

MAY 2021

Discovery: Exploring Neighborhood and Community Resources

Overview/Summary:

Exploring an employment seeker's neighborhood and community is a key element of the first phase of discovery. Discovery is a process of customized employment which involves observation and exploration through active participation in various community, home, and work settings that match the individual's career interests, support needs, family resources, and skills (Hall et al., 2018).

Building Neighborhood and Community Resources

Understanding the importance of what resources exist in a employment seeker's community and how or with whom they are connected is critical to offering insight into who this person is and where they spend time. At this phase of discovery, it is not about job development, it is about relationships, where people have a sense of place, and to build and leverage social capital.

What Does Identify and Explore the Community to Fidelity Mean?

Fidelity is the process of implementing practices in a consistent manner. Hall et al., (2018) developed a Discovery Fidelity Scale (DFS) in order to standardize the practices and processes of discovery. The DFS outlines the "acceptable", "good", and "exemplary" practices for each process of discovery. When implementing the process of exploring neighborhood and community resources, the fidelity scale outlines acceptable, good, and exemplary examples for this process:

Acceptable: The employment specialist explores the employment seeker's neighborhood and area by walking with and talking to neighbors, business owners, and other knowledgeable community members.

Good: The employment specialist conducts neighborhood and area visits at times necessary to meet with key people, including evenings and weekends.

Exemplary: The employment specialist includes others in several walks in the neighborhood and community areas to learn about it from different perspectives.

Focus Areas of Community and Neighborhood

When exploring neighborhood and community resources during the discovery process, more effort is required than simply looking up what is immediately surrounding the employment seeker's home. Understanding a person's connection to their community can be expanded by considering the following areas:

1. **People:** People are the most important community resource. People are often what connect us to the other resources within a community.
 - When you first meet a job seeker and their support team, make sure to note every person that is mentioned and briefly inquire as to their relationship with the job seeker. If it makes sense, you may involve them later in the discovery process.
2. **Associations:** Associations are groups that are less structured and often run by volunteers. Does the employment seeker belong to any associations or memberships? What opportunities exist? Many people belong to associations such as, car enthusiasts or homebrewing.
 - Associations may be social/recreational, business/professional, or educational in nature and can develop around specific/common interests related to neighborhoods or special events.
 - Associations are important because membership provides insight into a person's interests, commitments, and relationships.
3. **Community Institutions:** Community institutions are formal groups or organizations.
 - Examples include schools, churches, government agencies, and hospitals.
 - a. **Civic Resources:** Subsets of institutions.
 - Typically, civic resources are connected to an institution but have a unique function or focus. Examples of these include libraries, parks and recreation, public transportation, and municipalities.
4. **Businesses:** Business are places of employment within a community.
 - Businesses can include employers of all sizes, including small, home-based businesses that may not be clearly marked or identified such as a neighborhood pre-school or construction company for example.

Additional Considerations:

Identifying an employment seeker's community may include what services or amenities they commonly use, such as a local coffee shop, a dog park, a barber, a grocery store, or a recreational center. Ask yourself, "where is the employment seeker a 'regular'"? What if an employment seeker does not have a strong connection to their community? Start small and find ways to help connect to others based on common interests, NOT based on disability groups.

Cite Us!

Jones-Parkin, T & Snyder, A. (2021). Discovery: exploring neighborhood and community mapping [Fact sheet]. <https://ceiutah.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CEI-may-factsheet.pdf>

References

Hall, S., Keeton, B., Cassidy, P., Iovannone, R., & Griffin, C. (2018). Discovery fidelity scale. *Atlanta, GA: Center for Social Capital*. <https://www.griffinhammis.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/DFS-December-2018-4-2.pdf>