**Critical Elements of Customized Employment (CE) Mentoring**

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## Background

The Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) funded by the Department of Education’s Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) provides technical assistance and training to state vocational rehabilitation agencies and their partners. WINTAC developed this document to provide guidance to states regarding critical aspects of the Customized Employment (CE) mentoring process.

The CE delivery approach is very complex and requires practitioners to utilize multiple skills with high proficiency. This proficiency is achieved when trainees successfully complete the appropriate classroom training, typically 40 hours, and demonstrate the ability to successfully deliver CE services. Only after trainees demonstrate the translation of CE content into successful CE delivery, should any ‘credential’ be awarded the individual. Successful completion of performance-based training, inclusive of the mentoring component, provides the assurance this translation has occurred. Incorporating performance-based training into the mentoring component is vital for learning, practicing, and sustaining the delivery of CE services. In general, mentoring should help enhance and support service delivery with fidelity to best practice and, ultimately, the achievement of Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE). The following are what WINTAC believes are essential elements of the mentoring process.

### Critical Elements of the CE mentoring process

1. **Covers all aspects of CE including Discovery, Employment Planning, Job development, Negotiation and helps ensure longer term employment success**

The mentoring process should directly align and be consistent with “The Essential Elements of Customized Employment for Universal Application’’ and companion document [“Customized Employment (CE) Delivery Checklist” which can be accessed by clicking on the link to our resources page](http://www.wintac.org/topic-areas/resources-and-strategies-competitive-integrated-employment/resources). Following that guidance will help ensure longer term employment success.

1. **Dynamic process in ‘real-time’ with on-going communication**

The CE mentoring process should be dynamic, where the mentor is closely shadowing (if possible), observing and providing immediate feedback to the trainee regarding the discovery, job development and final job customization process. This involves frequent and on-going contact, review and feedback of the work as it’s being done, and can occur through a combination of in-person and distance mentoring approaches.

1. **Mentoring is both reflective and proactive**

Regular and consistent feedback from the mentor to the trainee where the trainee is afforded the opportunity to reflect on the experience is a critical component of mentoring. Mentoring is proactive, allowing the mentor to make timely suggestions before issues arise to ensure the provision of quality CE services. What the trainee learns from the mentor can then be put into practice immediately.

1. **Alignment with fidelity strategies and results in longer term successful Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) employment outcomes**

The mentoring process should directly align, be consistent with and be a part of an overall CE fidelity strategy to ensure on-going delivery quality. The mentoring component should include regular cross-checks between the work being done and the alignment of that work to established fidelity standards such as those identified in Discovery & Job Development fidelity scales. Mentoring should result in achieving successful long term customized employment placements that meet CIE criteria. This includes successfully negotiating a support plan with employers that offers the new employee access to all the naturally existing features of the workplace and, at the same time, offers the assistance of job supports as needed. This element connects CE with SE in a way that attempts to maximize the natural features of a workplace in relation to the ongoing supports offered by SE.

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