

# DDS Stakeholder Virtual Forums

**Welcome!**



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# Opening Remarks

- **Welcome message by DDS Commissioner Jordan Scheff**



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# STEP Update

- **Deputy Commissioner Elisa Velardo**
  - **What is STEP – Supporting Transformation to Empower People**
  - **Goal – Promote choice, individualized options and integration**
  - **All aspects of life – Home, work and community**

# STEP

- **Highlights the following core supports:**
  - **Assistive technology**
  - **Remote Supports**
  - **Self-Direction**
  - **Employment**
  - **Individualized Home Support (IHS)**
  - **Supportive Housing**
  - **Community Companion Homes (CCH)**



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# STEP

- **The vision for STEP ensures you and your loved ones will feel empowered, valued and respected.**
- **We want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to become more independent and participate in your community.**



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# What's next with STEP

- **STEP web page - [ct.gov/STEP](http://ct.gov/STEP)**
- **One pager fact sheets about each core support**
- **STEP video series**
- **Bi-monthly newsletter mailed and emailed to individuals, families, providers and staff members**
- **Regional conversations**



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# Forum Reminders

- **Thank you for attending today's session!**
- **Please hold all questions for staff and presenters until the end. Feel free to put questions in the chat section throughout the presentation and they'll be answered at the end.**
- **This presentation will be recorded and posted on our website.**

# DDS Employment Services

**Trever Rogers,**  
**DDS Central Office Transition Advisor**

**DDS supports people working in their local communities alongside people of all abilities, while being paid equally for the same work.**

**Employment supports through DDS help people develop work skills and obtain a good job in their community, with the necessary support to ensure their success.**



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# DDS Transition Supports

**Kate DeStefano,**  
**DDS West Region Transition Advisor**  
**Individual and Family Support Resource Team**



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# What does it mean to transition from school to adult life?

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) must include appropriate measurable postsecondary goals related to:

- ❖ education/training and **employment** and where appropriate, independent living skills as well as the transition services (including courses of study) that will help the student to meet their postsecondary goals



Transition planning:

- ❖ helps the student in identifying their vision for the future and developing the plan and required skills needed to reach that vision.
- ❖ ensures that students and families are aware of the variety of supports and services available through adult and community agencies.

*"I think working at a job is a good fit for me because I want to make money and find a good job for me." Marissa, age 16*

Post-school  
outcome goal:  
Employment

# What is the role of a DDS Transition Advisor?

- **Assist students, families, school systems, adult service agencies, and DDS case managers in planning a student's transition from school to adult life.**
- **Partner with other state agencies to ensure that all transition options are explored and presented to students, families, and school systems for consideration.**
- **Collaborate with providers of adult services to ensure that students, families, and school systems become knowledgeable of the various employment and day service supports available.**

**START  
PLANNING  
EARLY!!**



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# DDS Transition Advisors

Participate in presentations, trainings, and transition fairs to educate families and district personnel

Collaborate with DDS Helpline Case Managers to identify and address needs

Empower individuals and families to self-advocate

Serve as an informational resource for families, case managers, schools, etc.

Consult with special education transition staff

Work in collaboration with BRS to increase employment outcomes

Connect individuals and families with local community providers

Communicate with the DDS Individual and Family Support (IFS) team

Advise individuals and families on transition steps that may need to be completed

Attend Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings

Inform families which state agencies may be appropriate depending on the individual's needs

Encourage Person Centered Planning such as Chartering the LifeCourse

Participate in guardianship assessments



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# Transition Tasks

*Beginning at Age 18:*

## The DDS Helpline recommends:

1. **Connect with your DDS Transition Advisor**
2. **Explore Decision Making Options (Disability Rights CT/Probate Court)**
3. **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**
4. **CT Medicaid: Husky C (DSS)**
5. **Connect with BRS (Level Up/Adult VR)**
6. **Photo ID (DMV)**
7. **Register to Vote**

For additional information about these steps, check out the DDS Transition Timeline available in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#) on the DDS Website.

