



DOWN SYNDROME GUILD
OF DALLAS

Employment Options

One of the greatest challenges faced by adults with Down syndrome is how to stay involved and productive in the community after completing school. One of the ways to accomplish this goal is through employment. The following provides a simple introduction to employment options:

- **Competitive employment** - the individual secures employment in the community – for example, by responding to ads or job postings or proactively approaching businesses – and works independently without any support services.
- **Supported employment** - most commonly used by people with Down syndrome. The individual works in an integrated setting and receives support services from a job coach. Supported employment provides the person with the disability with the long-term support services needed to be successful in competitive employment – training, job matching, job development, job coaching, on-going on-site monitoring, etc. (*See “What is a Quality Supported Employment Program” for more details*)
- **Sheltered employment (also called “enclave” or “workshop”)** - individuals work in self-contained settings with others who have disabilities *without* the integration of non-disabled workers. Sheltered employment is often obtained through agencies, and wages for this type of work do not meet minimum wage standards. The “workshop” is usually paid a fee for providing the work and support, virtually negating any wages earned. Sheltered employment typically involves manual labor tasks such as assembling goods.
- **Volunteer employment** - volunteer job that is unpaid. This is sometimes an alternative for those who need more flexibility, or in the event that paid employment is difficult to find. A volunteer position allows a person to continue to improve their skills and build social networks in the community, and may sometimes lead to paid employment

Regardless of the type of employment that is pursued, the challenge will often be locating a job and coordinating appropriate support services. The primary agency that funds employment related programs in Texas is called DARS - Texas Department of Assistive Rehabilitative Services.