtain product information, apply for loans to acquire technology, and locate other potential funding sources for the purchase of needed equipment and devices.

For information about assistive technology, or to apply for a loan under the Assistive Technology Loan Program, contact the peer technology counselor at the independent living center near you. (See Chapter 7)

JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP ACT

(Excerpt from Connecticut Career Path, SOICC)

In Connecticut, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) is administered by the nine Regional Workforce Development Boards. They provide job training and job-related educational opportunities to state residents. JTPA programs assist school dropouts, welfare recipients, unskilled adults, older workers, displaced homemakers and people who face barriers to employment, such as those who have been laid off or unemployed for a long time. Participants are helped to find affordable childcare and transportation to allow them to participate in programs.

In addition to training in a wide range of vocations, services include remedial education, job-related math and classes to help individuals gain access to jobs. JTPA also offers job-search assistance, career-change services, entrepreneur training and other opportunities. Through this program, people have found such jobs as data processors, computer technicians, health aides and auto mechanics, etc. For more information go to the Regional Workforce Development Boards at <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/rwdb/dir-rwdb.htm>. If you are seeking a job, need advice or simply wish to explore opportunities, contact your nearest Department Of Labor office or the Workforce Development Board.

WORKER'S COMPENSATION – COMMISSION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

The main goal of Rehabilitation Services is to help the injured worker get back to work and regain independence. Prompt and well-planned vocational rehabilitation will prevent excessive losses sustained by both employees and employers. The injured worker will be prepared for return to work sooner than

otherwise might be possible. Each person's program will be different, based on each person's needs. Services may include: aptitude testing, evaluation, counseling, job seeking skills, job development and formal training

Rehabilitation Services offers financial incentives for employers to take the time to train injured workers to return to the work force with new skills and abilities. Training may involve hands-on learning for real jobs that allows employees to teach individuals their own methods and procedures in an active business environment. Just about any job, from unskilled to skilled, can be prepared for using this approach.

You can apply by calling the Worker's Commission District Office nearest your home. A Counseling Coordinator assigned to that office would answer any questions you have about Rehabilitation Services and will send you an application, brochure and return envelope. When your application is received, your case will be assigned to a Coordinator, and you will then be scheduled for an interview to find out whether you are eligible for services.

Worker's Compensation Commission, Rehabilitation Services, 21 Oak St. 4th Floor, Hartford, CT 06106, call 860 493-1500 or go to <http://wcc.state.ct.us/>.

CONNECTICUT WORKS

One can choose from a wide array of self-service options for a self-directed job search or to retrieve information on the occupations most in demand. Group services include workshops on managing change, preparing a resume, job hunting techniques, interviewing tips and becoming an entrepreneur. If additional help is needed, counselors are available for one-on-one assistance in testing and job counseling. The One-Stop Career Centers have telephones and copying machines available for use. They also offer a variety of resource materials such as magazines, newspapers and books that have information on occupations, the economy and labor market trends.

CONNECTICUT SMALL BUSINESS CENTER

The Connecticut Small Business Development Center (ct-clic.com/business/BizCenter) is a statewide organization funded through a matching grant from the Federal Small Business Administration to The University of Connecticut. The major goal of the Center is to provide professional counseling and training programs in all functional areas of business management, including the business plan. These services are provided by the Small Business Development Center staff, which consists of professional counselors, faculty, and members of the business community.

Consulting – The Small Business Development Center offers individual consulting in such areas as preventive feasibility, marketing, record keeping, financial planning, production, and general management for small businesses engaged in retail, wholesale, manufacturing, and service-oriented functions.

Continuing Education – The Small Business Development Center offers workshops, conferences, and courses all geared to the needs of your business. Working with professionals in business, trade associations, and colleges, the CSBDC provides expert instruction on specific and varied business topics. Courses range from advanced presentations aimed at furthering the growth potential of established companies to introductory courses for those just starting out in business.

