



# EMPLOYMENT: Building Awareness



E1MN is Minnesota’s state agency partnership to advance Employment First outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities.

These lessons can help students build their knowledge and awareness about what meaningful employment means for them, and about employment-related topics they can explore as they make a plan for work.

### LESSON PLANS FOR TEACHERS

LESSON 1: Meaningful Employment definition .....page 2

LESSON 2: Employment topics .....page 3

LESSON 3: Employment tools .....page 5

LESSON 4: My Vault’s Work activities .....page 7

**LENGTH**  
20–30 minutes for each lesson

**TARGET PARTICIPANTS**  
Youth in transition (14–24 years of age)

# Lesson 1:

## Meaningful employment definition



**LENGTH:** 20-25 minutes

**OBJECTIVE:** Students can describe what meaningful employment means.

### INTRO

**Talking point:** We're going to spend some time talking about meaningful work and how to create that for yourself.

### DISCUSSION

#### What is meaningful work?

**Instructions:** Ask each student to share what they think 'meaningful employment' means – "Let's go around the room and everyone share what they think of when they hear 'meaningful work?'"

**Answer:** Meaningful work means something different for each person, but the broad definition is the same for everyone—it's about finding work that you like and that matches your strengths, interests, preferences, and needs, and where you can make money to pay the bills and have some fun.

### ACTIVITY

#### Stories about meaningful work

**Materials:** Video: [Finding competitive, enjoyable employment](#)

- Talking points:**
- Let's watch a 5-minute video about what employment means to several youth.
    - As you watch the video, look for the things you want out of a job; the things that will make work meaningful to you.
    - After the video I'll ask you to share the things you saw in the video that you also want from work. (*Play video.*)
  - You can see how employment means something a little bit different to each person in that video.



*Video: Finding competitive, enjoyable employment*

### DISCUSSION

#### What might meaningful work mean to you?

**Instructions:** Ask students to raise their hand and share something from the video that they liked, something that also means meaningful work to them.

- Answers:**
- It's a way to make a difference in the world, make an impact on the economy. I have a lot of great co-workers. (Andrew)
  - To pay the bills and do some fun stuff. (Dupree)
  - An opportunity to increase job skills which increases potential for getting career of my dreams. (José-Daniel)
  - Gives you an identity, enhances your self-worth, makes you feel valuable. (Camilo)
  - Provides an opportunity to work as a team to reach a goal. (TK)
  - Provides an opportunity to be part of a team and contribute to something I couldn't do on my own. (Kevin)
  - To do well and thrive at what you do and show other people what you can do. (Hannah)
  - It gives me purpose and something to feel proud of. It feels nice being able to tell people the kind of work I do. A number of people from work have become friends. (Ethan)

# Lesson 2: Employment topics



**LENGTH:** 20-25 minutes

**OBJECTIVE:** Students can name at least one employment topic.

## INTRO

**Talking point:** There are six topics that can help you create meaningful employment. Let's look at each one, then let's see if together we can match some of the topics to examples in a video.

## DISCUSSION Employment topics

**Materials:** Handout: [Finding meaningful employment \(PDF\)](#)

- Instructions:**
- Give students the handout and describe the six topics by sharing the information on the handout: Career exploration, Work-based learning, Benefits planning, the job process, skills for success, and advocacy and supports in employment.
  - After you've described each topic, ask students to pick one that they have spent some time thinking about or that they have questions about. Ask them to share their thoughts or questions about the topic.



*Finding meaningful employment handout*

- Talking point:**
- Use these questions to prompt discussion if needed:
    - **Career exploration:** Have you spent time thinking about your strengths and interests or possible careers (e.g., interested in working with cars)?
    - **Work-based learning:** Have you spent time trying out jobs? Have you ever toured a business or talked to people that do jobs that you might like to do? If so, what did you learn about yourself? (E.g., that you liked working with customers, machines, or something else?)
    - **Benefits planning:** Do you get benefits, like SSI, and are you or your parents worried about changes to your benefits when working, do you need to learn more about this topic?
    - **The job process:** Are you unsure how to look for a job and need to learn how to do that?
    - **Skills for success:** Have you thought about all the skills you learned from the chores you do at home, volunteer work at church or other places?
    - **Advocacy and supports:** Do you need information about how to talk about your disability or ask for accommodations when getting a job?
  - Thinking about these things will help you figure out what you want to do for meaningful work!

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# Lesson 2: Employment topics (cont.)



## ACTIVITY

### An employment story

**Materials:** Video: [Andrew's story](#)

- Talking points:**
- Now that you know some things that can help you create meaningful work, I'm going to play the first part of a video about Andrew, where he shares some of his experiences with work.
  - As you listen to Andrew, see if you can identify one of the employment topics he brings up.



Video: [Andrew's story](#)

**Instructions:** Play the first three minutes and thirty seconds of the video, or if time allows, play the entire video.

