

Self-*D*irected Employment

Self-Directed Employment

A Handbook
for Transition Teachers
and Employment Specialists

by

James E. Martin, Ph.D.
University of Oklahoma, Norman

Dennis E. Mithaug, Ph.D.
Columbia University
New York City

John H. Oliphint, M.Ed.
City of Colorado Springs
Colorado

James V. Husch, M.A.
Pikes Peak Board of
Cooperative Education Services
Fountain, Colorado

Eva S. Frazier, M.A.
Academy School District
Colorado Springs



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About the Authors

James E. Martin, Ph.D., University of Oklahoma, Carpenter Hall Room 111, 840 Asp Avenue, Norman, OK 73019

Dr. Martin is the Zarrow Endowed Professor in Special Education and Director of the Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment at the University of Oklahoma. He received a bachelor of science degree and a master's degree in education from Eastern Illinois University, and he received a doctorate in special education with an emphasis on secondary transition from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Prior to his current position, Dr. Martin served as a professor of special education and as the first Director of the Center of Self-Determination at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Through the years, he has specialized in the development and implementation of self-determination methodology in educational, transitional, and supported employment programs. Dr. Martin has written extensively on special education, self-determination, and transition. He has also co-authored several instructional packages, including the *Self-Directed IEP Kit* (Martin, Huber Marshall, Maxson, & Jerman, Sopris West, 1996), *ChoiceMaker Self-Determination Assessment* (Martin & Marshall, Sopris West, 1995), and *Take Action: Making Goals Happen* (Huber Marshall, Martin, Maxson, Hughes, Miller, McGill, & Jerman, Sopris West, 1998).

Dennis E. Mithaug, Ph.D., Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 West 120th Street, New York, NY 10027

Dr. Mithaug is Professor of Education in the Department of Health and Behavior Studies at Teachers College, Columbia University. He received a bachelor of arts degree from Dartmouth College and a master's degree in education and a doctorate from the University of Washington. Dr. Mithaug's research includes issues related to the job preferences of adults with severe disabilities, school-to-work transition, self-determination of students with disabilities, and supported employment. He has published numerous research articles and book chapters, and he has authored and co-authored many books, including *Self-Determined Kids: Raising Satisfied and Successful Children* (Lexington Books, 1991); *Self-Regulation Theory: How Optimal Adjustment Maximizes Gain* (Praeger, 1993); *Equal Opportunity Theory: Fairness in Liberty for All* (Sage Publications, 1996); *Learning to Theorize: A Four-Step Strategy* (Sage Publications, 2000); and *Self-Determined Learning Theory: Construction, Verification, and Evaluation* (edited with Mithaug, Agran, Martin, & Wehmeyer, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002).

John H. Oliphint, M.Ed., City of Colorado Springs, Post Office Box 1817, Colorado Springs, CO 80903

Mr. Oliphint currently serves as Para Transit Coordinator for the City of Colorado Springs, analyzing transportation issues and supervising the city's transit program for people with disabilities. Previously, he served as Director of Martin Luther Homes, a comprehensive residential and supported employment agency serving children and adults with mental retardation. Mr. Oliphint also directed statewide employment training efforts and served as an employment placement specialist for the Self-Directed Employment Program for the Center of Self-Determination at the University of Colorado. He earned a master's degree in education from Memphis State University and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Colorado Springs. Throughout his career, in a variety of capacities, he has worked to better the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities.

James V. Husch, M.A., Pikes Peak Board of Cooperative Education Services, 301 East Iowa Avenue, Fountain, CO 80817

Mr. Husch coordinates the School to Work Alliance Program, which assists youth at risk for school failure and youth with disabilities in determining career goals and attaining successful employment. He earned a master's degree in special education from the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Previously, he served as Director of the Self-Directed Employment Program for the Center of Self-Determination at the University of Colorado. In this capacity, he was responsible for training the program staff, implementing the program goals, and assisting in procuring placement sites for the center's clients. He also serves as a professional research associate for self-determination projects at the university. Through the years, he has co-authored several articles and chapters and has frequently presented on the issues of supported employment and self-determination.

Eva S. Frazier, M.A., 1783 Mineola Avenue, Colorado Springs, CO 80915

Ms. Frazier provides special education support services to students with disabilities. She received a master's degree in special education from the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Previously, she served as the intake and assessment coordinator for the Self-Directed Employment Program for the Center of Self-Determination at the University of Colorado. In that capacity, she participated in the development of the assessment procedures featured in this book. In particular, she created almost all of the illustrations used in the book, which are available to download at www.brookespublishing.com/picturebank. She has presented the results of her work at numerous conferences, and she has co-authored many publications.

