2013 ACRE COMPETENCIES: EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

ACRE

Association of Community
Rehabilitation Educators

Understanding the ACRE Vision for Employment Services

ACRE members believe that the quality of employment services to individuals with disabilities can be improved by ensuring that the training available to provider staff is of a high quality. To quantify high quality, ACRE uses 4 domains (following APSE's domain model) and 38 competencies to evaluate curricula and training approaches, as well as requiring documentation of trainer qualifications and experience.

Establishing Competencies

APSE (the Association of People Supporting Employment First) has promoted community employment for people with disabilities since 1988. APSE assembled nationally recognized experts to establish the first formal set of supported employment competencies for employment providers in February 2001 (by Flippo, Rogan, Geary, Martin Luecking, Keul, Harrison, Harvey, Dutton, Drouet, Niemiec, McDonald, Killam, Quinn, DiLeo, Hoffman, and the NJ APSE Chapter).

In collaboration with APSE, ACRE refined and expanded the APSE competencies so that they would extend beyond supported employment. The expanded competencies include multiple approaches to employment for people with disabilities, including competitive employment, Customized Employment, supported employment, and transitional employment.

The first ACRE competencies were released in 2004 (by G. Brandenburg, L. Bandy, L. Ford, L. Fussell, S. Hartnett, L Holloway, D. Martin-Lueking, W. Quarles, C. Sax, P. Todd, J. Trach, D. Wilkerson). The 2013 competencies reflect recent revisions in the APSE competencies, as well as those made by the ACRE Competency Committee and Board members (see names below).

ACRE Certificate Programs and Curriculum Review Process

ACRE competencies are the basis for two levels of employment services certification: the Basic Employment Services Certificate (a minimum of 40 hours of training), and the Professional Employment Services Certificate (40 additional hours of training, plus a minimum of one year of experience in the field). Based on the certification level, each competency is assigned either knowledge (K) or skill (S) as a requirement of the outcome of the training.

Organizations wishing to provide training that bears the ACRE seal of approval must become ACRE members and submit their curriculum to ACRE for review. Instructions for submission are located on the ACRE website: www.acreducators.org

ACRE acknowledges the following people for their work to develop the 2013 competencies:

Judi Goldston, *Committee Chairperson*
Bethany Bilodeau
Gayann Brandenburg
Rebecca Cook
Vicki Ferrara
Laurie Ford
Liz Fussell
Cecilia Gandolfo
Martha Garber
Melanie Jordan
Sheila Mahon
Amy Scott
Dale Verstegen

Domain 1: Application of Core Values and Principles to Practice

Basic Level	Professional Level	Competency
K	K	1. Differences between traditional segregated employment and contemporary community models of employment, with emphasis on equal access in the general workforce, zero exclusion, and full inclusion.
K	S	2. Underlying values, ethical guidelines, definitions, and philosophy of community employment: a) Define "normalization" (social role valorization) and its guiding principles. b) Identify how support strategies can enhance or detract from the image of a worker with a disability. c) Discuss the benefits of integration at the workplace for people with disabilities. d) Differentiate between individual and group approaches to employment. e) Identify strategies for incorporating disability etiquette instruction in employment settings specific to individuals. f) Discuss the use of person-first language in all interactions, including those with employers. g) Discuss multicultural impacts and considerations in services delivered.
K	K	3. Informed choice, self-determination, and active participation throughout the employment process, emphasizing job-seeker strengths, interests, and talents.
K	S	4. Best practices in community employment services, from intake to follow-along: a) Motivational interviewing techniques b) Customized employment c) Use of natural supports d) Supported employment e) Evidence-based practices f) Transition and school-to-work practices
K	K	5. Rights and responsibilities of individuals in community employment.
K	K	6. History and status of community employment services in your state.
K	K	7. State-specific and federal legislation, regulations, and legal decisions related to community employment, including but not limited to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and amendments, Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the Rehabilitation Act, Ticket to Work And Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Fair Labor Standards Act and other Department of Labor (DOL) regulations, Olmstead as well as the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) and its role, and the Employment First Initiatives.
K	K	8. State/federal funding streams that support employment services (e.g., vocational rehabilitation (VR), mental health, developmental disabilities, Medicaid waivers, Ticket to Work).
K	K	9. Local and national resources including the discrimination complaint process in your state as it relates to the ADA and amendments, Independent Living Centers, and Protection & Advocacy networks.
K	S	10. Professionalism for employment specialists: a) Interact with job seekers, family members, employers, potential employers, and other providers in a respectful, non-judgmental, and professional manner. b) Dress in a manner that fits the environment and occasion. c) Write reports, case notes, emails, etc. that are purposeful and concise while also neat, objective and easily understood.