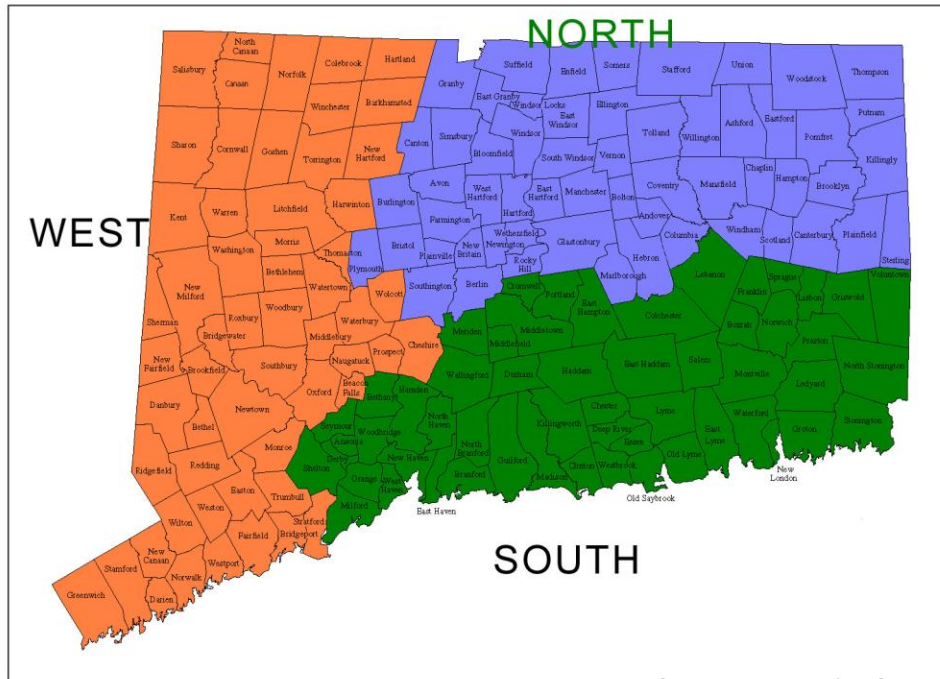


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# DDS Regional Helpline Contact Info



## North:

877-437-4577

[dds.nr.ifshelpline@ct.gov](mailto:dds.nr.ifshelpline@ct.gov)

## South:

877-437-4567

[dds.sr.ifshelpline@ct.gov](mailto:dds.sr.ifshelpline@ct.gov)

## West:

877-491-2720

[dds.wr.ifshelpline@ct.gov](mailto:dds.wr.ifshelpline@ct.gov)



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# DDS Helpline & Individual and Family Supports (IFS)

## *Services and Supports*

- **Respite Center Weekend Visits**
- **Camp Harkness pass**
- **Family Grants**
  - **Disability-related expenses not covered by insurance or schools**
  - **Respite, Assistive Technology**
- **Family Support Workers**
- **Transition Advisors**
  - 18-22
  - 16 or 17 by referral
- **Clinical Team Consultations**
  - **Speech Language Pathologists**
  - **Occupational Therapists**
  - **Physical Therapists**
  - **Psychologists**
  - **Behaviorists**
  - **Nurses**

REGIONAL HELPLINES SERVE ALL ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS NOT ON A WAIVER.

# Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)

**LEVEL UP:** pre-employment transition services for all students with a disability (ages 16-22)

**BRS provides pre-employment transition services (referred to as Level Up in CT) to students while in secondary, postsecondary and WIOA approved training programs.**

## **Pre-employment transition services:**

- job exploration counseling
- work-based learning experiences
- counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs
- workplace readiness training
- self-advocacy

## **BRS Adult Vocational Services (post-school)**

**BRS assists individuals with significant disabilities to obtain, maintain and advance in competitive integrated employment (CIE).**

**Individuals are encouraged to contact BRS within the year they are exiting special education.**

**Their sister agency, the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB), is also under ADS.**

**When?**

***BRS recommends contacting them six months prior to an individual's 22nd birthday at minimum.***

# Myth Busting: Misconceptions about Employment *from the TA Perspective*

**MYTH:** ➤ **Competitive Employment means 40 hours of unsupported work**

**FACT:** **Competitive Employment can be full or part time, it is what works best for the individual job seeker and can include job coaching support.**

**MYTH:** ➤ **If an individual goes to work/becomes employed, they will lose their benefits**

**FACT:** **If you receive disability cash or medical benefits (SSI/SSDI/Medicaid/Medicare) you may be able to work and still receive benefits. Benefits Counseling ensures that you get accurate information so that you can make good decisions about your vocational goals, your potential earnings and your health insurance needs.**

To learn more about benefits counseling, visit the ADS website: **Benefits Counseling**  
<https://portal.ct.gov/AgingandDisability/Content-Pages/Programs/Benefits-Counseling>



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# Transition Advisors – West Region

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**Bridgeport, Darien, Easton, Fairfield, Georgetown, Greenwich, Riverside, Monroe, New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Southport, Stamford, Stratford, Trumbull, Weston, Westport, Wilton**