Foreword

In *No Pity*, Joseph P. Shapiro's compelling book concerning the disability rights movement, the chapter describing the self-advocacy movement begins with a scene from a meeting at the inaugural People-First convention in 1990. T.J. Monroe, a national leader in the self-advocacy movement, was trying to rein in a roomful of boisterous delegates with cognitive disabilities from across the country. Hammering his gavel on the podium to get the attention of the meeting attendees, Monroe shouted to be heard above the din, proclaiming that "one thing we're going to vote on is a revolution!" (Shapiro, 1993, p. 184).

As Shapiro observed, T.J. Monroe actually intended to say *resolution*, not *revolution*. But as Shapiro noted and as anyone who has become acquainted with the self-advocacy movement can readily attest to, revolution is really a more appropriate description of the changes in the disability movement since the 1980s. My colleague Hank Bersani and I have described the history of the field of disability services and supports as defined by three waves. The first wave was dominated by professionals, during which physicians, psychologists, social workers, and other professionals were thought to hold all the keys to knowledge about disability. The bleak history of the treatment of people with disabilities during the first half of the 20th century illustrated the serious limitations of this "professional only" vision and led to the second wave, the parent movement. In the optimism and prosperity that washed across America in the aftermath of World War II and with advances in science and in the treatment of diseases such as polio, parents of children with disabilities began to challenge the standard expectations for the outcomes for their sons or daughters. The parent wave had tremendous impact on disability services, perhaps most notably evidenced by the passage in 1975 of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142). But even as the parent movement was at its peak, the third wave began to emerge, the self-advocacy movement.

This book is a product of the sweeping changes in disability services brought about by the third wave of the disability movement. It describes a revolution in the way we conceptualize services, moving away from programs designed by professionals toward programs characterized by self-directed supports. These supports are designed on the basis of the interests, preferences, and abilities of the person receiving the support and in such a manner to ensure that the person remains in control of the process. This process builds on another revolution, the revolution of supported employment.

Although the authors rightly note that it is not possible to pinpoint the exact moment of the birth of supported employment, many of us who have been in the field at least since the 1980s can identify the moment we were first introduced to the revolutionary idea that people with severe disabilities could hold competitive jobs. I was a classroom teacher working with adolescents with severe disabilities at the time, and literally overnight, my vision of what was possible for my students changed from sorting widgets by size, shape, and color in the sheltered workshop to working competitively for pay with colleagues without disabilities.

My responsibility as a teacher also changed with my exposure to the supported employment concept. The old way of doing things was no longer acceptable. I had been exposed to

a new way of thinking about people with disabilities that required that I change both my practices and my expectations. Not responding to that new vision was, in my perspective, never a viable option. Once I saw that people with severe disabilities could, in fact, contribute to society through competitive, paid work and could become a part of the rich fabric that is the social milieu of work environments, it became my *obligation* to discard my previous assumptions and expectations and move toward this new way of thinking and seeing.

The literature has debated whether supported employment is a process or a procedure, but this book captures perhaps the most important aspect of supported employment: having high expectations for people and supporting them to pursue rich, fulfilling lives. Supported employment is about the promise of a better life.

Why, at the start of the 21st century, do we find that supported employment is largely unrealized among people with severe disabilities? Perhaps it is because we, as a field, did not pay enough attention to the self-determination component of supported employment from the onset. We worried about the procedures and processes and forgot that it was really about empowerment, enablement, and high expectations. Martin, Mithaug, Oliphint, Husch, and Frazier suggest that the supported employment movement has, itself, moved through three phases. They title these the “Get a Job—Any Job—and Keep the Individual at the Job” phase, the “Get a Job That Is a Match For the Individual” phase, and the “Self-Directed Employment” phase. These are, in my mind, more than just three phases. They represent two dichotomous visions of disability and disability services. The first two phases put the professional in control of the process, even when integrating innovative strategies such as natural supports into the mix of supported employment services. The third phase is distinct from the first two. It is consumer-controlled and self-directed, and it places the person with disabilities at the controls, not professionals.

If you have not already been exposed to the vision of the self-determination movement, reading *Self-Directed Employment* places you at a decision point in your professional career. Much as obtaining knowledge about supported employment obligated those of us working with people with severe disabilities to change our visions for the future and to change our expectations of the people we support, so too does knowledge about self-directed services and self-determination obligate us to act and to create a new vision. It is a vision that must encompass the totality of our interactions with people with disabilities.