## DISCUSSION

### An employment story

**Instructions:** Ask students to raise their hand if they know an employment topic that Andrew brought up.

- Answers:**
- **Career exploration:** He has identified his personal strengths; adaptable, reliable, works well on a team. Took some classes that also helped him figure out what he was good at and got a degree in economics. He has found that he's passionate about food waste.
  - **Work-based learning:** He had 4 or 5 jobs that have given him experience.
  - **Benefits planning:** Nothing in this segment.
  - **The job process:** Has experience he has added to his resume.
  - **Skills for success:** Nothing in this segment.
  - **Advocacy and supports:** He decided to disclose his disability and has an accommodation (speaking software).

# Lesson 3: Employment tools



**LENGTH:** 20-25 minutes

**OBJECTIVE:** Students can name at least two tools that will help plan for work.

## INTRO

**Talking point:** Now that we've explored some employment topics, let's look at some tools you can use to start creating your vision for work.

## DISCUSSION Charting the LifeCourse® tools

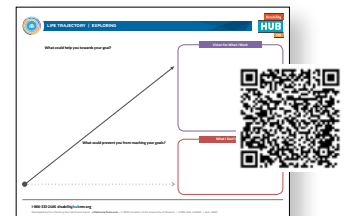
- Materials:**
- [My profile: Work](#) (PDF)
  - [Life trajectory](#) (PDF)
  - [Integrated supports star](#) (PDF)

**Instructions:** Print and give each student a copy of the three Charting the LifeCourse tools listed above.

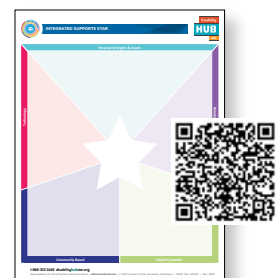
- Talking points:**
- These tools can help you learn more about yourself, set goals, and create a vision for what you want for work.
  - You can use these tools to organize your thoughts and speak up for what you want.
  - The first tool is the **one-page profile**, or My Profile: Work, which you can use to describe yourself – what people like about you, what would make you a good employee, what's important to you and how to best support you in work.
  - The next is the **life trajectory**. Use this worksheet to think about what you want for work and identify the steps or experiences you need to get there, including what you don't want your job or work to look like.
  - The third is the **integrated supports star**. You can use this worksheet to write about the tools, resources, and people in your life, and how they can help you get the work you want.



*My profile: Work*



*Life trajectory*



*Integrated supports star*

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# Lesson 3: Employment tools (cont.)



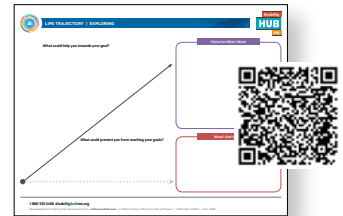
## ACTIVITY

### Practice using the Life trajectory tool

**Materials:** 'Life trajectory' tool from earlier discussion in this lesson (page 5)

**Instructions:** Help students think about what they want for work and identify some of the steps or experiences they need to get there.

- Talking points:**
- Now that you know about these three Charting the LifeCourse tools, let's practice using one so you can see how easy they are to use.
  - To start, let's put the **Life trajectory** tool to use.
  - Pull that out so it's in front of you.
  - In the top right corner, write 1 or 2 things that you want in your work.
  - Great! Below that write 1 or 2 things you do NOT want in your work.
  - Nice! Now, in the top left write down 1 or 2 things that could help you make that vision for what you want come true.
  - Good job! For the final step, in the middle write down 1-2 things that could stop you from reaching your goal.



*Life trajectory*

## DISCUSSION

### Your vision for employment

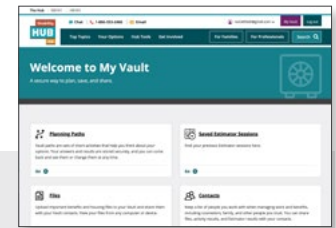
- Instructions:**
- Using their completed Life trajectory, ask 1-2 students to share their vision for what they want, what they don't want, what will help them reach their goal, and what will prevent them from reaching their goal.
  - After this discussion, encourage students to share their completed Life trajectory with the people who support them. For example, they could share it with their family or their IEP or transition planning team to help guide decisions about what to focus on for the year.

# Lesson 4: My Vault's Work activities



**LENGTH:** 25-30 minutes

- OBJECTIVE:**
- Students have a My Vault account.
  - Students can do planning activities in My Vault (with or without support).



*My Vault online tool*

## PREPARATION:

*Before doing this activity:*

- 1. Familiarize yourself with My Vault and how to use it to support students.** Review information on the Disability Hub MN website—you'll find an overview about [My Vault](#) and information about [using My Vault to support people](#).
- 2. Create your own My Vault account.** If you don't already have one, create your own professional My Vault account. With a professional account, you'll have access to additional sharing and collaboration features. Learn more about [how to create a professional My Vault account](#).
- 3. Introduce families to My Vault.** You can use this flyer: [My Vault: An introduction for families](#) (PDF) to let families know you'll be helping their student create their own My Vault account and do planning activities.
- 4. Determine if students will have access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone during the lesson** to create their own My Vault account and complete Vault activities.
  - **If students WILL have access to a device with an internet connection,** ask students if they have a personal email address, not their school email, to use for creating a My Vault account. If they do not have a personal email account, ask families for their support in getting a personal email for the student.
  - **If students will NOT have access to a device with an internet connection,** make copies of the following activities for students to complete in class while you demonstrate the activities through your My Vault account:
    - [My Profile: Work](#) (PDF)
    - [My Resources and Supports: Work](#) (PDF)
    - [My Vision: Work](#) (PDF)

