

Overcoming Barriers to Employment Success Facilitator's Guide

Overview

There are nearly seven million people officially counted as “unemployed” by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Another five million people say they want a job but are no longer counted as part of the labor force because they have not looked for a job in a month.

Despite relatively low unemployment, the labor force participation rate, which is a better measurement of the active workforce, is still a stubborn 62 percent.

For one reason or another, such as the belief there is no work for them or their inability to apply for or keep a job, they have stopped looking regularly. In fact, America has plenty of job openings. According to the BLS, six million jobs remain unfilled and staffing agencies alone had 13,000 openings to fill across the country. Something is stopping people from working.

Designed to be a companion piece to the *Overcoming Barriers to Employment Success* video, this facilitator's guide is provided as an interactive resource to engage and enlighten individuals and groups who may have trouble finding and keeping meaningful work. It contains conversation points and discussion questions, homework assignment suggestions, as well as a quiz to help assess comprehension of key points from the video.

By using the guide's tools, you can help participants self-analyze and reflect, as well as gain new insight and information that may help them become more successful in their job search and lives. Some changes can be made individually through self-diagnosis and changing one's habits and behaviors. Other changes may require intervention or assistance from community-based programs and agencies.

During any group discussions, it will be important to set a tone of support. Many of these topics may be deeply personal, and cause a certain amount of anxiety among participants.

The video, as well as this guide, focuses on overcoming the following five barriers to employment success:

- Personal and Financial Barriers
- Emotional and Physical Barriers
- Career Decision-Making and Planning Barriers
- Job Search Knowledge Barriers
- Education and Training Barriers

These five barriers to employment success are the same categories evaluated in the *Barriers to Employment Success Inventory (BESI)*, also published by JIST Career Solutions. *BESI* is available in both digital and print versions, and this inventory can be another resource to help individuals identify their own barriers to employment and develop a success plan.

In addition to the *BESI*, JIST Career Solutions publishes a variety of inventories designed to help individuals start their career exploration, help them with launching a new job, and to evaluate their job readiness. If you would like to integrate one or more of these inventories into your program, contact your JIST account manager.

Personal and Financial Barriers

Honestly and objectively understanding the obstacles to job stability is the first step someone can take in assessing their future. It may help set in motion a plan of action to confront and overcome those barriers that prevent someone from being a valued member of the workforce.

Discussion Question 1

What does the term “barrier” mean to you?

Discussion Question 2

What are examples of some barriers that you have faced? What are some techniques that you or others have used to overcome those barriers?

- Lack of reliable transportation
- Food insecurity
- Childcare issues

Discussion Question 3

What experiences or relationships have shaped your attitude about finances and employment?

Encourage the members of your group to truly reflect on their attitudes and beliefs associated with this question. Ask them to write down their thoughts, being honest. Reassure them that they can keep these reflections private, but explain that being honest with oneself is a helpful first step in moving forward. You may be your own hardest judge, but that is the only person who is judging you.

Note: This could be a simple question for some, or incredibly deep and dense for others.

Homework Assignment 1

Managing one’s money and keeping expenses in line with an income is an important responsibility. Having “financial wealth” does not mean having a lot of money. It means that

someone is living within their means; they have enough money to pay for living and day-to-day expenses.

Use the following introduction to frame this Wants-vs-Needs activity to help learners reflect on how they might make better choices regarding how they spend their money. After job seekers fill out the worksheet, you may invite a discussion about designations they have made, and how they might rethink those choices.

Wants vs. Needs

It's easy *to* spend money. What's not as easy is spending money-wisely. One way to help you spend wisely is to separate your needs from your wants, and spend money primarily on your needs.

Wants are nice to have but are not essential: eating out, going to concerts, or getting the newest cell phone and ring tones.

Needs are the essentials, the basics of life that you must have to survive: food, housing, and clothing. Some expenses that relate to your job also are needs, such as transportation to and from work, and healthcare coverage to keep you well enough to go to work.

Think about what you have spent money on in the last month. Try to categorize each spent item as a want or a need, and indicate the amount spent on that item.

Now, think about how you are planning to spend money in the near future. Try to categorize each item as either a want or a need.

After your group completes their lists, ask them to review the items that were marked and needs and wants. Are there some items marked as needs that really are wants? Ask the job seekers to consider if spend can be reduced by reclassifying a need as a want? When money is tight, how might the spend be prioritized?

Homework Assignment 2

Use the following worksheet to identify how much money you spent last month. Then, use that month's information to help you plan next month's budget.

