

Natural Supports and Social Inclusion in the Workplace
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Photos Courtesy of Quinn Barbour / Institute for Community Inclusion



Presented by:

- Melanie Jordan
 Training Associate
 Institute for Community Inclusion/UMass Boston
melanie.jordan@umb.edu

- Suzan Schuetz
 Program Supervisor
 ACT Career Services
 Columbia, MO
sschuetz@actservices.org




So, what are *natural supports*...



Refers to assistance in the workplace that is typically available and/or perceived as usual

Are natural supports always people?



Typical Workplace Supports

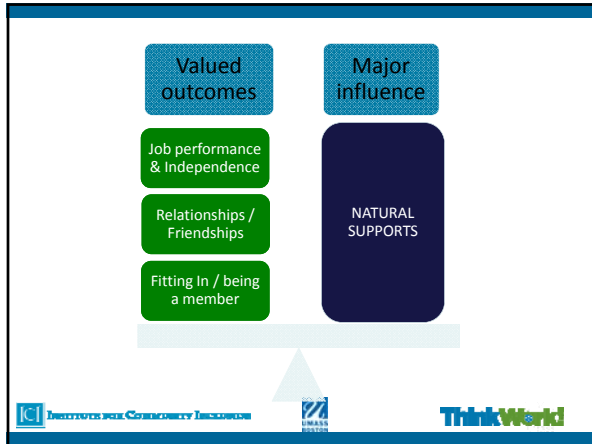
- Training & Orientation
- Friendships
- Supervision & Problem Solving
- Advocacy / Human Resources
- Transportation
- Social Events / Down Time
- Career Development / Advancement

How do you find out what is available on site?









Natural supports and social inclusion are important because:

Choose all that apply

- a. They reduce dependence on costly long-term employment success.
- b. They increase the likelihood of long-term employment success.
- c. People with disabilities will not become integrated and accepted into the workplace culture without natural supports.
- d. A fundamental goal of community employment is expanding the ability of society to support and include people with disabilities.

Logos for ICI, UMass Lowell, and ThinkWorld are at the bottom.

It's simple?!

Natural supports can occur automatically in the workplace, or can be facilitated by a job coach.

1. Use what is there.
2. Adapt what is there.
3. Supplement what is there.

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Natural supports begin:

- Once an individual has mastered the tasks of a job and is stable.
- The first day a person starts a job.
- When the job developer first meets with an employer.
- During the first encounter agency staff have with an individual.

It's never too soon to start planning for (and using) natural supports!

- Career planning
- Job matching
- Job design and restructuring
- On-the-job supports



Natural supports mean that people with disabilities should not be placed in jobs unless the employer can provide most of the support.



Supervisors & Co-workers

- Direct instruction & feedback to worker
- Give them "permission"
- Put them at ease
- Discuss support needs but don't risk disclosure
- Get out of the way!
- Ensure equal treatment in workplace
- Open communication with supervisor & co-workers
- Your modeling is POWERFUL



What Do You Think?


You facilitate natural supports well, but...

- Does that mean social inclusion will happen?
- Will the person feel like s/he fits into the workplace?
- Will co-workers perceive the new employee as "one of them"?



Work Culture & Social Inclusion

- Range of people who work here?
- Do people socialize at work (lunch/breaks) or after work (sports, meals)
- What are social rules & norms?
- How much difference is:
 - Allowed?
 - Accepted?
 - Appreciated?



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"Our office coffee machine makes 50 different flavors. That counts as workplace diversity, doesn't it?"

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Workplace Inclusion Checklist



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What social rituals take place at your workplace?



So many opportunities...

Social rituals	Daily routines	Miscellaneous
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate cards for BDs, births, deaths, farewells • Celebrations, (onsite and offsite) • Holiday decorating • Pot luck lunches • Super Bowl / sports squares • Morale events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First one in makes coffee • Clean up kitchen, break rooms, supply closet, conference rooms • Clean out fridge periodically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committees • Work groups • In-service trainings • Newsletters • Community service • Donation drives

Let's hear from Suzan about her experience facilitating *Social Inclusion*



Seek and you shall find!










Teaching Social Skills

- Seek out common ground
- Teach greetings, workers' names & small talk to fit the work culture. Then reinforce positive interactions.
- Look for ways to involve worker in food / drink customs - Join celebrations - Bring refreshments
Make coffee - Join committees
- Help person know when to ask for **and offer help**

Workplace Culture Survey







Coffee Breaks and Birthday Cakes: Evaluating Workplace Cultures to Develop Natural Supports for Employees with Disabilities



Book by David Hagner

Downloadable file for \$20

<https://www.trn-store.com/catalog/coffee-breaks-and-birthday-cakes-evaluating-workplace-cultures-develop-natural-supports>



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The biggest barrier to the use of natural supports and social inclusion in employment is:

- a. The unwillingness of employers to provide necessary supports.
- b. The significance of the disability of individuals being placed on the job.
- c. Lack of acceptance of people with disabilities by co-workers.
- d. Programs that work with people with disabilities not using strategies and methods that promote natural supports and social inclusion.



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Final Thoughts? Questions?



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In Conclusion

- Think widely about natural supports --- so much more than just people
- Never too early
- Invite workplace interaction – be deliberate, diminish concerns, build comfort
- Social rituals are a great way to integrate new workers into the culture
- Stay out of the way!



- Thanks for participating!
- Enjoy the rest of the conference.



