



National Disability Services

WESTERN AUSTRALIA



The Workplace Supervisor, Coach and Mentor

A resource for Disability Service supervisors and coordinators
to support staff involved in accredited training.



Acknowledgements

This guide is designed to assist staff who may be asked to supervise support workers who are involved in some form of accredited training in their workplace.

Development of the guide was made possible with the support of the following organisations:

Curriculum funding from the VET Teaching and Learning Branch

WA Department of Training and Workforce Development

Challenger TAFE Career Development Centre

Central Institute of Technology

Disability Services Commission Learning & Development

Community Services, Health & Education Training Council



Challenger
TAFE



Government of Western Australia
Department of Training
and Workforce Development



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BACKGROUND

Currently, in the WA Disability Work sector, the most popular model for training delivery and assessment is a “Work place based model”. This move to formal, accredited training being delivered in the support worker’s workplace has required a change in the way that people are both trained, and assessed.

In the past, the majority of accredited training for support workers was delivered away from the workplace either on a full time or part time basis. In recent times this has proved to be unsustainable to disability service providers who need to recruit new staff that are untrained, but need them to be trained as early as possible. Service providers can also not afford for their staff to be away from their workplace for long periods of time to undertake training.

The providers of accredited training; Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), have responded to the needs of the sector, and now provide training and assessment which is delivered predominantly in the workplace. However, this training model has meant that the service provider plays a much more important role in both how the training is delivered, and how staff competency is assessed.

Assessment in the work based model should be as rigorous as that undertaken in an institutional model. The primary difference is where the evidence is collected, and who collects the evidence, not in the quality, validity or reliability of the evidence collected.

Evidence collected from a workplace can have a richness that is difficult to replicate in an institutional model, but service providers should be actively involved in determining the best forms of evidence to be used when assessing their support workers. This may extend to determining the workplace tasks, using the language of the workplace and using workplace policies and procedures when gathering evidence. It is most likely that the immediate supervisor of the support worker being trained, will be in the best position to work with a training provider to advise on customising their training to meet the needs of the organisation.

Whilst a traineeship is one formal model of workplace training and assessment, the same principles described in this resource apply to all workplace based training whether part of a traineeship or not.

For the purposes of this resource, “workplace based training” is a full-time or part-time employment based training arrangement. During the course of this training, a support worker gains work experience and has the opportunity to learn new skills in a hands-on environment. On successful completion, the support worker earns a nationally recognised qualification.



ENSURING SUCCESS OF THE WORK BASED TRAINING MODEL

Roles of Key Players

The Employer (Service provider)

- The employer has a responsibility to ensure a safe working environment, in which the trainee's job role enables them to be assessed against the requirements of a qualification. What does this second responsibility mean? If there is a particular skill (competency) that a support worker needs to demonstrate to be assessed as competent, then the support worker should have the opportunity to learn and practice that competency in their workplace. For example; if a required competency is the person's ability to plan and facilitate community integration for their clients, they should have the opportunity to perform this task on a reasonably regular basis. If they don't have this opportunity, then both the training and assessment will need to be in a simulated situation. This defeats the purpose of workplace based training and assessment, as the person will need to attend some form of training to learn the underpinning skills and knowledge required to acquire the competency, and the assessment will not be in a "real" workplace situation. Whilst there may be the need for some simulated assessment within a whole qualification, a competency as important as community integration should be assessed in the person's workplace.
- The employer should allow the support worker to undertake some off the job training when required.
- The employer must ensure that the support worker receives adequate supervision during training. The guidelines for this supervision are reasonably flexible, but at the very least, the worker should be able to ask for support/help from a senior staff member by telephone.

The Employer may also ask for a customised training and assessment plan that meets the specific needs of the organisation. Whilst a national qualification identifies a worker's competency at a particular level of skills and knowledge, the assessment tasks that the worker is asked to complete may be customised to fit the particular service model provided by the employer.



The Workplace Supervisor/Coordinator

This person is integral to the success of workplace training and assessment. The support worker's immediate supervisor will probably know the person better than the RTO trainer/assessor, and more than any other manager within their organisation.