BUDGET WORKSHEET

Month: _____ Year: _____

Income

Paychecks \$ _____

Other Income (tax refunds, child support, cash jobs) \$ _____

Total Monthly Income \$ _____

Expenses

Rent/Mortgage \$ _____

Utilities \$ _____

Internet, cable, phones \$ _____

Other housing expenses (insurance, taxes) \$ _____

Groceries and household supplies \$ _____

Dining out/entertainment \$ _____

Car payment \$ _____

Car insurance \$ _____

Car expenses (gas, oil changes, maintenance) \$ _____

Other transportation expenses (tolls, cabs/ride sharing/bus fees) \$ _____

Medicine \$ _____

Health Insurance \$ _____

Other health expenses (doctor's appointments, eyeglasses) \$ _____

Childcare/child support \$ _____

Clothing \$ _____

Credit card payment \$ _____

Bank fees/financial fees \$ _____

Prepaid cards/phone cards \$ _____

Educational expenses (school supplies, student loans) \$ _____

Other expenses this month \$ _____

Total Monthly Expenses \$ _____

\$ _____ (Income) — \$ _____ (Expenses) = \$ _____

Maybe your income is more than your expenses. You have money left to save or spend.
Maybe your expenses are more than your income. Look at your budget closely to find expenses that you may possibly be able to reduce or cut out.

Discussion Question 4

How does life “interfere” with maintaining a budget? What are some examples?
What community-based resources may be available to assist staying within your budget?

Emotional and Physical Barriers

Some barriers that affect our overall well-being and job search are internal. Things like a positive attitude and outlook, controlling one’s emotions, and managing stress are equally important in becoming successful.

A physical impairment or disability may also impact employment. Fortunately, there are resources available to deal with these barriers.

Everyone experiences anger-it’s a completely normal emotion, and it’s healthy within limits. But as we know, anger can become an issue when it gets out of control. Although it might sometimes feel like “anger” explodes and comes out of nowhere, this is almost never the case. Anger builds slowly, and if you aren’t paying attention, it can happen entirely outside your awareness.

Discussion Question 1

How can your attitude help you or hurt you in a job search or in a job? What are some things you can do to improve or maintain a positive outlook?

Homework Assignment 1

On a piece of paper, write down all the things (at least three in each area) that you would like to become more effective in your personal and work life. Look at your list. Circle one thing from your personal life and one thing from your work life that you really want to change.

Discussion Question 2

Can you think of a time when your anger caught you by surprise? In retrospect, were there any warning signs you could have picked up on?

Discussion Question 3

When is anger healthy, and when does it become unhealthy or harmful?

Homework Assignment 2

Write down your responses to the following questions. Recall scenes from the video when recording your answers.

- What are examples of physical barriers?
- What might help to overcome those barriers?
- What are your top three physical barriers? List specific ways on how you can overcome these barriers?

Career Decision Making and Planning Barriers

Career success is influenced by an employee's ability to provide value to an employer. Helping job seekers understand that they can make choices to make it more possible for them to find a job that is a good fit will help them succeed in the jobs they choose to pursue. The following questions can begin conversations about the type of work a job seeker would enjoy.

Discussion Question 1

Think about your interests, hobbies, and skills. What do you do that makes you a good fit in certain industries? What does this tell you about your skills, knowledge, and talents?

Discussion Question 2

What would be the perfect job for you? Imagine you are in that role. What are you doing? Why would you like it so much?

Homework Assignment 1

Make a list of three categories—your skills (things you have background/experience or are good at), your hobbies/interests (things you enjoy in your free time), and preferred work environment (would you prefer being outside, in an office, or warehouse/factory? Would you enjoy working alongside others or by yourself?).

Once you have a list, circle your top two answers in each category.

Next, brainstorm occupations/industries that might need someone with those skills and interests. Don't limit yourself, but be honest.

What experience/training/education might you need to start toward that career path?

Research community resources, including your local workforce office, to check for assistance opportunities.

Job-Search Knowledge Barriers

Knowing and understanding the job market is almost as crucial as being able to perform the job itself. In a competitive market, a job seeker needs to learn how to position themselves to gain an interview first, and secondly, how to share with a hiring manager the skills and value they can add to an organization.

Homework Assignment 1

Develop your 15 second introduction. What would you say if you had an opportunity to introduce yourself to a company's hiring manager? Ideally, your 15 second intro would include:

- Your name at the beginning
- The position/type of work you are seeking (“I'm interested in a position in your logistics/shipping and receiving area.”)

- Your background and skills
- Anything else that might interest them or set you apart
- Your name

Practice this. You don't want it to sound too rehearsed or scripted, but want to be able to market your skills and abilities. It is also a good idea to get some index cards and write/type this out to drop off when a hiring manager is not available.

Discussion Question 1

What is meant by the term "hidden" job market? Why would some employers prefer to use the hidden job market to fill openings? Where could you look to find more information about positions that may not be advertised?

Homework Assignment 2

Make a list of area employers who might have positions that appeal to you.

Discussion Question 2

Imagine you are sitting in a hiring manager's office. They ask this question, "What made you decide to pursue a career in this industry?" What are some possible responses? Why would an employer ask this question?

