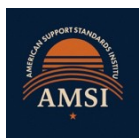


Emotional and Psychological Support in Supported Employment Services

AMSI STANDARD EMS1
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1. Purpose and Scope

This standard establishes the foundational expectations for providing emotional and psychological support to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) within supported employment programs. Emotional support is defined here as a critical element of the person-centered approach and must be provided across all levels of interaction: to individuals with IDD by their support teams, and among staff and leadership within service organizations.

This standard applies to:

- Individuals with IDD receiving employment services
 - VR Job Coaches, DSPs (DSWs), and care managers
 - Employers in supported employment settings
 - Organizational managers and supervisors within support service agencies
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2. Terms and Definitions

- **Emotional Support:** The act of recognizing, validating, and responding to another person's emotional experience with empathy and respect.
 - **Psychological Presence:** Demonstrating consistent availability and attention during emotional or challenging moments.
 - **Validation:** Recognition that a person's feelings or perceptions are legitimate, even if the situation cannot be resolved.
 - **Relational Dignity:** The sustained experience of being valued, heard, and emotionally safe in relationships with others.
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3. Emotional Support as a Core Component of Person-Centered Services

3.1. Emotional support must be integrated into the planning, implementation, and monitoring of employment services.

3.2. All stakeholders must practice emotional recognition and validation with:

- Individuals with IDD in service delivery
- DSPs and job coaches in internal management practices
- Coworkers and interdisciplinary teams

3.3. Emotional support is not conditional on resolving the problem. It is based on presence, listening, respect, and acknowledgment.

4. Responsibilities by Role

4.1. VR Job Coaches and DSPs (DSWs) Must:

- Pay attention to emotional cues (verbal and nonverbal)
- Listen deeply without interrupting or minimizing
- Validate emotions even when no solution is available
- Encourage self-expression and confidence
- Offer reassurance while preserving dignity
- Never ignore or dismiss the person's presence or perspective

4.2. Employers Must:

- Recognize emotional needs as part of inclusive hiring
- Create environments where workers with IDD feel psychologically safe
- Train supervisors in respectful communication and feedback

4.3. Service Organization Managers and Leaders Must:

- Demonstrate emotional support in supervision
 - Avoid fear-based, punitive interactions with staff
 - Provide feedback that acknowledges effort and emotional labor
 - Recognize burnout signs and respond with empathy
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5. Quality Indicators and Documentation

5.1. Emotional support must be observable through both non-latent and latent indicators:

- **Non-Latent Indicators:**
 - Eye contact, calm tone, respectful posture
 - Presence during emotionally intense moments
 - Timely responses to expressed concerns
- **Latent Indicators:**
 - Reported trust and comfort by individuals with IDD and staff
 - Feelings of psychological safety in surveys or interviews

5.2. Emotional support actions may be documented when relevant to:

- Coaching sessions
 - Conflict resolution
 - Onboarding and crisis intervention notes
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6. Integration with AMSI Standards and Accreditation Frameworks

6.1. This standard aligns with the following:

- **AMSI PCQ1**: Person-Centered Quality
- **AMSI WSQ1**: Work (Service) Quality
- **AMSI VRJ1**: Vocational Rehabilitation Job Coaching – Maintaining Competitive Integrated Employment
- **CQL Basic Assurances®**: Dignity, Rights, and Safety

6.2. EMS1 should be referenced when training on the following quality dimensions:

- Respect and dignity (PCQ1 §2.2)
 - Service consistency and trust-building (WSQ1 §5.2)
 - Emotional presence in coaching and job site relationships (VRJ1 §3.3.2 and §3.3.6)
 - Conflict prevention and workplace stability
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7. Implementation Guidelines

7.1. Each agency must designate a person or team responsible for training staff in emotional and psychological support.

7.2. Organizations must create a culture where emotional support is:

- Expected and modeled at all leadership levels
- Monitored as part of service quality
- Embedded in annual evaluations and training

7.3. Employers participating in supported employment should be offered orientation materials aligned with EMS1.

8. Review and Continuous Improvement

8.1. EMS1 must be reviewed biennially by AMSI or the designated standards review body.

8.2. Feedback mechanisms from individuals with IDD, frontline staff, and supervisors must be used to refine emotional support practices.

Special Note

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