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**Canaan, Cornwall, Bethel, Bethlehem, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, Goshen, Kent, Middlebury, Morris, Newtown, New Fairfield, New Milford, New Preston, North Canaan, Ridgefield, Roxbury, Salisbury, Sharon, Sherman, Southbury, Warren, Washington, Woodbury**

**Kaitlyn Drenzek**  
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**Bantam, Barkhamsted, Beacon Falls, Cheshire, Colebrook, Hartland, Harwinton, Litchfield, Naugatuck, New Hartford, Norfolk, Northfield, Oxford, Prospect, Thomaston, Torrington, Waterbury, Watertown, Oakville, Winchester, Winsted, Wolcott**



# Transition Advisors – South Region

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**Branford, Chester, Clinton, Deep River, East Haven, Essex, Guilford, Lyme, Madison, New Haven, Old Saybrook, Westbrook, West Haven**

**Asucena Colon**  
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[asucena.colon@ct.gov](mailto:asucena.colon@ct.gov)

**Baltic, Bozrah, Colchester, East Haddam, East Hampton, East Lyme, Niantic, Franklin, Gales Ferry, Griswold, Groton, Jewett City, Lebanon, Ledyard, Lisbon, Montville, Mystic, New London, North Stonington, Norwich, Oakdale, Old Lyme, Pawcatuck, Portland, Preston, Salem, Sprague, Stonington, Taftville, Uncasville, Voluntown, Waterford**

**Barbara Poplawski**  
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[barbara.poplawski@ct.gov](mailto:barbara.poplawski@ct.gov)

**Ansonia, Bethany, Cromwell, Derby, Durham, Haddam, Hamden, Killingworth, Meriden, Middlefield, Middletown, Milford, North Branford, North Haven, Orange, Seymour, Shelton, Wallingford, Woodbridge**

# Transition Advisors – North Region

**Jennifer Bundy**  
(Newington office)

860-331-2062

[jennifer.bundy@ct.gov](mailto:jennifer.bundy@ct.gov)

**Avon, Berlin, Bristol, Burlington, Canton, Farmington, New Britain, Newington, Plainville, Plymouth, Rocky Hill, Simsbury, Southington, West Hartford, Wethersfield**

**Vacant**  
(East Hartford Office)  
Jennifer and Jenni covering area until position is filled.  
Jennifer - **yellow** Jenni - **green**

**Bloomfield, East Granby, East Hartford, East Windsor, Enfield, Granby, Hartford, Suffield, Windsor, Windsor Locks**

**Jennifer 'Jenni' Miner**  
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[jennifer.r.miner@ct.gov](mailto:jennifer.r.miner@ct.gov)

**Andover, Ashford, Bolton, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Chaplin, Columbia, Coventry, Eastford, Ellington, Glastonbury, Hampton, Hebron, Killingly, Manchester, Mansfield, Marlborough, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Scotland, Somers, South Windsor, Stafford, Sterling, Thompson, Tolland, Union, Vernon, Willington, Windham, Woodstock**

# Employment and Day Services

**Darrell Spears,  
DDS West Region Transition Advisor,  
Employment & Day**



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# Self-Advocate Coordinators

*Because I work – Jossie Torres*

- **Because I work, I can give security to my child**
- **Because I work, I am not alone**
- **Because I work, I have more of a life**
- **Because I work, I am able to feel complete**
- **Because I work, I am financially secure**
- **Because I work, I have a tomorrow**

**Part of the DDS mission is “to support lifelong planning and to join with others to create and promote meaningful opportunities.”**



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# Pre-Employment & Employment Service Options