Loan Packaging – Our unique programs provide professionals who are experts in management and financial assistance. Combining our staff's resources with other professional in business, the CSBDC can assist you in financial planning and loan packaging.

ADULT EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Many additional programs are available for persons who are at least 16 years old and no longer enrolled in high school. These programs allow you to finish the requirements of your high school diploma - at no cost to you! They include the following: General Educational Development (GED) Test, Adult High School Credit Diploma Program, External Diploma Program, Regional Vocational-Technical School System Adult Credit Diploma Program. One of these programs may meet your needs as an adult learner. Several provide credit for prior academic, work or military experience and may offer independent study projects.

Other adult education program offerings include: Basic academic skills courses in reading, writing, mathematics and oral communication; English for adults with difficulty in speaking, writing, reading or understanding the English language; citizenship preparation for foreign-born adults and general interest courses for life enrichment or career advancement. For further information, contact your local school system or the State Department of Education Bureau of Adult Education and Training at 860- 638-4167 or go to www.sde.ct.gov.

BENEFITS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WHO WORK

It is possible for people with disabilities receiving Social Security or supplemental security income (SSI) to work and still receive monthly cash payments and Medicare or Medicaid. This is called “work incentives.” The rules are different for Social Security and SSI beneficiaries. Following are the rules that apply under each program. For more copies, or additional materials on work incentives, call any Social Security office. Ask for the work incentives expert at the social security administration/work incentive coordinators. For filing applications or questions about individual claims, calls must be directed to the general Social Security number, 1-800-2345-SSA or utilize the website at Social security (socialsecurity.gov).

The Red Book – The Red Book serves as a general reference source about the employment-related provisions of Social Security Disability Insurance and the Supplemental Security Income Programs for educators, advocates, rehabilitation professionals, and counselors who serve people with disabilities. This resource includes an overview of employment supports and how they help people with disabilities and a section on health care and Medicaid protections for people with disabilities who are working or want to work.

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/redbook.htm>

WORKING FROM HOME

www.ChamberofCommerce.com. The number of people who choose to leave corporate America to run a home-based business continues to grow. It’s the ideal situation for people who need additional flexibility or for those who have

disabilities. Even people who receive Social Security can return to work with the help of the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work program.

For people with disabilities working from home makes perfect sense – the workspace and environment is set up with accommodations for an individual's particular disability. Working at home can change your life and is a very rewarding experience – as long as you can abide by the basic rules of running a successful business from home. In order to stay on track, take a look at these helpful tips that can help you run your home-based business smoothly.

- **Structure Your Day:** Turn your day into one that mimics what you had when you worked in an office setting. Create structure so each day is similar to the next: establish a start and finish time and try to eliminate trips to the refrigerator or browsing online at things unrelated to work. Online task managers like Outlook can assist you with keeping track of whether or not you're making progress and headed for greater success. Set goals that are reminder of what you need to do each day.
- **Motivate Yourself:** Take the time to sit down and set goals for yourself and your business. You no longer have reviews or progress reports, so it's essential bigger than completing your to-do list – you also have to set goals that motivate you to succeed. Once a goal is met, further motivate yourself through rewards.
- **Take Time Out for Good Behavior:** When you work in a home-based setting, it can be difficult to turn yourself off and stop working when you know that there is ample work to accomplish. Take advantage of the flexibility you have and treat you on occasion. While it's tempting to work all the time, you need to know when to relax. As your business runs more and more smoothly, reward yourself. It's important that you don't get burned out.
- **Network:** Find ways to network with other home-based business owners. This is a great way to find leads and potential clients. Spending time with others who also work from home gives you additional support and exposes you to individuals who may help you build your business. There are lots of ways to market your local business on Facebook – so don't forget to take advantage of social media as you network.
- **Organize Your Family Time:** If you have children at home, you may realize the hours you work are based around their needs. Many people opt to save

on childcare expenses, but this can lead to hours away from work. Consider hiring help so you are guaranteed time to work and avoid distractions.

