



# Surviving to Thriving

*Enhancing informed choices  
about benefits and work.*

## Learn that residents can work and manage their benefits ...

- Attend basic benefits training
- Get resources about benefits programs (see Recommended Resource below)

## Discuss benefits when talking about work ...

- Help residents make informed choices with accurate information. Ask ...
  - “What are your questions about benefits?”
  - “What have you heard about work and benefits?”

## Ask residents who they want to include in discussions about benefits and work ...

Some examples include the following:

- Housing providers
- Employment service providers
- Behavioral healthcare providers
- Friends and family members

## Help people access accurate information ...

- Learn how to identify quality benefits-planning services
- Learn about benefits-planning resources in your community (e.g., Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) programs; other benefits planners)

## Help residents develop a simple system for gathering and storing documents ...

Examples of things to gather:

- Letters and reports from benefits providers and benefits-planning services
- Employment documentation (e.g., pay stubs, W-2s, photo i.d.)

Examples of simple systems for storing documents:

- Pocket, accordion, and manila folders; large clasp envelopes
- Scanning documents into a computer

## Help residents anticipate and avoid surprises ...

- Report earnings from work and other income (e.g., alimony, inheritance, lottery)
- Plan for and help interpret letters from benefits providers
- Offer to review and help modify personal budgets as income changes

## Help residents report income and changes to benefits providers ...

- Ask this question: “Have you reported your income? If not, how can I help?”
- Discuss reasons for and concerns about reporting income to benefits providers
- Report changes, such as ...
  - Address and phone number
  - Cost of disability-related materials or services needed for work (e.g., medications)
  - Household composition (e.g., marriage, divorce, child birth/adoption, someone moving in or out of residence)

## Provide ongoing support about benefits ...

Help residents understand matters, such as ...

- Inquiries from benefits providers
- Adjustments of benefits (e.g., overpayments, underpayments)
- Disability reviews by Social Security
- State hearings, appeals, and waivers

## Assist with long-term financial planning ...

Ask residents ...

- “What would you like your life to look like in the future?”
- “What would help you get there?”
- “How do benefits fit into this picture, if at all?”

Recommended Resource: [www.centerforebp.case.edu/resources/tools/benefits-advocacy-guide](http://www.centerforebp.case.edu/resources/tools/benefits-advocacy-guide)



# Creating a Culture of Work

*Everyone has potential.*

## Pause ...

Be curious. What is this person's potential?

## Reflect ...

Do I believe people can work with support?

## Discuss ...

Start the employment conversation. Ask ...

- What are your hopes for the future?
- How would life be different if you worked?

## Consider ...

- Am I open to what this person is saying?
- What do I know about this person's strengths?

## Assess & Assist ...

Use the stages of change to match your expectations and conversations with this person's current thinking about employment (see below).

Person's Perspective	Stage Of Change	What To Do...
"I don't want to work."	= Pre-contemplation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Avoid trying to convince this person to work</li> <li>▪ Seek to understand concerns</li> </ul>
"Maybe I could work if ..."	= Contemplation	<p><b>Help This Person ...</b> Consider the advantages and disadvantages of working</p>
"Okay. What's next?"	= Preparation	<p>Explore and plan next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Let this person set the pace</li> </ul>
"Let's try this."	= Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prepare for interviews</li> <li>▪ Apply for jobs</li> <li>▪ Get supports in place</li> <li>▪ Plan for bumps in the road</li> <li>▪ Connect with employment services (if desired)</li> </ul>
"How do I keep this going? Where can this job take me?"	= Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Problem-solve issues</li> <li>▪ Report income to benefits providers</li> <li>▪ Explore future work goals</li> </ul>

**Recognize Successes.** Acknowledge that change can be hard and give credit for small steps.



# Exploring Motivation to Change with Residents

*It's not just about behavior.*

## Pause ...

Notice your reaction to the person.

## Think ...

- What could the person be thinking and feeling?
- What does he/she want you to understand about his/her perspective?

## Be Curious ...

Ask open-ended questions:

- Tell me, what's going on with you?
- What are your concerns here?
- How can we work together to improve this situation?

## Listen ...

Try to understand the person's point of view.

## Consider ...

What stage of change is this person in?

<b>Person's Perspective</b>	<b>Stage Of Change</b>
"Change what?"	= Pre-contemplation
"Change? Maybe."	= Contemplation
"Yes. But how?"	= Preparation
"I'm ready. Let's do it."	= Action
"How do I keep it going?"	= Maintenance
"If I slip, what can I do?"	= Relapse Prevention

## Connect ...

Meet the person where he/she is.

## Explore Options ...

Exchange ideas about what to do next.

## Be Open ...

Ask more open-ended questions:

- How do we move forward together?
- What steps can each of us take?

## Recognize Success ...

Acknowledge that change is hard and give credit for small steps.

**Manners Matter.** Talk with respect. Choose your words and tone of voice carefully.