## Pre-Employment

- **Employment Transition Services (ETS)**
- **Project SEARCH**

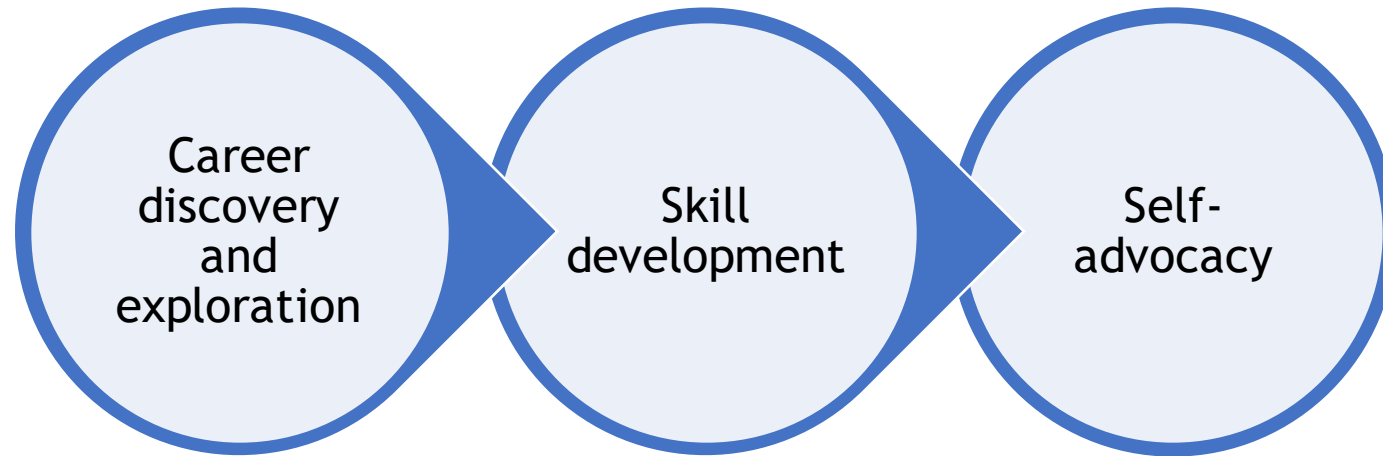
## Employment

- **Individualized Supported Employment (ISE)**
- **Customized Employment (CE)**
- **Group Supported Employment (GSE)**
- **Self-Employment Options**



# Employment Transition Services

**Employment Transition Services (ETS) is a time limited, community-based, vocational service with a focus on:**



**The goal of Employment Transition Services is to help individuals become equipped and ready for competitive integrated employment.**

***Time limited: 3 Year Max***



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# Employment Transition Services (ETS)

## 100% Community Based Utilizing:

- Internships
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Participation in community activities



## Where people may spend their time:

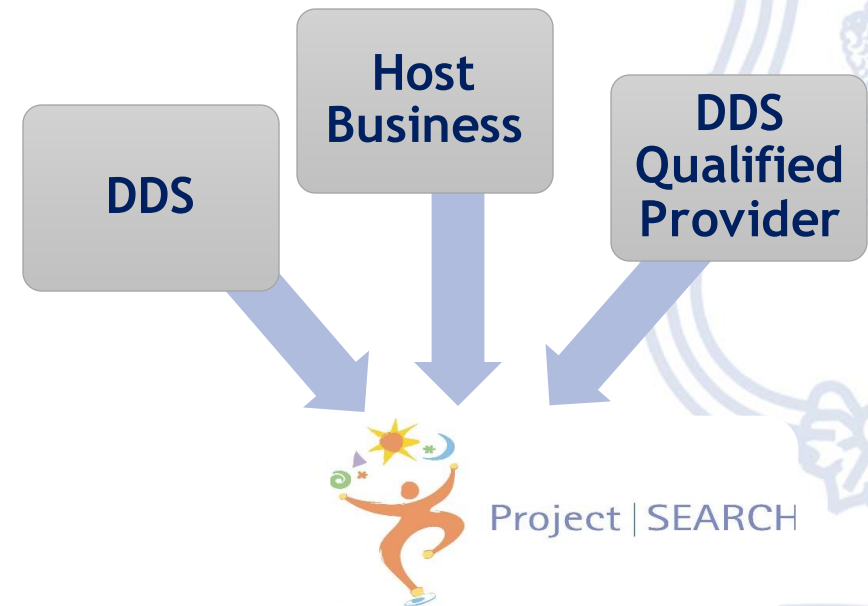
- Employment exploration sites
- Job centers / Workforce Centers
- Community Locations such as: libraries, health clubs, banks etc.
- Attending technical and community college educational activities
- Health and fitness activities that help impact better employment outcomes
- Adult Ed Sites / Post-Secondary Schools
- Networking Sites

# Project SEARCH

**Project SEARCH** is a 9-month internship training program, available to school transition age students and young adults, who need more intensive employment skills training.

Businesses serve as **Project SEARCH** host sites with programs run by DDS provider agencies and school partners.