When it's just you and your computer, the distractions of being at home can be hard to ignore. But for a person with disabilities, working from home can change your life. Running a home-based business can give you a chance at another career and allows you to have a job that fits your needs.

QUICK REFERENCES

Department of Labor - Information on employment for employers and employees. <http://www.dol.gov/>. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has nine regional offices around country.

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) - Information related to job accommodations, the ADA and employability of people with disabilities. <http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/>

Partners in Employment - A six hour self-directed e-learning course on how to find a job, write a resume, participate in an interview, and plan for your career. For a preview of the course and registration information: www.partneronlinecourses.com/partners-in-employment

The Red Book - The Red Book serves as a general reference source about the employment-related provisions of Social Security Disability Insurance and the Supplemental Security Income Programs for educators, advocates, rehabilitation professionals, and counselors who serve people with disabilities. This resource includes an overview of employment supports and how they help people with disabilities and a section on health care and Medicaid protections for people with disabilities who are working or want to work. <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/redbook.htm>

Social Security Administration - The Social Security Administration (SSA) pays retirement, disability and survivors benefits to workers and their families, administers the Supplemental Security Income program and issues Social Security numbers. This web site provides comprehensive information on Social Security benefits and programs and how to access them. <http://www.ssa.gov>

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) - News and information on equal employment in the United States, including information for employers, research, statistics, laws and regulations. <http://www.eeoc.gov>

Disability.Blog - The official blog of www.disability.gov features weekly posts from subject matter experts who address important topics for people with disabilities, their families and others. Aligning with the mission of its managing partner, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, Disability.gov uses its blog to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce and communities nationwide. For example, the site's No Boundaries Employment Series recognizes the diverse skills and talents individuals with disabilities bring to the workplace. Popular guest blogs have also covered disability benefits, invisible (or "hidden") disabilities and personal stories from people with disabilities. If you would like to be a guest blogger on Disability.Blog, please email your name, contact information and suggested topic to guestblogs@dol.gov for consideration.

Information on Finding a Job - *"Where the Jobs Are"* (Excerpt from Job Search Strategies for the Disabled) - Although workplace attitudes toward people with disabilities are changing, the unemployment rate among the job-aged disabled population is more than 60 percent, as compared with less than 10 percent among the general population. Two out of three people with disabilities are not working. And of those, two out of three *want* to work. With roughly \$200 billion in benefits being paid out each year to nonworking people with disabilities, it just doesn't make sense for businesses to say they can't afford to accommodate people with disabilities.

The following three publications are considered to be the bibles for labor market research:

- ***The Guide for Occupational Exploration*** is a user-friendly reference work written in nontechnical language. It divides the world of work into 12 major interest areas, which are divided into 66 work groups, and then into subgroups with specific job titles.
- ***The Occupational Outlook Handbook*** offers full-length descriptions of some 200 jobs, with an outline of working conditions, salary data, and growth projections.
- ***The Dictionary of Occupational Titles*** is self-explanatory.

These publications are widely available in libraries, or they can be purchased through the BLS Chicago sales office (312-353-1880). The Bureau of Labor Statistics also conducts and publishes many wage and salary surveys, another area worth studying before you begin your job search.

It takes some people a great deal of time and effort to find a job they enjoy. Others may walk right into an ideal employment situation. Don't be discouraged if you have to pursue many leads. Friends, neighbors, teachers, and counselors may know of available jobs in your field of interest. Read the want ads. Consult state employment service offices and private or nonprofit employment agencies, or contact employers directly.

WHERE TO FIND A JOB

Parents, friends, and neighbors, school or college placement services, classified ads, local and out-of-town newspaper professional journals, trade magazines, employment agencies and career consultants, state employment service offices, internet networks and resources, civil service announcements (Federal, State, local), labor unions, professional associations (State and local chapters), libraries and community centers, women's counseling and employment programs, youth programs and employers.

