

 One of the best ways to begin to understand an employer's staffing needs is to conduct an informational interview with that person. This involves

Here are 4 steps to complete an initial employer informational interview

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Informational interviews with local employers are a great way to:

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## Step 4: Conduct the informational interview.

At the start of your time at the business, build rapport through small talk and share what you know or have learned about the employer. Share information about your transition program and the different jobs that your students have participated in. When talking about disability, focus on the abilities, skills, and interests of your students. Avoid using human service or education jargon. Remember, when you meet a business person for the first time, they want to know who you are and what you can do for them.

This first meeting is to learn specifically about the business and its operations. Your main goals for the interview and tour are to:

1. clarify operational procedures,
2. identify tasks that a student could do, and
3. pinpoint opportunities where customizing a job position would benefit the employer.

Focus on questions that will get you the following information:

- the variety of tasks performed by the business
- tasks that need doing that take employees away from their more critical job duties
- tasks that could be done more efficiently or more often
- busy times of the day/week/year when the employer could use extra help
- jobs that are not getting done because no one has the time
- jobs that have the greatest turnover
- qualities the company looks for in an employee

On the tour, observe the worksite culture. For example, is it friendly, formal, informal, busy, loud, or quiet? This is important so you can match a student's personality with the right work environment. For instance, if a student is sociable and chatty, it would not be a good job match to have the student be in a work environment where that behavior is frowned upon.

After the interview, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this business a good match for a specific student?
- What skills does that student have that could fit this employer's needs?
- What specific tasks can that student do or learn to do that will benefit the business?

Keep in mind that the only reason a business hires anyone is to improve their bottom line. Convey to the employer that you're here to help them make a smart business decision that will improve their bottom line.

## Step 5: Follow up

If you have a student who would be a good fit, send a thank you note for the opportunity to visit the company. Review the needs of the company that you observed and/or discussed in the interview. Then ask for an additional meeting to explain your ideas on how you could partner with the business to meet those needs. Include a short introduction to the student you have in mind with some initial tasks that you think could help fill the needs of the company.

If the business is not a good fit for the students you support, still send a thank you note. Review their employment needs and make it clear that you will be on the lookout for a great employee in the future. Discuss other ways to partner (e.g., mock interviews, job try-outs, student informational interviews, résumé reviews, speaking at a job club, etc.). Invite your contact at the business to join a business council/transition team for increasing work opportunities for young people. Explain that you will maintain regular contact.

If the business was not a good fit, you and your student should decide which employer to focus on for your next informational interview.



Employer informational interviews and observational tours are an excellent way to get the information you need to develop a successful job proposal that will meet the needs of both the employer and a student. The next step is to put together a job proposal. Check out Grab and Go Practices: Job Development Planning for more on that!

