### **Getting Help along the Way**

Everyone needs help from other people in order to achieve their career development goals. People are just one kind of support. Other types of supports include places, activities, and things. Today the group will discuss what kinds of supports they need in working toward their career development goals. By the end of this session, students will be able to list the kinds of support they already have, identify what kinds of additional supports they may need to progress toward achieving their career goals, and brainstorm strategies for strengthening current supports and building new ones.

**AGENDA**

1. Warm Up
2. Discussion
3. Break
4. Activity
5. Reflection
6. Evaluations

**WARM UP**

*Think of a time when you successfully achieved something you set out to accomplish – it can be anything – big or small. Maybe you made a new friend, completed a class, finished a project, went on a trip, etc. Think back to what people, places, things, and activities helped you to achieve that goal.*

(Give the group an example from your own life to help them understand what you’re asking them to do.)

Ask for a volunteer to share their example. Write the supports they name on the board, and indicate the category (person, place, thing, activity; formal or informal).

**Make the connection:** *When it comes to achieving a goal, many people find that social support*

*– i.e. the help we receive from other people – is an invaluable resource. The same goes for the career development process! If you don’t feel like you have a lot of social support right now, the good news is a) you can work on building it and b) support comes in other forms too – like in the form of places, things, and activities. We often want and need* ***multiple*** *sources of support to achieve a goal. One of our goals is to help you strengthen and expand your professional/formal supports (e.g. providers and services) and natural supports (e.g. friends, family, and hobbies).*

**DISCUSSION**

Write the four columns on the board: people, places, things, activities. Ask: Who and what are the people, places, things, and activities that are supporting your career development right now? Write students answers on the board in the appropriate categories.

Explain the difference between formal and informal supports. Highlight examples students provided to clarify.

**Formal Supports.** *Formal supports involve professionals providing us with a service. Has anyone ever used a work-related service prior to this program? For example, maybe you had a job coach, or you worked with a state rehabilitation agency? What was your experience with those supports? Another formal support is mental health providers. Does anyone talk about their work goals with their therapist? Would you like to?*

*What kinds of formal supports can people access to help them with their career goals?*

Brainstorm on the board. Possible answers:

* Your Opening Doors career counselor
* Your providers – therapists, psychiatrists, case managers, etc.
* Employment supports for the general public – websites, Career One Stops, local community colleges, adult education centers
* Employment supports for people with disabilities – Mass Rehab, Benefits counselors (CWICS), employment specialists/vocational counselors, agencies that you can access through your ticket to work, clubhouses, Center for Psych Rehab classes

**Informal Supports.** *Informal supports are anything other than professional services -- the people in our lives that we know through social connection, the hobbies and activities we do, etc.*

*What kinds of informal supports can people access to help them with their career goals?*

(Make sure to acknowledge that people supports can be complicated.) You might say:

*Sometimes, our sources of support, like family members or providers, might not be enthusiastic about our career development goals. They may have concerns or conflicting viewpoints. In this case, people in your life who are supportive overall might need coaching on ways they can be more supportive in this particular area, i.e. career development.*

* Supportive family members
* Supportive friends
* Pets
* Fellow Opening Doors participants
* A mentor
* A boss
* A coworker
* Wellness activities
* Meet-ups

**ACTIVITY**

*Thinking back to our work last week, supports can be especially helpful when it comes to navigating obstacles. Let’s spend some time brainstorming how current or future supports might help you to navigate some of your obstacles and achieve your goals.*

Have students look back at their materials from the Obstacles session and locate their six- month career goal. Have them also identify three obstacles that they are concerned might get in the way.

Ask whether a student would like help from the group brainstorming supports to help navigate obstacles and reach his/her goal.

Write the goal on the board. Ask students: What are four supports (at least one from each category) might be helpful in navigating the identified obstacles and achieving this goal? Look back at the list of supports we have brainstormed. Might any of those apply?

Have students repeat this process for themselves. Provide individual assistance as needed.

**REFLECTION**

Ask students to share one support they already have and one that they would like to connect to/develop. Ask them to share what first steps they might take toward developing a new support.

**EVALUATIONS**

Allow a few minutes for participants to complete evaluations.

### **What is a Support?**

Support is a **person, place, thing, or activity** that helps you achieve a goal.

We often want and need ***multiple*** sources of support to achieve career goals.

##### **CATEGORIES OF SUPPORT**

Shape

* **People** - *friend, coworker, therapist*
* **Places***- home, work environment, outdoors*
* **Things**- *medication, transportation, accommodations*
* **Activities**- *meditating, exercising*

##### **USE YOUR SUPPORTS TO REACH YOUR GOALS**

How do you effectively use your supports to help you reach your career goals?

1. Identify a **goal**.
2. Identify **obstacles** that may get in the way of you reaching your goal.
3. Identify current & future **supports** that could help you navigate these obstacles.
4. Create a **plan** for strengthening current supports and connecting to new ones.

### **My Career Goal**

**What is your 6-month career goal?**

Shape

|  |
| --- |
| **Ideas** |
| In 6 months, I want to be (choose one): |
| Actively networking to help get my foot in the door of a specific career field |
| Actively applying for jobs or internships |
| Volunteering at an organization that interests me |
| Interning at a company that interests me |
| Working part-time |
| Working full-time |
| Taking a class |
| Enrolled in a training or academic program |

### **What Might Get in the Way?**

Take a few minutes to brainstorm what obstacles may get in the way of you achieving your six-month goal. Consider both **internal and external obstacles**.

Internal obstacles are challenges that originate from within – like fears, beliefs, behaviors, functional limitations, lack of skill, or lack of knowledge. External obstacles are challenges in your environment – like relationship dynamics, lack of resources, societal/cultural perceptions and circumstances, etc.



### **Who or What Can Help?**

Now, for each of the obstacles you identified on the previous page, think about what people, places, things, activities, or personal strengths might be able to help you navigate those obstacles. These can be both current supports and supports you would like to build. Record your ideas on the next page.

It is also important to recognize that the quality of supports can vary, depending on the goal. If you like, on your map, you can use the following symbols to indicate the quality of each support in relationship to your career goal.