Want ads – The “Help Wanted” ads in newspapers list hundreds of jobs. Be aware that the classified ads sometimes do not give some important information. Keep the following in mind if you are using want ads: answer ads promptly, since openings may be filled quickly, even before the ad stops appearing in the paper, follow the ads diligently. Check them every day, as early as possible, to give you an advantage. Beware of “no experience necessary” ads. These ads often signal low wages, poor working conditions, or straight commission work, keep a record of all ads to which you have responded, including the specific skills, educational background, and personal qualifications required for the position.

Internet networks and resources – A variety of information on jobs and job search resources and techniques is currently available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Internet resources include Usenet newsgroups, Telnet sites, and World Wide Web resources. In addition to the listings of companies, professional societies, academic institutions, and government agencies, it is possible to search

employment ad and career information databases directly. Available information includes government reports, salary surveys, job listings, and even “networking” contact within organizations. You can find out about companies or academic institutions directly, as well as the cities in which they are located. When searching employment ad databases, it is sometimes possible to post your resume on-line or send it to an employer via electronic mail. Some sources provide this service free of charge once you have access to the Internet. However, be careful that you are not going to incur any additional charges for postings or updates. No single network or resource will contain all information on employment or career opportunities, so be prepared to search for what you need. Job listings may be posted by field or discipline so it is best to begin your search using topics or “keywords.” It may be helpful to consult a reference book such as *The Internet Yellow Pages*, which should be available in most libraries.

Public employment service – The State employment service sometimes called the Job Service operates in coordination with the U.S. Employment Service of the U.S. Department of Labor. About 1,700 local offices, also known as employment service centers, help job seekers find jobs and help employers find qualified workers at no cost to themselves. To find the office nearest you, look in the State government telephone listings under “Job Service” or “Employment.”

A computerized job network system-*America’s Job Bank*-run by the U.S. Department of Labor, lists approximately 100,000 job openings each week. Wide ranges of jobs are listed all over the country, and most are full-time jobs in the private sector. Job seekers can access these listings through the use of a personal computer in any local public employment service office, as well as in several hundred military installations. In addition, some State employment agencies have set up *America’s Job Bank* in other settings, including libraries, schools, shopping malls, and correctional facilities. *America’s Job Bank* is also available on-line through the Internet and can be accessed at the following World Wide Web address: <http://www.ajb.dni.us>

Federal job information – For information about employment with the U.S. Government, call the Federal Job Information Center’s *Career America Connection*, operated by the Office of Personnel Management. The phone numbers is 202-606-2700 or write to: the Federal Job Information Center, 1900 E St. NW., Room 1416, Washington, DC 20415 or at: <http://www.fedworld.gov>.

Private employment agencies – These agencies can also be very helpful. Most agencies operate on a commission basis, with the fee dependent upon a successful match. You or the hiring company will have to pay a fee for the matching service. Find out the exact cost and who is responsible for paying it before using the service. While employment agencies can help you save time and contact employers who otherwise may be difficult to locate, in some cases, your costs may outweigh the benefits. Consider any guarantee they offer when figuring the cost.

College career planning and placement office – College placement offices facilitate matching job openings with suitable job seekers. You can set up schedules and use available facilities for interviews with recruiters or scan lists of part-time, temporary, and summer jobs maintained in many of these offices. You also can get counseling, testing, and job search advice and take advantage of their career resource library. Here you also will be able to identify and evaluate your interests, work values, and skills; attend workshops on such topics as job search strategy, resume writing, letter writing, and effective interviewing; critique drafts of resumes and videotapes of mock interviews; explore files of resumes and references; and attend job fairs conducted by the office.

Community agencies – Many nonprofit organizations offer counseling, career development, and job placement services, generally targeted to a particular group, such as women, youth, minorities, ex-offenders, or older workers. Many communities have career counseling, training, placement, and support services for employment. These programs are sponsored by a variety of organizations, including churches and synagogues, nonprofit organizations, social service agencies, the State employment service, and vocational rehabilitation agencies. Many cities have commissions that provide services for these special groups.