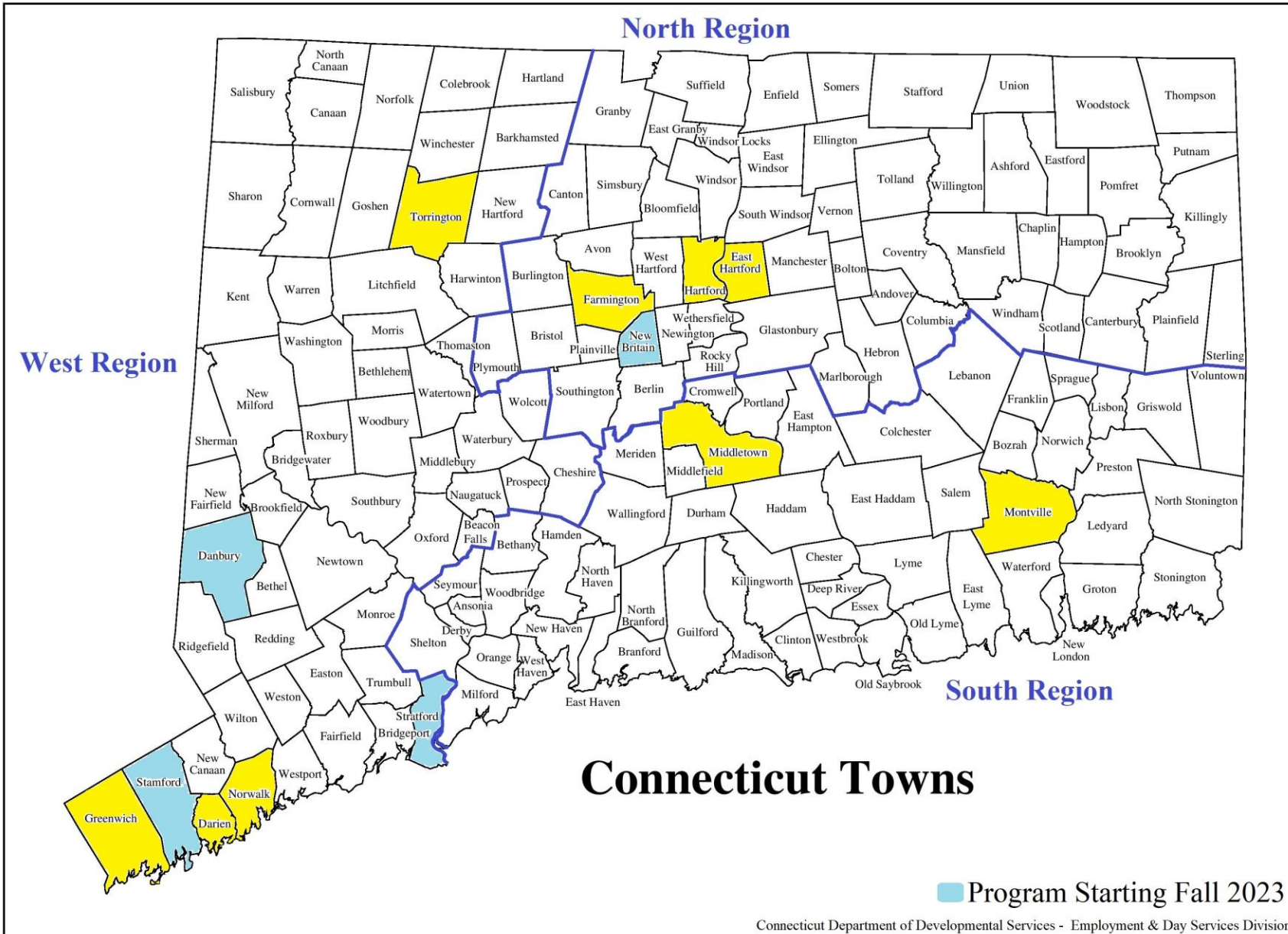
The host business provides access to an on-site training room and access to business departments to provide 3 separate internship rotations.



CT has **14** Project SEARCH Sites

Learn more about Project SEARCH in CT [here](#).

# CT Project SEARCH Locations



## North Region

Host – UConn Health, Farmington (since 2015)

Provider – FAVARH

Host – Goodwin University, East Hartford (since 2019)

Provider – MARC of Manchester

Host – Hartford Hospital, Hartford (since 9/2021)

Provider – MARC of Manchester

## South Region

Host - Mohegan Sun, Uncasville (since 2019)

Provider – UCP Eastern CT

Host – Middlesex Hospital, Middletown (starting 9/2022)

Provider – MARC Community Resources

## West Region

Host – Charlotte Hungerford Hospital, Torrington (since 2020)

Provider – Litchfield ARC

Host – Greenwich Hospital, Greenwich (since 2019)

Provider – Abilis

Host – Darien YMCA, Darien (start 1/2022)

