

Disability Employment Services

A diagnosis of Parkinson's does not necessarily mean early retirement from the workforce. Depending on the type of employment, many people living with Parkinson's continue to work for the length of their intended careers.

This information sheet offers information about 'Disability Employment Services', a Government-funded service that may assist you to find and maintain employment.

What kind of assistance does a Disability Employment Service provide?

If you have a disability, injury or health condition, you may be eligible for assistance from Disability Employment Services to find a job or maintain your current employment.

If you are currently looking for work, you will meet in person with your Employment Consultant on a regular basis, as well as receive support over the phone. They will be able to help you prepare a cover letter and resume, do some career planning based on your interest and skills/abilities and help you job search.

They will also assist you to apply for suitable jobs, cold-call potential employers, and practice interview techniques.

If you are already employed, and have been working at least 8 hours a week for 13 weeks, you may be eligible for assistance as a 'Job in Jeopardy' client. 'Jobs in Jeopardy' services are not designed to assist with finding new employment but are intended to assist customers to maintain their current employment.

Jobs in Jeopardy participants will receive face to face support, as well as assistance such as:

- Advice about job redesign- things like going from physical work to an office position, part-time, working from home, different hours, taking more frequent breaks, flexible days and leave options.
- Workplace assessments
- Workplace modifications – the implementation of technology such as speech to text programs, ergonomic chair and desk, building accessibility, the use of prompts, reminders and labels, the installation of air-conditioning.

** If you decide to leave the workplace in which modifications have been installed, you have the right to take the equipment with you to a new job.*

Disability Employment Services (cont.)

How do I get a referral to a Disability Employment Service?

If you are not currently employed, you will need to contact Centrelink Employment Services on **13 28 50** or visit your local Centrelink office to make an appointment to have a 'Job Capacity Assessment (JCA)'.

If you are a 'Job in Jeopardy' client, you may be able to contact a Disability Employment Service directly without needing to visit a Centrelink office or have a JCA.

You can find your local Disability Employment Service by searching the 'Find a provider' section of the 'Australian JobSearch' website:

www.jobsearch.gov.au

What is a Job Capacity Assessment (JCA)?

A Job Capacity Assessment (JCA) is a comprehensive assessment of an individual's ability to work. The assessment involves identification of any barriers to employment and any assistance that may be required to overcome those barriers. For people with medical conditions or disabilities, the assessment also identifies their current and future work capacity. Information provided by individuals will be used by a Job Capacity Assessor to complete this assessment, to assist in determining the appropriate type and level of support that the individual requires.

When you go to your assessment, you will meet with an assessor and they will talk to you about your employment skills/background and barriers to employment.

The assessment is not a medical examination, however, if you have information from your doctor or health service, the assessor will look at this.

The appointment will normally take between 45-90 minutes.

Afterwards, the assessor will write a report to inform Centrelink how much work you can do, and what assistance you will require to find and maintain employment. The people at Centrelink will then make a referral to a Disability Employment Service in your local area. You may not be able to attend your preferred service initially if they do not have a vacancy, however, you will have the option to request a transfer when a spot does become available. A copy of your JCA report will also be provided to the Disability Employment Service that you have been referred to.

Disability Employment Services (cont.)

What incentives do employers have to employ a person who is a client of a Disability Employment Service?

Through the Disability Employment Service, your employer will have access to the 'Wage Subsidy Scheme', which will allow them to claim up to \$1,500 to put towards your wages.

For your employer to claim the wage subsidy, you must have been employed for at least eight hours per week for at least 13 weeks and have a reasonable expectation of continuing for more than 13 weeks (or six weeks in a seasonal industry).

The Disability Employment Service can retain up to a maximum of \$400 of the wage subsidy to put towards the purchase of incidental items necessary to support you to take up the job placement, such as steel capped boots or a compulsory work shirt.

** The employment must be under open employment conditions. That is, under a legal industrial agreement that complies with minimum standards established under Commonwealth, state or territory law. It must also guarantee the worker a weekly award-based wage, for example: no commission-based or subcontracting type positions.*

Funding of up to \$5,000 is available through the 'Workplace Modifications Scheme (WMS)' for essential workplace modifications or special or adaptive equipment for eligible employees with a disability.

This could include the installation of a ramp, air-conditioner, ergonomic chair or speech-to-text computer software. Your Disability Employment Service can assist your employer to apply for funding and will help to coordinate the purchase and installation of any assistive technology or building modifications you may require.

What if I do not wish to disclose that I have Parkinson's to my current or future employer?

It is your personal choice whether or not you disclose a health condition or disability to a future or current employer, unless it could potentially be a health and safety issue.

For example, if you were applying for a job in an office, and your health condition would have no effect on your ability to perform the inherent requirements of the job, than it is not necessary to disclose. However, if you were applying for a position as a forklift driver and you tend to get fatigued in the afternoons, than it may be necessary to disclose for the safety of yourself and others in the workplace.

Disability Employment Services (cont.)

You may also need to disclose if you require assistive technology or modifications to the workplace, or if you wish for your Employment Consultant to apply for jobs on your behalf or have contact with your future or current employer.

What happens once I get a new job?

Your Employment Consultant will provide you with ongoing support in person and over the phone until you reach your 26 week employment milestone, and then as long as you need after that.

You will be required to attend regular appointments with your Employment Consultant to discuss how the job is going, and to resolve any problems you may be having. Your Employment Consultant may also be in regular contact with your employer to negotiate your work conditions and any technology/modifications required if your work capacity is expected to change over time as your condition progresses.

If you decide in the future that your job is no longer suitable, or you would like to find alternative employment, your Employment Consultant will help you to job search and update your resume and cover letter.

For more information about Employment Services:

- Centrelink Employment Services – **13 28 50**
- JobAccess – **1800 464 800**
- Parkinson's Victoria – **1800 644 189** (for general advice only)
- Australian JobSearch Website – www.jobsearch.gov.au