Employers – It is possible to apply directly to employers without a referral. You may locate a potential employer in the *Yellow Pages*, in directories of local chambers of commerce, and in other directories that provide information about employers. When you find an employer you are interested in, you can send a cover letter and resume or file a job application even if you don't know for certain that an opening exists.

JOB SEARCH GUIDE – STRATEGIES FOR PROFESSIONALS

The U.S. Department of Labor pamphlet offers advice on determining your job skills, organizing your job search, writing a resume, and making the most of an interview. *Job Search Guide: Strategies For Professionals*, another U.S. Department of Labor publication, also discusses specific steps that job seekers can follow to identify employment opportunities. This publication includes sections on handling your job loss, managing your personal resources, assessing your skills and interests, researching the job market, conducting the job search and networking, writing resumes and cover letters, employment interviewing and testing, and sources of additional information. Check with your State employment service office, or order a copy of these publications from the U.S. Government Printing Office. Phone: (202) 512-1800 for price and ordering information.

APPLYING FOR A JOB

Resumes and application forms: Resumes and application forms are two ways to provide employers with written evidence of your skills and knowledge. Most information is common to both the resume and application form, but the way the information is presented differs. Some employers prefer a resume while others require an application form.

There are many ways of organizing a resume. Depending upon the job you are applying for, you should choose the format that best highlights your skills, training, and experience. It may be helpful to look at different examples. Examples can be found in a variety of books and publications available through public libraries or career guidance centers. Also, ask someone to read your resume and suggest ways to improve it.

In completing an application form, make sure you fill it out properly and follow instructions. In general, the same type of information is included on an application form as in a resume. Don't omit any information asked for and be sure to check that all information provided is correct.

WHAT GOES INTO A RESUME?

A resume summarizes your qualifications and employment history. It

usually is required when applying for managerial, administrative, professional, or technical positions. Although there is no set format, a resume should contain the following information: Name, address, telephone number, and employment objective. State the type of work or specific job you are seeking, your education, including school name and address, dates of attendance, curriculum, and highest grade completed or degree awarded, experience, (paid or volunteer). Include the following for each job: Job title, name and address of employer, and dates of employment. Describe your job duties, special skills, knowledge of machinery, proficiency in foreign languages, honors received, awards, membership in organizations, etc. and note on your resume “references are available upon request.”

- **Cover letters.** A cover letter should be sent with a resume or application form, as a way to introduce you to employers. It should capture the employer’s attention, follow a business letter format, and should generally include the following information: the name and address of the specific person to whom the letter is addressed, the reason for your interest in the company or position. Your main qualifications for the position (in brief), a request for an interview and your phone number.
- **Interviewing:** An interview gives you the best opportunity to show an employer your qualifications, so it pays to be well prepared. Each interview is different, however. The following provides some helpful information. Practice an interview with a friend or relative and arrive before the scheduled time of your interview.

JOB INTERVIEW TIPS

- **Preparation:** Learn about the organization, have a specific job or jobs in mind, review your qualifications for the job, prepare answers to broad questions about yourself, review your resume.
- **Personal Appearance:** Be well groomed, dress appropriately, do not chew gum or have a cell phone visible.

THE INTERVIEW

Answer each question concisely, respond promptly and use good manners. Learn the name of your interviewer and shake hands as you meet, use proper English and avoid slang, be cooperative and enthusiastic, ask questions about the

position and the organization, thank the interviewer, and follow up with a letter.

Test (if employer gives one): Listen closely to instructions and follow them exactly, read each question carefully, write legibly and clearly and budget your time wisely and don't dwell on one question.

Information to Bring to an Interview: Social Security number, driver's license number and/or other identification and at least one copy of your resume. Although not all employers require applicants to bring a resume, you should be able to furnish the interviewer with information about your education, training, and previous employment.