Almost everyone has seen the ubiquitous faces/vase stereogram developed by Gestalt psychologists to illustrate the figure-ground phenomenon in perception. This stereogram is the black and white object that, when you first look at it, appears to be the image of a white vase on a black background. When, however, you shift your focus slightly, you can see that the black background actually forms two faces looking at one another with the facial features (nose, brow, chin) on either side forming the contour of the vase. From the point in time one sees the faces, it becomes almost impossible to see only the vase in the image. Likewise, as you read this book and begin to see the faces of self-determination and the third wave of the disability movement outlining the vase of best practice in supported employment, it should change not only the way you provide supported employment services, but indeed the way you look at all supports for people with disabilities. Like the faces/vase stereogram, we should no longer be able to conceptualize disability supports without seeing the vision of self-determination.

Does this new vision mean that there is no longer a role for professionals? Hardly. The chapters that follow detail strategies and procedures for professionals. You must become the catalyst to enable and empower people with severe disabilities to “get a job” or more expansively, “get a life.” There are detailed instructions for implementation, photocopyable forms to individualize instruction and assessment, and, perhaps most important, stories of the lives of real people, like Joe, Richard, Nina, Martha, and others who have succeeded with self-directed employment. This chapter is written out of the authors’ decade-long experiences providing these supports. It helps that two of the text’s authors, James Martin and Dennis Mithaug, are leaders in defining and promoting the self-determination of people with disabilities and can

intertwine stories and procedures in a way that is both inspirational and instructive—a rare combination!

Are there any drawbacks to pursuing this course of action? Only one. That is, reading this book and implementing the practices and procedures outlined therein is not the end, but only the beginning. That is the rub with providing supports that promote self-determination. People's preferences change. They want new and better jobs. Access to employment leads to greater demands for supporting people to live in their communities, to become home owners and contributing members of that community, and so forth. Of course, it is not really our choice, is it? Not following this course of action is not really an option. Fortunately, this course is both the right and effective path. So, read on and then lead on!

Michael L. Wehmeyer, Ph.D.

Beach Center on Families and Disability
University of Kansas, Lawrence

REFERENCES

- Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, PL 94-142, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1400 *et seq.*
Shapiro, J.P. (1994). *No pity: People with disabilities forging a new civil rights movement*. New York: Times Books.

Preface

Self-Directed Employment: A Handbook for Transition Teachers and Employment Specialists provides step-by-step instructions on how to infuse self-directed employment strategies into your school transition or agency-supported employment program. First, you will read about the evolving nature of employment supports for individuals with disabilities and the important role that self-determination plays in this evolution. After the steps are stories and data demonstrating the effectiveness of the Self-Directed Employment (SDE) methodology.

We realize that many of you reading this book are veteran teachers or employment specialists who want to enhance your existing self-determination practices. Others of you believe that the strategies presented in this book require too much work, involve too much data collection, or decrease the professional input you and your colleagues now give to the employment process. We ask you to approach the ideas in this book with an open mind and consider the methods as tools to produce better outcomes. Then, after reading the book, think about how you can infuse a few strategies from this book into your own program.

Some of you reading this book will be new to the field or studying to enter your first teaching or employment specialist position. Welcome to a very exciting and important profession in which your efforts will improve the quality of life for many individuals with disabilities. As you read the chapters, reflect on your previous studies and notice how the procedures use the best of what the field currently knows about effective instruction. As you begin your first position, find the strength needed to implement these procedures and do not be overcome by the tendency to simply do what has been done in the past.

This book consists of five major parts: a general discussion about employment and self-determination, assessment methodology, placement and follow-along methodology, data analysis, and photocopiable forms. The first two chapters summarize community employment and self-determination research. Chapter 3–7 present the steps for conducting an SDE assessment. Chapters 8 and 9 present information on placement and on-the-job problem solving. Chapters 2, 10, and 11 include case studies and summative data for the SDE methodology. Finally, the appendix contains photocopiable forms that enable the user to copy and implement the SDE methodology in schools or supported employment programs. Readers can download pictures from www.brookespublishing.com/picturebank to individualize the forms.

CHAPTERS 1 AND 2

Chapter 1, entitled “Get a Job,” discusses two major points. This chapter reviews the revolutionary concept of community employment and explains how supported employment consists of a set of methods, not just a type of employment outcome. The chapter also examines the evolution of employment practices from the “get them any job” initial phase to self-directed employment. Chapter 2 explains how and why self-determination powers the SDE methodology presented in this book. Self-determination concepts from a macro and micro

viewpoint are examined, followed by a discussion of two different self-determination definitional strands. Next, a unifying understanding of self-determination is presented after examining several definitions.