Provider – Abilis

Host – Norwalk Community College, Norwalk (since 2018)

Provider – Norwalk school district

Co-Provider – Ability Beyond

Host – NuVance Hospital, Norwalk (start 1/2022)

Provider – Ability Beyond



# Project Search Intern

**Intern at Middlesex Hospital-  
Nick G**

**Has gain transferrable  
employment skills**

**Conducts interviews and  
attends conferences to speak  
about his experience**

**Looking forward to working  
full time in Patient Transport**





# Questions About Project SEARCH?

**Please contact the DDS Employment & Day Services Division at:**

**[dds.employment-dayservices@ct.gov](mailto:dds.employment-dayservices@ct.gov)**

*Or*

**DDS Project SEARCH Coordinator Brian Gresko at:**

**[brian.gresko@ct.gov](mailto:brian.gresko@ct.gov)**



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# Employment Supports



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# Individual Supported Employment (ISE)

**Employment specialist (job coach) helps you find competitive employment through a job discovery process, provides training and support, and then gradually reduces time and assistance at the worksite.**

## **ISE includes:**

- **Supports to help individuals in competitive work settings.**
- **Assisting individuals find and apply for jobs.**
- **Job coaching support once work is secured.**

**This service is designed to provide support and supervision but is not intended to provide ongoing long term 1:1 support to help a person complete their work activities.**

# Group Supported Employment (GSE)

**Supported employment in a competitive employment environment where a group of participants are working under the supervision of a permanent employment specialist (job coach).**

- **Services are provided in the community or a facility-based program to focus on developing meaningful skills in the area of work, socialization, and community participation.**
- **Participants may be disbursed throughout the company among workers without disabilities or congregated as a group (with efforts toward interaction with nondisabled coworkers).**

***GSE Mobile Work Crew:* A group of participants who perform work in a variety of locations and travel to various worksites during the day under the continuous supervision of an employment specialist (job coach/supervisor).**



# Ryan C – 4th Tuesday Forum Presenter

- **Started in GSE**
- **Enjoyed his job and those he worked with**
- **Job ended once pandemic started**
- **Obtained employment with same company**
- **Utilized our Employment incentives and completed a 40hour working interview**
- **Received an offer to do some of his old job task at a competitive wage**

Want to know more?

Listen to the live interview [here!](#)



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# Self Employment & Small Business Enterprise (SBE)

**Small Business Enterprises** allow individuals to start their own small business enterprise or become competitively employed at a small business enterprise.

**Self Employment** is an outcome that can be achieved with supports and services that help the participant.

# DJ Joe

**DJ Joe started his own DJ company and is self-employed with support through DDS' Innovative Employment Outcomes Pilot.**



- **Designed to support small businesses and entrepreneurs promote Competitive Integrated Employment for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**
- **Offers both an exploratory grant for small “seed money” and implementation/expansion grants at larger amounts**

# Customized Employment

**Trever Rogers,  
DDS CO Transition Advisor,  
Employment & Day**



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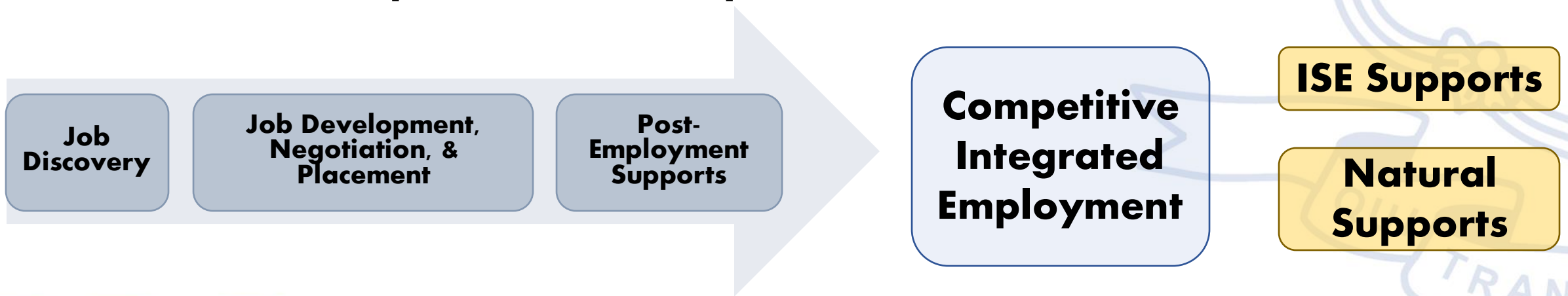


# What is Customized Employment?

**Customized Employment (CE)** is an alternative method of finding competitive integrated employment for individuals with significant disabilities.