Homework Assignment 3

As the video suggested, a resume is your personal business card for employers to view. It is an important tool, no matter the position. Create your own resume and including the following information:

- Your contact information
- Job objective or the type of position or work you are seeking
- Work experience (include volunteer experience or non-paid assignments)
- Education/specialized training you have completed or certifications you have received

In addition to free online resume builders, JIST Career Solutions offers a variety of resources to help in building a strong resume. For more information, contact your account manager.

Discussion Question 3

What do employees really want from their jobs? Ask participants to mark how important they think each motivational item is to them as an employee on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being the most important. After compiling the participants' answers, compare them to the following statistics. How do their ranking compare to the source's employee rankings? How do the source's employer rankings relate to the sources employee rankings?

Motivational Item	Employers	Employees
Loyalty to workers	6	3
Job security	5	1
Promotional opportunities	3	2
Good wages	1	5
Help with personal problems	10	10
Feeling “in” on things	7	8
Tactful discipline	9	9
Interesting work	2	4
Good working conditions	4	6
Full appreciation for work done	8	7

Source: *HR News*, published by the Society of Human Resource Management, October 10, 2020. Data used to create this table was compiled from survey responses from 200 companies across the United States.

Discussion Question 4

Think back to an interview you have had. What difficulties did you face? What made the interview a failure or success?

Education and Training Barriers

Developing one’s skills and learning new methods is critical in today’s workplace. This can be done through a variety of resources, ranging from further education to certifications to online workshops. An employee who makes themselves more valuable to their employer will have more success remaining employed and gaining advancement and promotion.

Discussion Question 1

What skills do you want to learn? What do you want to learn more about? Provide some examples. What is keeping you from exploring those new ideas or skills? Why is lifelong learning important?

Homework Assignment 1

Think about your employment and career goals. How would you further your own education or gain additional training for a desired job or position? Research what additional education/training you would need. Then write down the necessary steps. What community funding might be available to assist (Community/Junior College, workforce office, workshops, internships/apprenticeships)?

Quiz

1. Which of the following is a common obstacle to getting to work consistently and on time?
(Personal/Financial barrier)
 - a. Not having a checking account
 - b. Lack of reliable transportation
 - c. Not having a new wardrobe
 - d. Not knowing the names of your co-workers
2. Bad attendance caused by sickness or stressful home situations can cause you to lose a job.
(Personal/Financial barrier)
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. Which of the following is not a good money management practice. (Personal /Financial barrier)
 - a. Create a budget.
 - b. Open a savings account.
 - c. Identify wants and needs.
 - d. Use multiple credit cards.
4. Budgeting can help you better understand how you are spending your money so that you can better save money. (Personal/Financial barrier)
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. Which of the following is not an example of an emotional barrier that can affect the success of a job search? (Emotional/Physical barrier)
 - a. stress
 - b. excessive tardiness
 - c. positive attitude
 - d. anger
6. Which of the following is not a strategy to manage stress or anger? (Emotional/Physical barrier)
 - a. listen to relaxing music
 - b. take deep breaths
 - c. avoid exercise
 - d. get enough sleep
7. An addiction is a type of physical barrier. (Emotional/Physical barrier)
 - a. True
 - b. False
8. There is no difference between a job and a career. (Career Decision-Making and Planning barriers)
 - a. True
 - b. False

9. Fear of failure can lead to poor decision-making. (Career Decision-Making and Planning barriers)
- True
 - False
10. What is the last step in the decision-making process? (Career Decision-Making and Planning barriers)
- Weigh alternatives.
 - Gather information.
 - Take action.
 - Understand what is at stake in the decision.
11. What is the difference between “visible” jobs and “hidden” jobs? (Job-Search Knowledge barriers)
- Visible are jobs that are known and posted; hidden are open jobs that are not yet advertised.
 - Visible jobs are internally posted jobs; hidden jobs are jobs that have been filled.
 - Visible jobs are entry-level; hidden jobs require prior experience
 - Visible jobs require a college degree; hidden jobs require a high school education.
12. What is the term for connecting with people who can provide you with information that may lead to a job? (Job-Search Knowledge barriers)
- interviewing
 - studying
 - researching
 - networking
13. These documents need to convince an employer to interview you. (Job-Search Knowledge barriers)
- driver’s license and Social Security card
 - W-9 form and references
 - resume and a cover letter
 - current photo and diploma
14. Which of the following should you do to prepare for a job interview? (Job-Search Knowledge barriers)
- Research the organization.
 - Prepare questions to ask the interviewer.
 - Make a plan on how you are going to get to the interview.
 - All of these.
15. Community colleges and trade schools can offer training for in-demand jobs. (Education and Training barriers)
- True
 - False

Answer Key:

1. b. Lack of reliable transportation.
2. a. True
3. d. Use multiple credit cards.
4. a. True
5. d. excessive tardiness
6. c. avoid exercise
7. a. True
8. b. False
9. a. True
10. c. Take action
11. a. Visible are jobs that are known and posted; hidden are open jobs that are not yet advertised.
12. d. networking
13. c. resume and cover letter
14. d. All of these
15. a. True