

sos  care

Autism & Intellectual Disability Services

CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In order to best meet the needs of our job seekers, SOS Care recognized the importance of incorporating the customized employment (CE) strategy into our employment program. Customized Employment includes job seeker exploration and discovery, customized planning to determine the direction for the job search and job negotiations which result in a job description that outlines a customized relationship between the employer and employee. The process is based on a match between the unique strengths, needs, and interests of the job candidate with a disability, and the identified business needs of the employer or the self-employment business chosen by the candidate.

In July of 2019, SOS Care was awarded funding from the SC Developmental Disabilities Council and established our customized employment program. The program's focus was as follows:

- Provide ACRE certified customized employment training from Griffin-Hammis Associates (GHA) to 30 staff members and agencies across South Carolina**
- Encourage new motivation and ideas to take Employment First to the next level.**
- Offer technical assistance training from GHA to collaborative partners to ensure they can implement process in their agencies.**
- Complete the customized employment process with 3 individuals with disabilities at SOS so they gain competitive employment or start their own business.**
- Increase awareness and knowledge of customized employment in South Carolina.**

OVERVIEW: PROGRAM YEAR ONE

BARRIERS

- **Customized Employment not recognized by state as viable option for employment**
- **Lack of funding for staff or mentoring and technical assistance from Griffin-Hammis.**
- **Without ongoing support, attendees were unable to implement at their agencies.**
- **Invested time and resources into employment specialists who then left organization**
- **Covid-19 pandemic caused many agencies to suspend services, especially in-person.**
- **Time-committed required from staff who are juggling multiple priorities**
- **Job seeker removed herself from process**

SUCSESSES

- **Provided ACRE certified training from Griffin-Hammis Associates to:**
 - ✓ **3 employment specialists from SOS care**
 - ✓ **3 adults with disabilities from SOS Care and their families**
 - ✓ **26 attendees from 10 different agencies across South Carolina**
- **Learned the process for customized employment and how to implement within our organization**
- **Job seeker working in supported employment but was able to identify other strengths and now knits and makes crafts to sell at craft fairs.**

In July of 2020 we started our second program year, with continued funding from the SC Developmental Disabilities Council. The program's focus was as follows:

- Provide ACRE certified “on-line” customized employment training from Griffin-Hammis Associates (GHA) to 30 staff members and agencies across South Carolina to continue to expand knowledge and awareness of customized employment throughout South Carolina.**
- Offer technical assistance and mentoring to SOS employment specialists and 2 outside agencies to increase knowledge and offer follow-up training that is needed to successfully implement the program.**
- Complete the customized employment process with 2 individuals with disabilities at SOS so they gain competitive employment or start their own business.**

OVERVIEW: PROGRAM YEAR TWO

BARRIERS

- Covid-19 pandemic changed focus of some agencies away from customized employment to different priorities.
- Covid-19 created increased challenges with funding for agencies. Because of this, we were unable to secure buy-in from agencies for technical assistance training and agencies lost momentum.
- Funding continues to be an issue as our customized employment is time consuming and our employment specialists have competing priorities.
- Job seeker LN went through discovery but was unable to commit to process until he finishes up a different priority.

SUCSESSES

- **Provided ACRE certified training from Griffin-Hammis Associates to:**
 - ✓ **7 employment specialists from SOS care**
 - ✓ **18 attendees from 5 different agencies across South Carolina**
- **Held bi-monthly calls with GHA and employment specialists for check in and troubleshooting**
- **Completed mentoring program with Griffin-Hammis with employment specialists and job seekers**
- **2 job seekers started their new businesses.**
- **1 job seeker completed discovery and learned a lot about his different interests. We had very good conversations with his team and a family meeting with a budget outlining the benefits of working. We saw a huge boost in his confidence and self-advocacy.**
- **Amazing collaborative efforts with Griffin-Hammis for training and development.**

SUCCESS STORY - TC

Job Seeker TC started his t-shirt business: Sal-T-Bonz

<https://fb.watch/8vrbd6HcJe/>

Here's a video of TC and customized employment from his perspective!

Thomas is finalizing his website and will be selling his T-shirt line coming soon!

SUCCESS STORY - JB

Job Seeker JB started his dinosaur business

He paints dinosaurs and sells his original artwork on T-shirts, paintings, onesie's, mugs and other items. He has a booth at Inlet Queens and is working on setting up his online store.



In July of 2021 we began year three of our program. Our focus this year is as follows:

- **Complete the customized employment process with at least 2 job seekers**
- **Create a series of webinars to showcase the customized employment using our current job seekers and ACRE certified staff. Webinars will show real world examples of what customized employment is, how we use it as an organization, how job seekers benefit from the process and the successful outcomes that we have seen for the people we are serving currently. Webinars will be made available to all interested agencies in South Carolina.**
- **Create more interest in the process so there are more customized opportunities for individuals who may need to find their niche within an organization or through self-employment.**
- **Continue to interview previous participants to show where they are in their business. These interviews will be posted on social media via SOS and Able SC.**

OVERVIEW: PROGRAM YEAR THREE

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Level funding by the state for each part of the process.**
- **Statewide collaborative meeting with people doing the work to share what works and to have the support of other providers.**
- **Annual conference (like Project Search) to share experience and expertise.**
- **Choose 2-3 of the strongest agencies to pilot program and head up the collaborative meetings and provide feedback to funder**