

# The Self-Determined Career Development Model: Promoting Integrated Employment

Self-determination is a key predictor of employment for individuals with intellectual disability (Dean et al., 2017). Understanding personal strengths, interests, and needs forms the foundation of self-determination and plays a key role in finding meaningful employment opportunities (Shogren et al. 2015). By adopting approaches that promote self-determination, like the Self-Determined Career Development Model (SDCDM), educators and service providers can create pathways that lead to meaningful employment and greater independence for individuals with disabilities.

## What is the Self-Determined Career Development Model (SDCDM)?

SDCDM is a practical tool used by educators and service providers to help individuals with disabilities identify and achieve their employment goals. This structured process teaches individuals how to make informed choices about their careers, set meaningful goals, and develop strategies to overcome challenges (Dean et al., 2017; Shogren et al., 2016).

With SDCCDM, individuals with disabilities engage in self-directed problem-solving to set and achieve employment-related goals. A facilitator supports the job seeker through three-phases. These phases are (1) identify a barrier to employment, (2) set a goal and create an action plan to address the barrier, and (3) evaluate progress and make adjustments as necessary (Dean et al., 2017). This approach ensures individuals take an active role in shaping their career paths. Educators and service providers facilitate this process by offering guidance, resources, and support, thereby helping individuals build the skills they need for employment success.

## What the Research Says

Research on SDCCDM shows significant benefits for individuals with disabilities. Studies demonstrate that when individuals with disabilities use this process, they gain more control over their career decisions compared to those receiving traditional employment services (Shogren et al., 2016). Through

active participation in goal-setting and problem-solving, individuals develop better understanding of their strengths and interests, which is crucial for making good employment choices (Dean et al., 2017). SDCCDM also leads to employment success. Dean et al. (2017) found that participants who used the model were able to identify and achieve their personal career goals. In fact, all study participants achieved their employment goals, showing how effective this approach can be in helping people find meaningful work.

Shogren and colleagues (2016) identified several factors that influence the effectiveness of SDCCDM. Individual factors, such as personal characteristics and past experiences, affect how prepared someone is to engage in the SDCCDM process. Some individuals may require additional support to develop the problem-solving skills needed to fully benefit from the model. Educator and support provider factors also play a crucial role. The success of SDCCDM often depends on the skills and commitment of those facilitating the process. Educators and service providers who believe in self-determination principles and possess strong facilitation skills are more likely to help individuals achieve positive outcomes. Additionally, organizational factors contribute to the model's success. Schools or agencies that prioritize self-determination and create a supportive environment establish better conditions for effective implementation of SDCCDM.

## Guidelines for Practice

To successfully implement SDCCDM, it is essential to adopt strategies that support both the individual and the broader educational or service environment. The following guidelines highlight key areas of focus for educators and service providers aiming to promote self-determination and employment success for individuals with disabilities.

- Foster self-awareness by helping individuals identify their strengths, interests, and needs. This foundation supports informed decision-making and increases the likelihood of securing meaningful employment.

- Implement SDCDM's three-phase approach—identify a barrier to employment, set a goal and create an action plan, and evaluate progress—to ensure individuals take an active role in shaping their career paths. Guide them through identifying problems, exploring solutions, and evaluating progress.
- Recognize that individuals may differ in readiness. Offer additional instruction in problem-solving and decision-making when needed to ensure they can fully engage in the process.
- Train educators and service providers in self-determination practices and facilitation skills. Their belief in the model and ability to guide the process greatly impact success.
- Promote a school or agency environment that values and supports self-determination. Organizational commitment enhances the effectiveness of SDCDM and creates sustainable pathways to employment.

## References

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## Additional Resources

### SDCDM- The Self-Determined Career Design Model

<https://selfdetermination.ku.edu/homepage/intervention/#sdcdm>

*This site provides practical tools and materials for implementing SDCDM.*

### Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI) Webinar

<https://transitioncoalition.org/diys/self-determined-learning-model-of-instruction-sdlmi/>

*Provides an overview of the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI), a widely used approach that shares the same theoretical foundation as SDCDM. It supports educators in teaching students to set goals, make plans, and track progress—key components of both models.*