Domain 2: Individualized Assessment and Employment / Career Planning

Basic Level	Professional Level	COMPETENCY
S	S	11. Assisting job seekers with making a decision about disclosure considering both the risks and benefits of disclosing and providing approaches to disclosing.
K	K	12. Best employment practices for youth with disabilities transitioning from school, including transition into post-secondary programs.
K	K	13. Effectiveness and limitations of traditional vocational evaluation for people with significant disabilities.
S	S	14. Personal career profile development: a) Encourage the active participation and decision-making of the person served in the career planning process. b) Interview the individual and others familiar with his/her abilities and work history. c) Identify the impact of an individual's cultural and social background, including socio-economic status, race, gender, ethnicity, native and spoken language, and sexual identity, as well as his/her role in the family, religious organization, and community. d) Review individual's records and collect pertinent information related to employment. e) Observe the individual in his/her current daily routines and environments. f) Explore non-work needs that may impact the achievement and maintenance of employment, as well as work-life balance (money management/banking, social/recreational needs once employed, getting up and ready for work, and scheduling appointments so they don't conflict with the work schedule). g) Assess the individual's preferred style of learning, environmental tolerances, and preferred modes of communication, as well as their expressed interests in jobs, careers, or specific tasks. h) Integrate relevant employment information regarding each person served into a vocational profile. i) Use informational interviewing, job shadowing, and other work-based opportunities to explore careers and identify possible job tasks.
S	S	15. Situational assessments, paid work trials, job tryouts, volunteer work, and job shadowing, including assistive technology and other accommodations: a) Develop career exploration sites aligned with the interests and desires of each individual. b) Assess needed environmental or job-task modifications for the person to succeed in his/her choices of employment settings. c) Assess the availability of community supports and transportation. d) Conduct situational assessments, paid work trials, job tryouts, volunteering, and job shadowing. e) Understand Department of Labor guidelines regarding unpaid work. f) Identify techniques and resources to address business concerns about liability risks associated with situational assessments/job tryouts.
K	S	16. Social Security benefits and the impact of wages on Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security, Disability Insurance (SSDI), Medicaid, and Medicare: a) Understand the differences between SSI and SSDI. b) Identify strategies to reduce or eliminate dependence on benefits, specifically Social Security work incentives such as Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS plans), Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWEs), Ticket to Work, Medicaid Buy-in, Continued Medicaid Eligibility (1619B), Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE), etc. c) Identify local and national resources for additional benefits planning information.
K	K	17. Self-employment opportunities: a) Examples of self-employment b) Local and national resources c) VR's role in self-employment
K	K	18. Making referrals to appropriate agencies, organizations, and networks based on individual career plans.

Domain 3: Community Research and Job Development

Basic Level	Professional Level	COMPETENCY
K	S	19. Marketing plans targeted to employers, including researching opportunities and organizing information gathered: a) Explore local and national labor market information for employment trends via the Internet, market surveys, outreach to business groups, etc. b) Develop a system for organizing information on businesses and business contacts, including new area businesses and types of jobs available in the local area. c) Analyze the gathered information to inform the job development process.
K	S	20. Effective marketing tools for community employment: a) Develop and use marketing tools, including employment brochures, fact sheets, cover letters to businesses, and business cards. b) Use the personal and professional networks of job seekers and employment staff, including targeted use of social media. c) Plan and deliver presentations to groups of individuals and parents, advocacy groups, local civic organizations, service providers, and employers. d) Participate in community business organizations (career centers, Chambers of Commerce, etc.). e) Consult with businesses on disability issues.
S	S	21. Effective marketing messages for community employment: a) Promote the agency as a resource to help businesses meet their hiring needs while accurately explaining services. b) Target messages to audience needs, rather than offering only one generic presentation or brochure. c) Use language and images that highlight skills, abilities, and interests of job seekers. d) Use language and images that respect the job seeker's disclosure choices. e) Share information about incentives to businesses when hiring job seekers with disabilities (e.g., tax credits, on-the-job training, diversity goals).
S	S	22. Developing relationships with businesses: a) Target and identify businesses to contact based on job seekers' needs, interests, and personal networks. b) Use informational interviews, tours, and observations to better understand the business culture and build a relationship with the employer. c) Provide information about disabilities, inclusive hiring, accommodations, etc. to potential employers. d) Respond to businesses' concerns about job seekers' abilities, interests, and challenges in the workplace. e) Maintain the business perspective, emphasizing to employers the benefits of hiring a diverse staff. f) Conclude employer contact with clear next steps (interview, job offer, situational assessment, etc.).
S	S	23. Assisting job seekers in developing portfolios, resumes, cover letters, letters of introduction, references, and other job application documents in various media, including electronic and print.
S	S	24. Assisting job seekers in their job search process: a) Identify potential employers, schedule tours or informational interviews, complete job applications, and arrange job interviews. b) Support job seekers' disclosure decisions and advise about the best disclosure practices. c) Use social media/electronic media, as well as traditional job search resources.
S	S	25. Job matching considerations: a) Identify/clarify existing job descriptions. b) Identify/clarify unmet employer needs. c) Understand workplace cultures and climates. d) Consider transportation options.
K	S	26. Negotiating accommodations and job details, including hours, wages, tasks, work area, breaks, orientation, training, supports, and developing employment proposals based on business and job seeker preferences.