## INTRO

- Talking points:**
- Let's take a look at a tool you can use to complete employment and planning activities online.
  - This tool is called My Vault. My Vault is a personal, online account you can use to explore options around work, understand benefits, store and share files, and plan for your future. My Vault is free, private, and secure. The account is yours to use for all the planning in your life, no matter if you're in or out of school or what agency or organization you're working with.
  - My Vault is a tool of Disability Hub MN. Disability Hub MN is a resource network that helps people find information, explore their options and plan for their future. The Hub is a resource you can use now and after you graduate from high school. You can use their website to find information and planning tools, and they also have experts who can answer questions and help you figure things out. You can reach out to a Hub expert by phone at 1-866-333-2466, and by chat or email on their website, [disabilityhubmn.org](http://disabilityhubmn.org).
  - Optional: Show students the [Welcome to My Vault](#) video (3 min, 52 seconds)

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# Lesson 4:

## My Vault's Work activities (cont.)



### ACTIVITY

### Create a My Vault account

**Talking point:** I'm going to walk through how to create your own My Vault account.

- Instructions:**
- Ask students if they already have a My Vault account. Any students who already have an account can skip this activity and wait to start the next.
  - If students have a computer or device with an internet connection and a personal email address, ask students to open an internet browser.
  - Project your computer screen. Open an internet browser and go to [disabilityhubmn.org](http://disabilityhubmn.org)
  - Demonstrate how to create a My Vault account using the step-by-step instructions in Disability Hub MN's [My Vault: How to create an account](#) (PDF) guide. If students are using a computer or device and create an account, go slow so they can follow you.



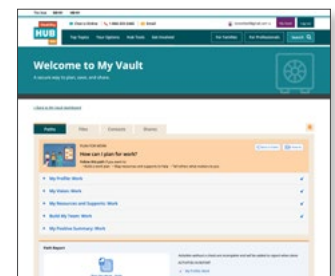
*My Vault: How to create an account guide*

- Talking points:**
- Now that you have a My Vault account, you'll see on the dashboard there are Planning Paths, Files, Saved Estimator Sessions, and Contacts.
  - Let's look at how you can do some of the Work activities in the Planning Paths area.

### ACTIVITY

### Overview of My Vault's "Plan for Work" path activities

- Instructions:**
- On the My Vault dashboard, click **Planning Paths**. On the next screen, in the Work Paths area, click on the box that says "**Plan for Work: How can I plan for work?**".
  - If students are following on a computer or device, go slow and check in with students as you go.



*My Vault's "Plan for Work" path*

- Talking points:** There are four activities in this Work path:
- The first one is **My Profile: Work**. This lets you make a one-page profile to let people know what matters to you, and how they can help.
  - The next activity is **My Vision: Work**. This lets you say what you want and don't want in a job and list things that will help you move to what you want and stay away from things you don't want.
  - The third activity is **My Resources and Supports: Work**. Here you can write about the people, tools, and other resources you have or need in your life to help you in the work you do or want to do.
  - The last activity is **My Team: Work**. This is where you can list the people in your life who can help you with employment, along with their contact information.

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# Lesson 4:

## My Vault's Work activities (cont.)

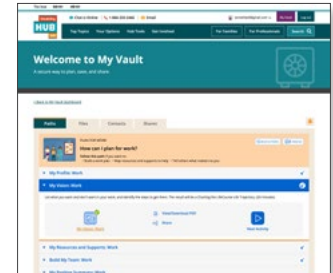


### ACTIVITY

### Complete a My Vault activity

**Materials:** Completed 'Life trajectory' tool from Lesson 3 (page 6)

- Talking points:**
- Let's take a few minutes to complete the activity, **My Vision: Work**, using the Life trajectory you created in our last lesson. (Have students use the Life trajectory worksheet they completed earlier for themselves as you walk them through each question.)
  - First, click on the My Vision: Work activity.
  - Then, click on the blue icon to open the activity.
  - Next, fill in your answers to the questions. Then you can download or share the results from the activity.



*"My Vision: Work" activity*

- Instructions:**
- Click on the View/Download PDF icon so students can see the information entered in the activity shows up on the PDF.
  - Click on the Share icon to show how you can share an activity with someone in the Contacts area of their My Vault account.



- Talking point:**
- As you can see, there are many activities in My Vault's "Plan for Work" path that you can use to learn more about yourself and your idea of what meaningful work is to you. Some of the activities can also be completed as printed PDFs.
  - You can complete these activities on your own or with your family.
  - Each activity in My Vault also has a sample you can use if you'd like an example.

### CLOSING

#### Talking points:

- By working on each of these topics you can create meaningful employment for yourself.
- You don't have to wait; you can begin learning about these topics now!
- Make sure you share the activities you do in your My Vault account with your family and others helping you plan.