

# EDS Updates

## Customized Employment (CE)



The Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS), and the State Department of Education and the Regional Educational Service Center (RESC) Alliance rolled out the Connecticut Customized Employment (CE) Curriculum on October 4, 2021.

Connecticut Customized Employment is an alternative method of finding competitive integrated employment focusing on the strengths, skills, and abilities of individuals with disabilities and focusing on the unmet needs of employers. It is a highly structured, person-centered process, carried out over time.

DDS will be holding a Provider Information Session to review and discuss Customized Employment on Monday November 15<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. via Microsoft Teams.

[Operations Center Memo FY2022-13 RE: Provider Qualifications for CE Services](#)

**Essential Elements of Customized employment**

**DDS**  
Connecticut Department of Developmental Services (DDS)  
Customized Employment (CE) Information Session  
**November 15<sup>th</sup> 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

This meeting will discuss the joint work of DDS and the State of Connecticut Departments of Education (SDE) and Aging and Disability Services (ADS) as well as the RESC Alliance on the Connecticut CE Curriculum which launched 10/4.

**Opening Doors to Possibilities**

**The following topics will be reviewed and discussed:**

- CT State CE Training Curriculum and Certification
- Current CE Training (started 10/4) & Next Training
- Rates, Incentives, & Referral Process
- Provider Qualification Process & Criteria
- Different Certification Processes & CESP Certification
- Outreach to individuals & families about the benefits of CE

**Introduction**  
We take time to discover your...  
We help put together the right pieces to find a career, not just a job.

## CT DDS SELN Strategic Planning Committees

CT DDS Strategic Planning Sub-Committees to address the State Employment Leadership Network's (SELN) Finding & Observations Report (February 2021). The report commends strengths, reviews areas of improvement, and makes recommendations for action.

A Steering Committee and seven sub-committees each meet monthly to collectively create a workplan centered around the content areas of the SELN F&O Report. Each sub-committee group is assigned to one of the seven content areas below:

1. Leadership
2. Strategic Goals & Operating Policies
3. Financing & Contracting Methods
4. Training & Technical Assistance
5. Interagency Collaboration
6. Services & Service Innovations
7. Employment Performance Measurement, Quality Assurance, & Program Oversight

More information about this exciting process can be found [here](#).

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## CT Job Developers Leadership Networks (JDLNs)

JDLN, otherwise known as the Job Development Leadership Network, provides networking and resources to employment specialist and Job developers. Most recently, JDLN conducted our 2<sup>nd</sup> Statewide meeting in which we highlighted a few relevant and vital assessable resources and connections. This meeting highlighted CT APSE, CESP certification, DOL and much more. We have also extended the proposal of creating a 2<sup>nd</sup> Southern JDLN for the New Haven County area.

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## Project SEARCH

The federal government has increased its efforts to have individuals competitively employed by providing funding through WIOA to support apprenticeships. [Apprenticeships](#) are workforce development strategies that trains a worker in a specific occupation using a structured combination of paid on-the-

job training and related instruction. Connecticut has increased its own efforts by continuing to increase and expand our Project SEARCH internship program.



Project | SEARCH

There are currently 4 new Project SEARCH host sites including *Hartford Hospital, Danbury Hospital, Darien YMCA and Norwalk Hospital*. In our initiative to provide employment related services so individuals may gain competitive integrated employment, we've made an objective to reach counties and communities where there are no Project SEARCH sites or where the distance is too far. We can ensure, in the state of [Connecticut Project SEARCH](#) is growing.

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# Employment News/Updates

## Westport Book Sale Ventures

In 2019, Westport Book Sales Ventures was a recipient of a 2019-20 IDPAC Pilot Project Grant to establish alternative business models or alternative models of support that would employ or encourage the employment of people with intellectual disabilities. The award was granted shortly before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Operational changes due to global lockdowns allowed Westport Book Sales to pivot focus from creating employment in their book donation center to opening a nonprofit retail used book shop. This endeavor created a larger variety of employment opportunities where employees gain more readily transferable work skills, and greater

direct contact with more members of the community. During the pandemic, community members joined together and successfully fundraised enough to open the shop and secure operating expenses for more than a year.

Westport Book Shop officially opened in January 2021 at 23 Jesup Road

(just across Jesup Green from the Westport Library). The Book Shop presently provides part-time employment and job training for nine individuals with disabilities. Theresa Taylor's 23-year-old son, Jamie, works at the Westport Book Shop. Theresa shared some of her son's experience at the Westport Book Shop: "Inclusion has been the key for Jamie. Everyone in our hometown knows him and this has made Jamie feel important in the community as well as change the culture of the way people see our loved ones. Inclusion creates awareness of the capabilities of all individuals and allows young people, such as Jamie, to live independently and to thrive and be a positive contributor in society." For more information about Jamie's story, [click here](#).

According to Jocelyn Barandiaran, the President of Westport Book Sale Ventures, the long-term goal of the organization is to spread their business model. Most municipalities in the state of Connecticut have public libraries that conduct used book sales on a regular basis. Innovating or creating programs with existing assets can benefit everyone in the community and create competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Other towns have already followed suit, with the town of Trumbull, CT making efforts to create a similar opportunity in connection with their public school system in Trumbull Center. To learn more about Westport Book Sales Ventures, [click here](#).

## Disability Employment Resource Fair

**9<sup>th</sup> Annual Disability Resource Fair**  
*In recognition of Disability Employment Awareness Month*



**October 22, 2021**  
 Free Virtual Event  
 9:00 am – 11:30 am  
 Registration Required...

<https://www.conntech.org/ct9th-annual-disability-resource-fair>  
 860.441.1744 #CT9thADEF21

**IDEAL FOR THOSE WHO ARE:**

- Unemployed or under - employed
- Transitioning from school to work or higher education
- Receiving Social Security Disability & are considering work
- Rely on public transportation
- Interested in learning how assistive technology can help
- Unsure of your legal rights in the workplace
- Networking opportunity for community providers

All are welcome to learn about the available resources such as free employment services, transportation, legal rights, assistive technology, education & more!

The Annual Disability Employment Awareness Month Resource Fair is Sponsored By...




DDS Employment and Day unit observed October as Disability Employment Awareness month. Aside from conducting the CT JDLN statewide meeting, the DDS Employment and Day unit participated in 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Disability Resource Fair. Our presentation provided us a platform to inform current and upcoming

individuals who will be seeking services and employment, with our current services and some of the different objectives we have as a unit. Our contributions to the fair highlighted our partnership with SELN, business start-ups as well as Project SEARCH.

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## **Celebrating 20 Years of ODEP!**



This year is the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the U.S. Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). It's not only a time for celebration, but also reflection, as we reaffirm the commitment to driving change and creating opportunity in the years to come.

## **Links & Resources**

### **Training & Further Education**

[APSE Certified Employment Support Professional](#)

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### **Success Stories & Inspiration**

[CT DDS Self-Advocate's Corner](#)

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### **Contact Employment & Day Services:**

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