Domain 4: Workplace and Related Supports

Basic Level	Professional Level	COMPETENCY
K	K	27. Building collaborative relationships with: a) Job seeker/employee b) Employer, supervisor, coworkers (solicit employer feedback on satisfaction with employment services) c) Natural and paid supports d) Family e) Other providers, including housing/residential staff, clinicians, etc.
K	K	28. Managing travel/transportation: a) Facilitate transportation to and from work (natural supports, paid transportation agreements, etc.). b) Provide travel training. c) Explore creative transportation solutions.
K	K	29. Ensuring that the employee enters the job in the most inclusive manner possible: a) Maximize the employee's hours on the job, including natural social times (breaks and lunch). b) Support worksite personnel in introducing the new employee to coworkers. c) Maintain adherence to typical new employee orientation and training procedures. d) Make sure that necessary modifications and accommodations are in place. e) Establish clear employer and employment service expectations.
S	S	30. Comprehensive job analysis: a) Identify strategies for creating/designing jobs that make use of integrated and natural supports. b) List in sequence the duties and requirements of the job as well as the approximate time required to perform each task. c) Describe job skills needed for an employee to perform the job functions. d) Identify reinforcers that are natural to the work site (e.g., praise from a coworker or boss; taking a break).
K	S	31. Helping individuals meet social/behavioral expectations of the workplace culture: a) Identify cultural norms of the workplace. b) Describe behaviors in measurable and observable terms. c) Describe the events and situations that precede the occurrence of challenging behaviors. d) Identify consequences that follow these behaviors. e) Assess the communicative functions of these behaviors. f) Evaluate options before implementing behavioral interventions. g) Support individuals to acquire socially acceptable behaviors.
S	S	32. Strategies for developing workplace supports: a) Explore workplace/culture for opportunities for natural supports and how to implement them. b) Model good interactions with the employee from which other workplace personnel may learn. c) Facilitate training of the employee by his/her coworkers. d) Facilitate supports that promote inclusion and good social interactions rather than those which may be stigmatizing or stereotyping. e) Facilitate mentor relationships between the employee and his/her coworkers.
S	S	33. Providing systematic instruction based on individual learning styles and needs, including task analysis with baseline and scheduled data collection, natural cues, and reinforcement procedures.
S	S	34. Maximizing worker job performance and social integration to achieve job stability: a) Develop strategies to increase worker productivity/efficiency. b) Assist the worker in using self-management strategies. c) Identify strategies to increase the employee's tolerance to workplace changes, including new or multiple supervisors, added job duties, scheduling adjustments, and coworker assignments. d) Identify strategies to mitigate job stress and anxiety.

K	K	35. Methods for providing long-term support for individuals, families, employers, and coworkers, including how these supports are funded.
K	K	36. Strategies to provide support to the employee and employer in the event of a job separation or termination.
K	S	37. Providing an ongoing review of the employee's performance and satisfaction with the job: a) Determine the supervisor's and coworkers' satisfaction with employee performance. b) Determine additional or different support needs. c) Conduct on-site observations to evaluate job performance. d) Gather input from others (family/residential, counselors, other professionals) about how the job is going for the worker. e) Explore opportunities for career advancement.
K	S	38. Accommodations and universal design strategies that match the needs of the worker and employer: a) Identify commonly available and non-stigmatizing accommodations and modifications. b) Develop individualized adaptations, including low-tech and no-tech solutions. c) Explore universal design strategies for accommodations and solutions, and explain their utility to the employer. d) Identify resources and options for assistive technology. e) Teach the employee to use the accommodation strategy selected. f) Evaluate the need for/appropriateness of accommodations on an ongoing basis.

This grid provides guidance on the number of hours of training required for each of the domains. The information will help organizations preparing to create curriculum or submitting curriculum for review.

Topic Area	Required Hours: Basic	Suggested Hours: Professional
Application of Core Values & Principles to Practice * Rights, history, legislation, best practices, professionalism	4	
Individualized Assessment and Employment / Career Planning * Assess strengths, skills, interests, situational assessment, career exploration, support plan, stakeholder involvement, work impact on benefits, accommodation plan, transition to work models	6	
Community Research and Job Development:		
* Preparing marketing approaches and materials for job developer and job seeker (brochures, resumes, profiles and other materials, planning job seeker involvement and decision making, assistance with disclosure and accommodations requests, networking, development of skills for outreach and interactions with employers to explore their needs, as well as conducting community research including labor market info, range of employers in the area and info on specific employers or industries)	5	
* Job Acquisition (involvement of job seeker, disclosure decisions, accommodations, negotiations, job creation/carving and closing the deal)	5	
Workplace and Related Supports * Job analysis, starting the job, implementing support plans, involvement in usual employer training, systematic instruction, natural supports, social inclusion, fading, positive behavioral supports, ongoing supports and funding, access to resources needed for long-term employment, opportunity for career advancement	10	
Other (Specific Disabilities, etc.)	10	
Total Hours	**40**	
Experience Requirements	**None**	**One Year**