**CE** focuses on the strengths, skills and abilities of the individuals and the unmet needs of employers.

It is a structured, person-centered process, carried out over time.



# Who is Customized Employment for?

- CE is a good strategy for those who need more intensive support than typical individualized or group models and who may need more career and job direction.
- CE is effective for individuals who have tried traditional job search strategies and need more creative, customized supports.

## DDS



Group Supported  
Employment  
(GSE)

Individualized  
Day Vocational  
(IDV)

Employment  
Transition  
Services (ETS)

Trial Work  
Experiences

On the Job  
Training

Industry  
Specific  
Training  
Placement  
Programs  
(ISTPP)

Individualized  
Employment  
Supports (ISE)

One-Time  
Employment  
Incentives

Other DDS  
Employment  
Experiences

Work  
Attachments

Work Based  
Learning

[CE Candidate Overview Document](#)

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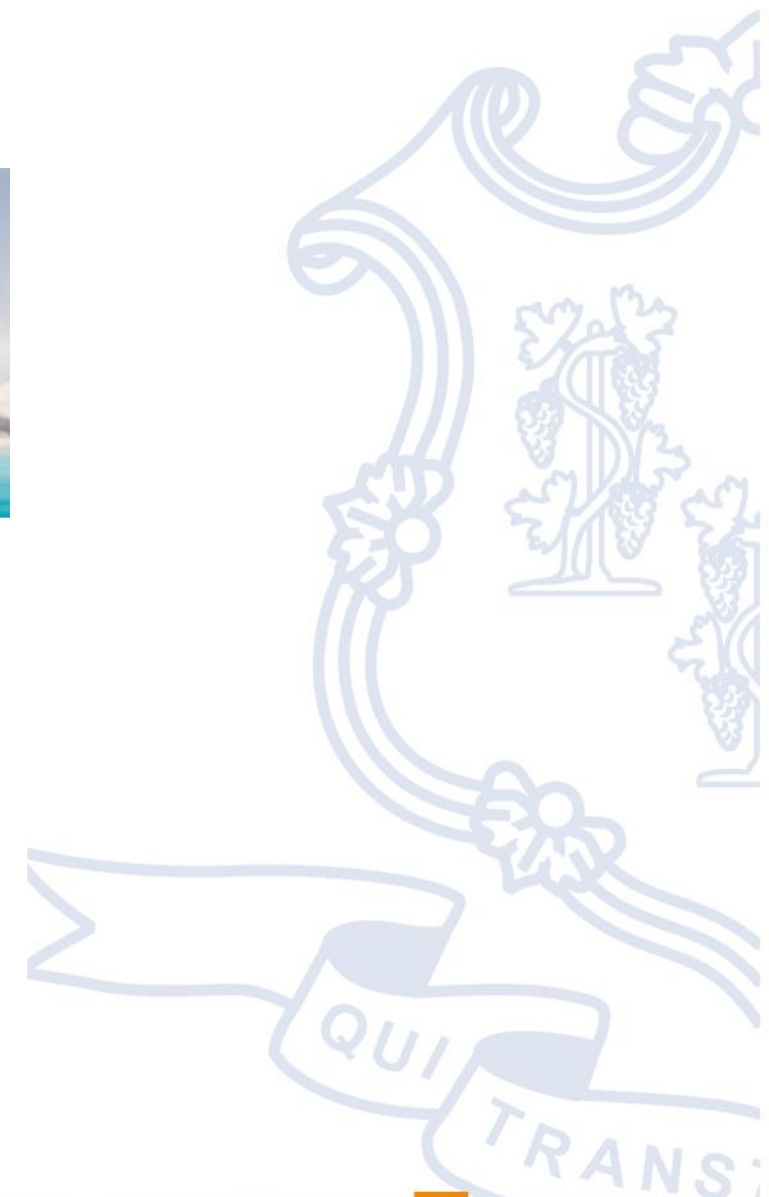
# How Can CE Look?

- The Customized Employment Process is meant to be carried out over time.
- Job seekers continue their current service options while in the CE process.