The front line manager of the support worker is responsible for ensuring that the person is performing to the standard expected by the service provider and ensuring that the service is compliant with Disability Services Standards. The Supervisor therefore is an excellent source of evidence for the assessor in determining the competency of staff being trained and is normally expected to provide regular feedback to the RTO on the progress of the support worker. The support of the individual's supervisor may also determine the success or failure of the training.

The Training provider (RTO)

- The RTO is responsible for ensuring that the necessary training and assessment is carried out to the required standard of the qualification. This does not mean that all of the training must be provided by the RTO. Workplace Training assumes that staff in the workplace will be training support workers through a range of formal and informal methods. However, the RTO will normally be required to deliver training in essential knowledge required in order for the support worker to demonstrate competency. For example, an understanding of underpinning philosophy in Disability Service provision, and how this is translated into Disability Service Standards.
- The RTO is responsible for the final assessment of the required competencies of a qualification, which must be completed by a qualified assessor.
- The RTO is also required to issue statements of attainment and certification achieved as a result of the assessment.

The Trainee Support Worker

It is the support worker's responsibility to:

- Carry out tasks as required by their supervisor and assessor.
- Keep their supervisor informed as to their progress in achieving a qualification or part of a qualification.
- Notify their supervisor of any areas of difficulty or risk encountered during their training.
- Notify their RTO assessor if they identify any gaps between their current job responsibilities and the requirements of the qualification, for example, if there is criteria that they cannot meet due to a lack of opportunity.
- Inform their RTO assessor if they will not be at work on a date that has been previously arranged for the assessor to visit the workplace.



CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS TO SUPERVISORS

As highlighted above, the immediate supervisor/coordinator/manager of the trainee support worker is integral to the success of their training, however there are both challenges and benefits to supervisors who commit to this role as “coach and mentor” to staff in training.

The table below highlights both challenges and benefits.

Challenges	Making time	Front line managers are typically very busy people. The added responsibility of being more involved in training may impact on the supervisor’s ability to perform other key tasks.
	Conflicting roles	The supervisor is also part of the reporting/disciplinary process. It may be better for an appropriately qualified and experienced peer to take this role.
Benefits	Better trained staff	Eliminates the need for “re-training”. Inadequate training early is often the reason for poorly performing staff further down the track.
	Organisational culture	Working with employees who are an integrated part of the organisation will ensure that the support worker learns the right policies, procedures and values, exactly as intended by the organisation.
	Training contextualised to the workplace.	The needs of both the organisation and its service users are more likely to be met.



ASSESSMENT

Rules of Assessment and Good Evidence

There are some fundamental rules applied to the use of “good” evidence when making a final assessment.

The basic requirements of good evidence are;

- **Authenticity** - The evidence is genuine and trustworthy. That is it should be the trainee’s own work and not someone else’s. Direct observation therefore is probably the best way of ensuring authentic evidence
- **Validity** - The evidence should show the trainee is competent in the skills required by a particular unit/units and should not be about other skills.
- **Reliability** - This means that the evidence indicates that the individual can perform a task to the required standard, with regularity and consistency, and every assessor who looked at the evidence would make the same assessment decision.
- **Sufficiency** - There should be enough evidence for the assessor to be sure that they can make an accurate decision. (see triangular evidence below)

Points for gathering “good” evidence

1. Is the evidence reliable?

In other words, can the assessor trust the evidence presented? It may require several observations of the trainee in different situations, and require the assessor to dig deeper by asking questions of both the support worker and their supervisor.

2. The concept of “triangular evidence”

This means that the assessor does not rely solely on just one form of evidence. A good assessment decision should be based on three different forms of evidence. So a good assessment decision could be made by using:

- Direct observation of the support worker performing their job.
- Feedback from the support worker’s immediate supervisor (Refer to p.9), and
- Verbally questioning the support worker with “What would you do if...?” and “Why would you/did you do that?” types of questions.