CHAPTERS 3–7

Chapter 3, entitled “Getting Started: An Implementation Overview,” presents the SDE curriculum and explains the choice management and self-management outcomes. The organizational schema explains how to use Chapters 4–9. Finally, an implementation reference guide lists the forms needed to implement each curriculum objective. Chapters 4–7 explain the steps for implementing the choice management assessment process. Each chapter details how to complete each curriculum objective and fill out each form and compute results and provides “What If?” questions and answers that offer solutions to the most common problems found in implementing each objective.

CHAPTERS 8–9

Chapter 8, entitled “Introduction to Section II. Goal E: Finding a Job Matching Skills and Preferences,” explains placement and on-the-job problem solving. This chapter shows how to engage individuals with disabilities in the placement process. It emphasizes achieving a match between interests, skills, and job demands before and after the person accepts a new position. Chapter 9, entitled “Introduction to Section II. Goal F: Solving On-the-Job Problems,” explains how to apply basic self-management skills to adjusting to the demands of the work place.

CHAPTERS 10–12

We established a SDE program at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs to develop and demonstrate the procedures described in this book. During the program’s 11 years, we provided employment services to 751 youth and adults with severe disabilities, including individuals with mental retardation, traumatic brain injury, and mental illness. Chapter 10, “Stories,” presents case studies. These real-life examples—with the names, identifying information, and circumstances changed—show the SDE methods in action. A few case studies describe situations that were not successful because they illustrate other variables (beside the SDE methods) that can affect success. Chapter 11 presents summative results of the SDE program from different points in time. Comparison between the SDE program and national demonstration projects show that when individuals make their own choices and solve their own problems using the SDE procedures, their results at least equal the results of efforts made by professionals and often exceed professional accomplishments. Chapter 12 summarizes ideas behind the SDE program.

APPENDIX

The appendix presents photocopiable forms used in Chapters 4–9. Purchasers are granted permission to photocopy the individual forms in the appendix. Each site must purchase its own book; master forms cannot be shared among sites. Electronic reproduction of any form is prohibited, and none of the forms may be reproduced to generate revenue for any program or

individual. Photocopies may only be made from an original book. *Unauthorized use beyond this privilege is prosecutable under federal law.* You will see the copyright protection at the bottom of each photocopiable page.

Most forms have two versions: a version that uses mostly words and a version that is illustrated. Use the text versions with individuals who can read, and the illustrated versions with individuals whose disabilities are more severe. Many of the forms can also be adapted using illustrations that you can download from the Brookes web site: www.brookespublishing.com/picturebank. This option can help you increase the individualized nature of the program.

NOTE TO THE READER

We worked together for many years creating and implementing the strategies in this book. We argued, laughed, and skied our way through the years. The time we spent together solving problems and creating an effective employment agency represent a dynamic, exciting, and vibrant part of our professional lives. We have all moved on to other professional positions, but each of us carries on with the work we established together.

Acknowledgments

So many people supported our efforts to develop the procedures described in this book and to all of you, we say thanks. We give a special acknowledgment of thanks to six people who supported our efforts to create the Self-Directed Employment Program. Professor Frank Rusch at the University of Illinois suggested that we create a supported employment program to develop our emerging self-determination ideas. Maxine Riley and Glenn Perry from the Colorado Springs office of the Colorado Division of Rehabilitation, Don St. Louis, Director of the Rocky Mountain Resource and Training Office, and Bill Bowman, Director of the Colorado Springs community board for individuals with disabilities, shared a vision for community employment and a process that empowered individuals to direct their own future. They also secured initial funding to begin what later became the Self-Directed Employment Program. Dr. Peg Bacon, who was the Dean of the School of Education at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs when we began this project, encouraged and supported all of our efforts.

Numerous graduate assistants left their own mark on the finished procedures. We learned so much from you. You saw problems, created solutions, and implemented procedures that enabled many individuals to secure and maintain employment. Most of you today are implementing self-determination practices in your own educational programs. Together, we did accomplish a lot!

A special acknowledgment must go to the families of the individuals who became involved in the Self-Directed Employment Program. You supported your adult sons and daughters as they made the transition from sheltered employment or high school into community jobs. At times, individual preferences differed from what you believed was a good future, yet seldom did this difference of opinion deter individual success. The people who became involved in the Self-Directed Employment Program came looking for a better future. Your efforts enabled us to understand what you wanted.

*To our families and to the many individuals who supported
our efforts and taught us so much about self-determination
and employment practice*

To ski trips, where many of our best ideas became reality

*To napkins, where many of the ideas first saw the light
of day*

Self-*D*irected Employment