## SAMPLE SCHEDULE:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Current Service	Employment	Current Service	Current Service	Employment

# Discovery



# Discovery

- **Discovery is time spent between the job seeker and CE Certified Staff Member to gain a more in-depth understanding of the job seeker's interests, likes, dislikes, knowledge, strengths, skills and abilities.**
- **The focus of Discovery is not to find a job, but to engage with the job seeker and identify up to 3 areas of interests.**
- **The average timeframe for Discovery is 5 to 7 weeks.**



## Discovery

We take time to discover your:

interests

strengths

skills

support needs

social and support connections

# Job Development, Negotiation, & Placement

- **This phase begins with identifying businesses that match the individual's vocational themes.**
  - **Informational interviews**
  - **Observations**
  - **Walkthroughs of the business**
- **These activities help learn more about the business needs and if the business needs also meet the needs of the job seeker.**



## Job Development and Negotiation

We work with you and potential employers to:

discuss work experience and employment opportunities

develop job roles that fit your skills and interests

discuss your conditions of employment, such as job responsibilities, work hours, dress code, salary

understand your support needs at work

understand the employer support needs



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# Customized Employment Process



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# Customized Employment Story: Josh

Customized Employment seeks to create a customized position that matches the **likes, skills, and abilities** of a job seeker with the **unmet needs** of an employer.



- Interested in cars, has a large collection
- Prefers hands on work
- Tried other employment services, needed more individualized supports
- Multiple volunteer experiences
- Enjoys organizing, finds it calming

# Customized Employment Story: Josh

Customized Employment seeks to create a customized position that matches the **likes, skills, and abilities** of a job seeker with the **unmet needs** of an employer.



**Assisting front desk associate**



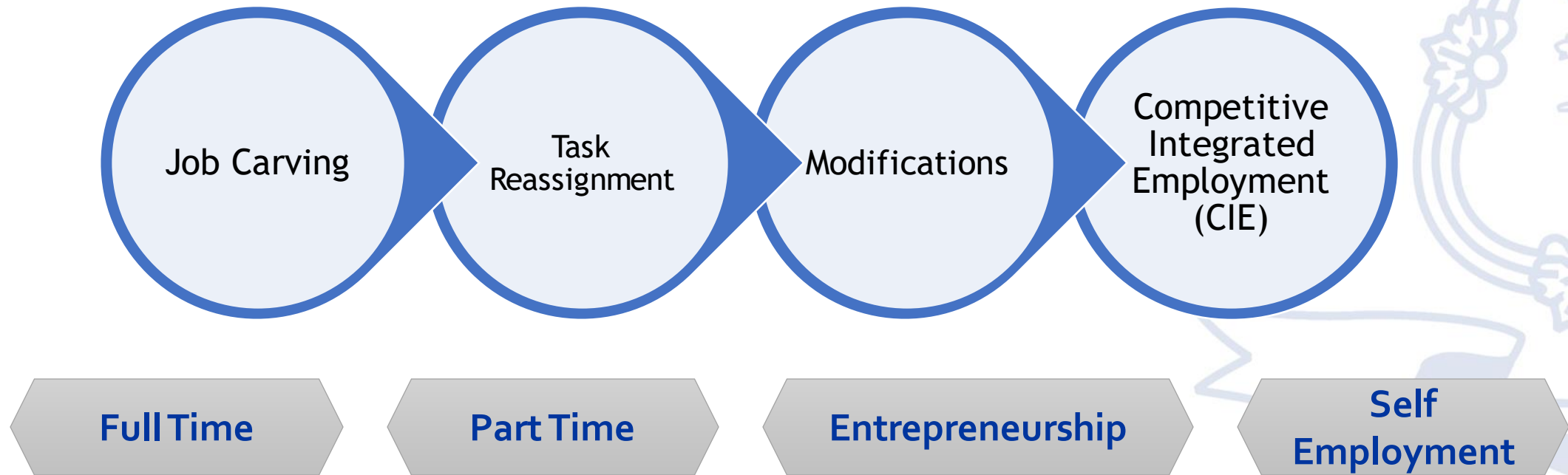
**Routine maintenance**



**Detailing**

# What's the Goal?

The end goal is placement in a competitive integrated employment position in whichever shape or form works best for the job seeker.





# Interested in CE? NEXT STEPS!

**The first step in pursuing Customized Employment is to talk to your DDS Case Manager.**

**Customized Employment is an interagency process with DDS and the Department of Aging & Disability Services (ADS) including the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and the Bureau of Education Services for the Blind (BESB). If you don't have a DDS Case Manager, contact your Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor.**

**Program questions about CE?**

**[DDS.CustomizedEmployment@ct.gov](mailto:DDS.CustomizedEmployment@ct.gov)**

**Questions about starting CE:**

**Contact your Case Manager**



# Questions?

**Contact:** [dds.employment-dayservices@ct.gov](mailto:dds.employment-dayservices@ct.gov)



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