3. Does the evidence show consistent performance, rather than a “one off” demonstration of competence?

Is the assessor sure that the support worker demonstrates competency on a consistent basis? Seeing a staff member using good communication skills with one of their clients once, does not ensure that this behaviour is consistent. The assessor needs to see the worker using good communication skills on many occasions and will also seek feedback from others who have observed the worker over a period of time in their workplace.



4. Is the evidence current?

In other words is the evidence based on the knowledge and skills that the person displays now? Whilst past experience is useful to assist a final assessment decision, the assessor must be sure that the person being assessed has the necessary knowledge and skills “right now”. An assessor would be wary of someone using evidence from 10 years ago, unless the person could demonstrate that they are still currently able to perform tasks at the required level of competency.

5. Is evidence gathered by the use of holistic assessment tasks?

Good assessments should attempt to use workplace tasks that enable the worker to demonstrate a range of competencies. For example a support worker may be given the task of planning, facilitating and evaluating a community integration strategy for a person with a disability. This one task does in fact require the worker to demonstrate a whole range of skills. They must:

- be well organised,
- they need to communicate clearly to their client and maybe the client’s family,
- they need to research the availability of appropriate community options for their client,
- they may be required to transport the client safely,
- they must facilitate support from community members, and so on.

In terms of the knowledge the support worker needs to demonstrate; an awareness of various organisational policies and procedures, an understanding of person centred planning and the disability service standards and relevant legislation. By demonstrating, over a period of time, that they are able to successfully support their client to engage with their community, the support worker has shown skills in many areas. Holistic assessment avoids the use of too many assessment tasks when assessing all of the competencies needed to gain a qualification (**See example provided as an appendix**).

Remember, the final decision on whether a person is competent may only be made by the RTO assessor. However in reaching a decision, the assessor may use a variety of evidence gathering methods.



Evidence from the support worker's immediate supervisor

This is usually referred to as “Third party evidence”. In workplace training and assessment, this form of evidence is very important. Why? Because as already described, the Supervisor will probably know the support worker's skills better than anyone. They will certainly have observed the person many more times than the RTO assessor, and as a result will know if the person's work performance is consistent. It is also not possible or even appropriate, for an assessor to be in the workplace to observe certain activities, for example when assisting a person with a disability to carry out personal care tasks. In this situation feedback from the person's immediate supervisor, as well as verbal questioning of the individual may be the most appropriate forms of evidence.

Customised documents and assessment tasks

Wherever possible the documentation and situations used during assessment should be customised to suit the support worker's place of work. For example, when a worker is being assessed on their capacity to follow appropriate Occupational Health and Safety procedures, the organisation's policies, procedures and documentation should be used, rather than a generic version.

If the worker is required to undertake an assessment of a client, the current assessment tool employed by their organisation should be used. This is a good example of how the service provider may be directly involved in the planning of assessment tasks. Remember that the RTO may be providing training to support workers across a range of service delivery models. They need the guidance of individual service providers to use the most appropriate assessment tasks and tools.

The workplace supervisor may provide feedback that will assist the RTO when designing assessments. In fact, in order to meet the requirements of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) all RTOs must demonstrate that they have consulted with employers to ensure that the training and assessment that they provide meets the needs of service providers in the sector. The process of consultation between RTOs and Service providers is known as “validation”.

For example - Support workers from a disability service provider were given a generic form to complete, in order to identify the current needs, goals and aspirations of someone that they were supporting. The service provider felt that the form was not appropriate for their specific service, so worked with the RTO to design a more appropriate form specifically for their service model. RTOs will welcome this kind of feedback and input from the employers of the workers they are assessing.

Assessment tasks should be driven by the service provider (within the requirements of the unit evidence guide). Again, wherever possible the service provider should guide the RTO to use assessments that “fit” their service delivery model. Again the RTO will be happy to modify assessments around the service provider's needs.

So, Supervisors should let their RTO know what they require. The RTO won't know unless someone tells them!



RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

A very important component of work based training is the “Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). This provides the person undertaking training the opportunity to demonstrate competency before any training is delivered. The person must still be assessed using the same guidelines as previously described, but the assessment is carried out without doing the training first. This form of assessment acknowledges that people may already have a range of skills, so credit may be given for these skills, thus reducing the amount of time required for training. The cost of RPL can also be cheaper than the cost of undertaking training.

As the supervisor of a trainee, your staff may ask you questions about RPL, so it is good if you have an idea of what it is and how it works. You might even want to apply for some recognition yourself!

“Frequently Asked Questions” about RPL

What is recognition?

Recognition of prior learning, or recognition, is a way to use your existing skills and knowledge to get a formal qualification. It involves getting your current experience assessed and taking into account other qualifications you may already have. It means you don't have to waste time learning things you already know how to do.

Can anyone apply for recognition?

Yes. Anyone can apply for recognition.

I have no qualifications from my industry but I have skills, knowledge and experience gained from working in that industry. What can I do to have these skills recognised?

The recognition process takes into account all relevant skills, knowledge and experience that you have regardless of the way you got them. This includes experience and training you have gained through paid work, volunteer work or just life in general. Through the recognition process, you may be able to gain a complete qualification or, if you have gaps in your knowledge, parts of a qualification. If you need to, you can complete the rest of the qualification through training.



Why would I bother with recognition?

Recognition is generally faster and cheaper than completing a qualification from scratch and provides you with the opportunity to get; a promotion or more money entry into a different career or job entry to or credit in another course; satisfaction from having your skills formally recognised. The qualification you get is the same that you would get if you completed a full training qualification but with the added bonus that you won't spend time in the classroom going over things you already know, making it faster. Because you don't attend class, getting your qualification through recognition means you do not have to pay resource fees, making it cheaper.

Does recognition have the same requirements as other assessments?

Yes. The recognition assessment process is as rigorous as any other assessment. However, the type of evidence that you need to provide may be different from normal class assessments. Importantly though, the recognition process is flexible. You and your training provider assessor will discuss and determine the evidence you can provide.

How long will it take?

This will depend on how much recognition you are applying for. Your training provider assessor will be able to advise you on how much time it is likely to take you to complete your recognition process.

Is it easier and cheaper just to enrol in the subjects?

Going through recognition can save you time and effort. It will also mean you avoid spending time in classroom going over things you already know. In most cases, applying for recognition will also save you or your employer, money because you do not have to pay resources fees.

How difficult is it for me to apply for recognition?

After you discuss your skills, knowledge and work experience with your RTO assessor to work out if recognition is right for you, applying for recognition and going through the assessment process should be straightforward. The assessor will be able to:

- provide you with information on the recognition process
- help you with any forms that need to be completed
- discuss the evidence required
- support you through the process



What is involved in the assessment process?

Once you and your assessor agree that you are a suitable candidate for recognition you will be required to gather evidence which proves your competence. When you provide evidence you may be required to:

- answer questions about your work experience in an interview
- demonstrate your skills and knowledge by completing practical tasks or showing your assessor how you would complete a task
- provide supporting evidence such as a résumé, job description, report from employers/supervisors. This evidence must confirm that you have shown competence over a period of time and can work under different conditions

If I need help at any time during the process, what can I do?

Your training provider assessor is there to help you. Contact your assessor at any time, if you are not sure what to do or if you need help to gather evidence.

Is study I completed many years ago OK as evidence for recognition?

Yes, but you will need to show how you have applied and maintained the skills and knowledge.

What if I can't find my old qualifications?

Contact the organisation where you completed your studies as they may be able to provide you with a copy of your qualification. If you cannot get a copy of your qualification, you can still go through a recognition process, however, you will need to show your competence in some other way.

Can I just show you my skills rather than have to dig out old qualifications?

Yes. You can demonstrate your skills and knowledge without having to present your qualifications.

What can I do if I am not happy with the result of my recognition application?

If you are not happy with the outcome of your recognition application, the training provider you went to will have a process to follow. When you first apply for recognition, the training provider should provide you with information about this process. If you did not receive this information, contact your training provider or your assessor

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The information and advice provided is provided solely on the basis that users will be responsible for making their own assessment of the matters discussed herein and are advised to verify all relevant representations, statements and information.

