### **Visiting a Local Career Center**

Participants face many barriers to community inclusion. These barriers include symptom- related difficulties (e.g. difficulty getting out of bed or leaving the house, intense worry around having to interact with strangers), issues of confidence, self-efficacy, or knowledge, as well as resource barriers (e.g. lack of transportation). Sometimes, one of the most effective supports for people with lived experience is another person (e.g. someone to accompany them to an employment service orientation).

This session is an opportunity to provide this form of support to participants. In this session you will accompany participants to a local American Job Center (AJC). AJCs offer employment- related services to the general public. Services include help with resumes and cover letters, job search counseling, use of computers and fax machines, help connecting to opportunities like career fairs, and workshops on topics like LinkedIn.

You can locate the closest AJC at [**www.careeronestop.org**](http://www.careeronestop.org/)

Here are some tips for organizing your trip:

* + Sign-up for a center orientation well in advance. If you have a large enough group, see if the AJC manager will schedule a separate orientation just for your group. This will involve calling the manager well in advance and explaining your program. Note that most career centers employees are not well-versed in services for people with lived experience, so it will be necessary to orient them.
	+ Also be mindful of how you describe your program and how much detail you provide, because it can become a form of forced disclosure. In other words, if you say you are facilitating a career guidance group for individuals with lived experience, but your participants have not agreed to be identified as such, you will have effectively broken their confidentiality.
	+ If your group agrees, find a center in your area that has a disability coordinator and request that the disability coordinator be present at the orientation. At the same time, do not do this at the expense of exposing participants to the mainstream center services. (Oftentimes, programming for people with disabilities is targeted to physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities.)
	+ Sometimes, career centers host Certified Work Incentive Counselors (CWICs) who can provide guidance around going back to work while receiving social security benefits.
	+ To properly prepare participants, begin communicating information about the trip several weeks in advance. Communicate whether transportation will be provided or participants need to arrange their own transportation. If participants will need to arrange their own participation, provide the location address and directions.
	+ Request that participants RSVP and, if necessary, let you know how they will be getting to/from the center.
	+ Recommend that participants explore the center’s website ahead of time and develop a list of questions to be asked at the orientation.
	+ While at the center, students can sign up for a membership and develop a working knowledge of the kinds of services available through their local career centers. They can sometimes sign up for an appointment with a career counselor.
	+ Make time to debrief with participants. Ask them to describe their experience of the AJC, to relate what they learned, and to ask any follow up questions.