References: An employer usually requires three references. Get permission from people before using their names, and make sure they will give you a good reference. Try to avoid using relatives. For each reference, provide the following information: Name, address, telephone number, and job title.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- *Computer Resources for People with Disabilities: A Guide to Exploring Today's Assistive Technology.* The Alliance for Technology Access, Hunter House, 1994.
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Job-Hunting and Career Resources for 50+ in Connecticut (AARP)

Today's job market can be challenging for anyone, but for workers age 50 and older, finding a job, or remaining in the workforce past traditional retirement age, can pose unique challenges. Consider this formidable statistic: Nationally, jobseekers age 55 and up spend an average of 46 weeks looking for work, as compared to 34 weeks for younger jobseekers. That is nearly a year, on average, of unemployment. And the outlook for older workers in Connecticut — the 7th "oldest" state in the nation — is no better.

AARP believes that one's possibilities should never be limited by their age and that, in fact, age and experience can expand your possibilities, whether they be personal or professional. Here in Connecticut, AARP is working with the Governor and state lawmakers to help workers age 50+ and the long-term unemployed get back to work, including support for legislation that would help prevent employers from excluding the unemployed in advertised job postings. A prohibition against this practice is a good step toward reducing the barriers faced by job seekers in a difficult economy and highly competitive job market.

Whether it is about staying in the workforce or finding work when suddenly faced with unemployment, the issues of employment and financial security are front and center for AARP members and their families in Connecticut. AARP is dedicated to supporting older jobseekers through public policy changes like the one above, and through free resources to help individuals navigate career changes, regardless of their circumstances. Below are some free or low-cost career and job-hunting resources that can help:

ONLINE RESOURCES

Check out www.aarp.org/workresources for resources to help you start a business or use your experience to find a job you may like. The site offers expert information to help you update your résumé, expand your network, and enhance your interview skills. AARP's job search tool, powered by Indeed.com, lets you search thousands of job listings. Also, AARP's Life Reimagined for Work, powered by LinkedIn, aims to help experienced professionals connect to more satisfying careers, and connects job seekers to companies that have signed a pledge stating they value experienced workers and are committed to hiring them.

The Connecticut Department of Labor has a wealth of local information and job search tools, including: guidance and information on interviews, résumé development, and preparing for job/career fairs; an on-line database of nationally posted job openings; job fair listings and information on finding a career that is right for you, learning about occupations, searching for education and training, and searching for jobs and employers.

IN-PERSON RESOURCES

American Job Centers (formerly CTWorks Career Centers) offer services to job seekers at no cost, in convenient locations throughout the state. Many of the Centers are affiliated with the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), a federally funded program that matches low income older adults ages 55+ with jobs in the private or non-profit sector. For a list of Center locations and available services, visit www.ct.gov/dol.

Job clubs and career workshops. The American Job Centers mentioned above also offer free workshops, many geared specifically for older job seekers. Topics vary by Center. Also check with your local library to find out if it offers workshops or hosts job clubs. You may also check with local nonprofits or your place of worship.

Employee assistance programs at work. If you're currently employed, find out if you have access to an employee assistance program. It may offer career counseling or coaching.

See more at: <http://states.aarp.org/job-hunting-and-career-resources-in-connecticut-sc-ct-wp-money/#sthash.F2ohPBOk.dpuf>.

Department of Labor <http://social.dol.gov/blog/category/disabilities/> Blogs
March, 2014

An Ordinary, Extraordinary Day “For millions of workers around the nation, March 24 was just another Monday, the first day of another week of work. But at the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, March 24 was a special day: the day our rules expanding employment opportunities for qualified workers with disabilities and protected groups of veterans went into effect.”

Additional articles included:

- [*Budgeting for Equality*](#)
- [*Promoting Business and Workplace Equality for ALL Diverse Segments*](#)
- [*A Collaborative Pathway to an Accessible Future*](#)
- [*Planning for a Year of Disability Employment Action*](#)
- [*The Thrill of Being in the Game*](#)
- [*Civil Rights in America: We Rise Together*](#)
- [*The Benefits of Striking Out*](#)
- [*A Powerful Message for Youth with Disabilities*](#)