TIPS FOR WORKPLACE SUPERVISORS

Supervisors/Coordinators are usually very busy people, but investing some of your time in supporting the training of staff, is productive for everyone involved in providing services to people with disabilities. Here are some of the things you might do to make the training experience of your staff a success.

1. Make yourself familiar with training content and assessment tasks.

How? If possible try and sit in on RTO training workshops. Familiarising yourself with the information that is being provided to your staff, as well as the assessment tasks that they will be expected to complete, puts you in a much better position to support and guide them through the training process. This also provides the opportunity to advise trainers/presenters of any customisation that may be required to suit your particular organisation.

2. Meet staff regularly to discuss their training progress.

This is important for two reasons. First it reinforces to the staff member that the training is valued and important. Secondly it offers you the opportunity to encourage your staff and give positive feedback on their work. In most training situations the trainee will be provided with some form of record booklet that requires a sign off from their immediate supervisor. If your staff is undertaking a traineeship they will have a formal “Training Record Book” which documents their progress. However all staff undertaking training will be provided with some form of workplace evidence checklist which performs a similar purpose (see the sample provided as an appendix) You also might want to use a diarised formal feedback session with your staff. The staff’s diary can act as a prompt to the clarification of work performance and understanding of policies and procedures.

3. Try and provide multiple practise opportunities

When you know what is expected of the staff being trained, try and give them plenty of opportunities to carry out particular tasks or procedures.

4. Meet regularly with the RTO assessor.

The more liaison between you and the assessor, the more accurate the assessment of your staff will be. So if you find it impossible to sit in on training sessions delivered by the RTO, try and catch up with the assessor whenever they visit your workplace. Don’t be afraid to ask them questions about “why” they are using a particular assessment. You may have a better idea!



5. Utilise opportunities for incidental training that reinforces the training delivered by the RTO.

As the immediate supervisor of the trainee support worker you will be giving guidance, advice and correcting the new support worker as they learn. For example; you notice a new worker going into a person's room without knocking the door first. When you tell the staff that they should always knock first, also link the need to do this with the Disability Service Standards. Whilst the RTO training will try to link theory to practice, it is much more effective when the workplace provides opportunities to reinforce or clarify some of the philosophical and legislative expectations of working with people who have a disability.

Another example might be when you observe the new worker giving a three step instruction to a person with a disability whom you know needs to be given clear one step instructions in order for them to process a question or request. You might take the support worker aside and explain how they should communicate with the person next time, but also link the reason for this to the training the support worker is receiving. i.e. you would have learned (with the RTO) the importance of understanding the individual's preferred method of communication. This is a good example of how you need to modify how you communicate with that person to ensure that they understand. You could even suggest to the support worker that they use this situation as an opportunity to discuss communication skills at the next RTO workshop/training session. The other participants in the training will then, also learn from the experience.

6. Delegate some responsibility for supporting new staff to an experienced co worker.

It is considered good practice to "buddy" a new staff member with a very competent and experienced co worker. Involve this person in the training process so that they may supplement your role as coach and mentor.

7. Use your staff meetings as an opportunity for new staff to give feedback on what they are learning during training.

As well as reinforcing that your organisation values training, this may also assist existing staff keep up to date with current training in the sector. It may also provide an opportunity for more general feedback to staff in training.

8. Access free training to gain assessor qualifications.

Any organisation which offers a traineeship to support workers may access free accredited training in seven units from the Certificate IV in Training & Assessment. Ask your RTO for information if you would like to take up this training and gain a nationally recognised assessment qualification. The more aware you are of why's and how's of assessment the more effective you will be as a workplace coach.



9. Access support

Other than talking to the RTO providing the training for your staff, you could also seek advice from;

- The Disability Sector Training Liaison Coordinator, David Rogers
david.rogers@nds.org.au Ph: 9208 9815
- The Disability Sector Training Coordinators Network, Charlotte Howell
charlotte.howell@hcsgr.com.au Ph: 6274 3722
- Supervisors from service providers in your area who are also supporting staff training in the workplace. Form your own support network of workplace supervisors.

A FINAL WORD

You, as the immediate supervisor of the worker being trained, are absolutely critical to achieving a successful training outcome. Please:

- Value training
- Find out what the training and assessment involves
- Support your support worker
- Talk often to the Training provider
- Don't be afraid to suggest how training and assessment could be done in a better way.
- **GOOD LUCK!**



APPENDIX I

Assessment Task (Summarised version)

The following task provides the opportunity to assess the unit “Support community participation and inclusion”, as well as elements from several other units listed below. It is an example of an ‘holistic’ assessment task.

- “Work effectively with people with a disability,
- “Maintain an environment designed to empower people with a disability”
- “Participate in safety procedures for direct care work”
- “Participate in the implementation of individual plans”
- “Contribute to skills development and maintenance”

Description

You will need to work together effectively with other staff members to support people with disabilities to integrate in a community setting. You will assess the location, plan necessary adaptations and family liaison, facilitate communication between the person with a disability and the service provider(s) and enhance client access to other services.

Using your client profile and lifestyle plan as your starting point, look at your client’s likes, dislikes, skills and goals. Select an activity in which the individual might like to participate in one of the following areas: recreation, work, education, culture and religion.

Include your client, his/her family and/or advocate, your colleagues and any other relevant and significant people in discussion to help you make your selection. Prior to taking your client to the venue you will need to visit the venue to consider its suitability in terms of access and talk to the service provider to ensure that they are adequately prepared and supportive of your client’s involvement.

Once you have assessed the location and prepared the client for the activity, you will need to take them to the location/facility to participate in the activity.

You will be responsible for organising transport, preparing the individual for the activity, and once at the venue you will be expected to facilitate communication between the client and staff/other members/participants at the venue. Your plan should be such that over time, your involvement should be reduced, as the service provider/other participants learn to communicate with the individual.

You will need to book time with your trainer to do this. The trainer will be assessing you by observing and questioning while you implement your plan. The trainer will use a checklist to do this (you will get a copy of the checklist before your assessment).

After you have implemented your community inclusion plan with the resident, you will need to reflect on what has taken place and recommend modifications required for future visits.



APPENDIX II

This is a sample of a Training Record or Journal

N.B. Not all of the required criteria for this unit have been listed. It is a sample only.

CHCDIS322A	Support community participation and inclusion	Trainee	Employer	RTO
Elements	Performance Criteria			
1. Support the person with a disability to engage with a social network and the broad community	1.1 Identify interests, abilities and requirements of person with disability in order that they may engage with a social network			
	1.2 Match relevant options, networks and services to requirements of person with disability			
	1.3 Identify and access appropriate resources according to organisation policy and protocols			
	1.4 Provide information about options available to person with disability and/or their advocate/s /carer			
	1.5 Recognise and accommodate individual and cultural differences			
2. Support strategies for community participation & inclusion according to individualised plan	2.1 Support the person and, where appropriate their family, to implement strategies to address barriers to participation, according to the individualised plan			
	2.2 Assist the person and, where appropriate their family, to identify and access community options that will meet needs identified in the individualised plan			
	2.3 Support the person and, where appropriate their family, to access opportunities to establish connections through shared interests			
	2.4 Assist the person, if appropriate, to become an active member of their local neighbourhood			
	2.5 Provide the person and, where appropriate their family, the necessary supports for participation, according to the individualised plan			
3. Assist in minimising isolation for people with disabilities	3.1 Assess physical barriers to participation and identify solutions with involvement of person with disability			
	3.2 Recognise own limitations in addressing issues and seek advice when necessary			
	3.3 Assist the person and, where appropriate their family, to implement strategies to address transport issues according to the individualised plan			
Each completed Element must be initialled by appropriate assessor before final sign off.				

Completed	Name	Signature	Position–Title	Date
Trainee:				
Employer				
RTO:				
Comments:				

Notes



