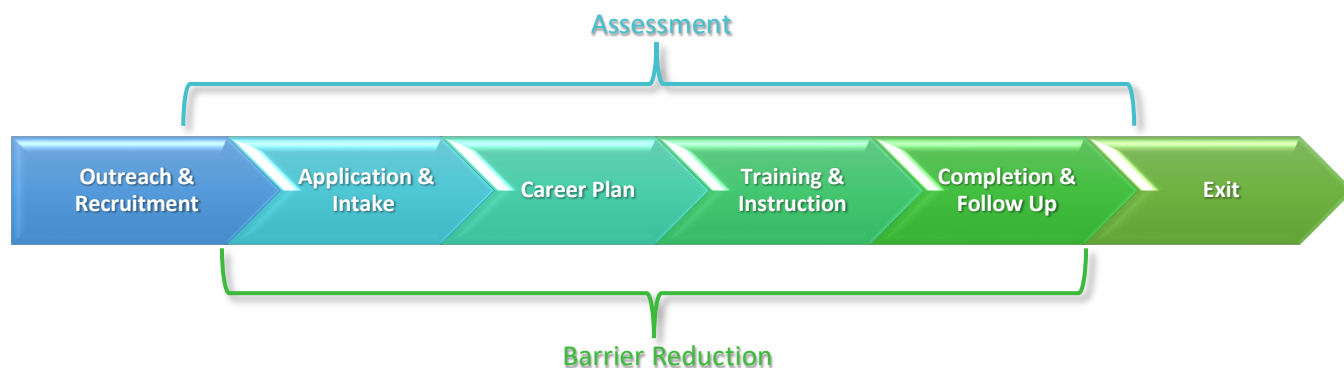


Chapter 8: Barrier Reduction and Support Services



Barrier Reduction Services help customers overcome barriers to participation and empower customers for resilience and self-sufficiency. Together, they create a supportive service package that helps minimize or eliminate non-academic and academic barriers to participation.

Providing Services Equitably

Equity Values

Staff who conduct intake and service assessments must do so with keen attention to the **six core equity values** outlined in Chapter 2: Equity and Program Culture. JTED staff are accountable for creating and encouraging a judgment-free environment:

- Do not make assumptions about what customers may or may not need; or may or may not know.
- Ask questions based on the assessment and explain the various service options provided.
- Inform and guide customers through the process and encourage active questioning. If something goes unsaid, it could lead to miscommunication and unmet needs.

Promote openness—there are no stupid questions—empower and encourage self-defined individual and group identities. Customers can draw strength and confidence from how they see themselves and the communities they are part of. Importantly, staff and everyone in the program must use **person-first language** that avoids defining individuals or groups by one narrow label or adjective (e.g., use *person/people with disabilities* instead of *disabled person*, *person/people of color*, *person/people with undocumented status*). Person-first language does not begin with an aspect of how society sees them but

instead attempts to include that characteristic as only one part of a greater whole. Customers are unique individuals that are **not** defined by one characteristic of their multifaceted identities.

Barrier Reduction and Equity

Providing **Barrier Reduction Services** is a huge part of ensuring **equity-eligible populations** can benefit from being part of industry. Providing these services equitably must not be an afterthought or taken for granted. Equity-eligible populations face challenges that result from how society treats differences and has historically discriminated against underserved groups. Staff must know these challenges and cultivate a supportive environment free from prejudice and judgment. Doing so will help promote empathy, successful communication, and understanding; which are all necessary to meet the needs of program customers and ensure successful outcomes.

Barrier Reduction Versus Support Services

What is the difference between Support Services and Barrier Reduction Services?

There are core differences between Support Services and Barrier Reduction Services. **Support Services** focus on helping someone succeed within a program, while **Barrier Reduction Services** focus on removing obstacles that prevent someone from fully participating in the program. Barrier Reduction Services are about **access**. Support Services are about **success**. Programs often use both: first to *remove barriers*, then to *support growth*.

- **Support Services** -
Ongoing help that improves learning, performance, or well-being.
- **Barrier Reduction Services** –
Targeted help that removes non-academic or academic barriers so a person can access and stay engaged in a program.

Support Services are the broader category of assistance provided to help individuals succeed during participation. These services help people perform better once they are already participating. Organizations must establish Support Services policy that defines what can be offered.

They often include:

- **Academic supports** (tutoring, or one-on-one instruction)
- **Accommodations** (changes in how learning happens, such as extra time or quiet spaces)
- **Modifications** (changes in what is learned)
- **Related services** (mental health services, transportation, or childcare)

Barrier Reduction Services can go behind what Support Services policy allows. For example, an organizations policy may state that car repairs can be paid out at a maximum of \$200. If a participant has a car repair that is greater than \$200, it could be paid out of barrier reduction as long as it is necessary for the participant to continue in the program and the cost are reasonable. A barrier reduction policy needs

to be established by the organization and can be more expansive as long as it follows cost principles, is necessary and reasonable.

They include:

- **Wrap-around Supports** for non-academic barriers
 - Childcare
 - Transportation
 - Mental health counseling
- **Student Support Services** for academic barriers
 - Tutoring
 - Attendance-based interventions

Table 6.1: Barrier Reduction Versus Support Services Comparison

Category	Support Services	Barrier Reduction Services
Primary purpose	Improve success <i>during</i> participation	Remove obstacles to <i>enable</i> participation
Focus	Continued participation in academic, work experience, and career services	Academic barriers and non-academic barriers that could result in withdrawal from a program
Examples	Mentoring, academic fees, transportation, equipment needed on job	Long term childcare, housing, mental and/or addiction supports, past fees or fines if reasonable and necessary, car repairs
When used	When someone is already in the program and needs help to succeed	When someone cannot participate or risks dropping out
Goal	Enhance performance and learning	Increase access, stability, and self-sufficiency

Example Support Services:

- Transportation assistance — bus passes, gas cards, mileage reimbursement
- Childcare assistance — subsidies so customers can attend training
- Work uniforms or tools — scrubs, steel-toe boots, welding gloves
- Training-related supplies — textbooks, certification exam fees, laptops (if required)
- Emergency assistance — small payments for utilities, rent, or food to maintain program engagement
- Career counseling — ongoing guidance during training
- Tutoring or academic support — help with coursework

Example Barrier Reduction Services:

- Mental health counseling referrals
- Substance use treatment support
- Housing stabilization — deposits, short-term assistance
- Legal assistance — expungement help, driver's license reinstatement
- Domestic violence support — safety planning, relocation
- Financial literacy or budgeting help
- Health-related services — physicals, immunizations required for training

Service Needs Assessment

The **Service Needs Assessment** is a JTED Reporting System tool that aims to identify the service needs of customers.

The tool assesses the following:

- Accommodations and Student Services
- Technology Assistance for Virtual Learning (*Broadband and Hardware - If Virtual Learning Will be Employed*)
- Transportation
- Childcare/Family Member Care
- Assistance with Housing
- Food
- Healthcare
- Legal Assistance
- Financial Literacy
- Mentorship
- Application Fees
- Other Support Services

Note: *If there is a needed service not on the assessment, it can be added manually. The support service must first be submitted to the grantee's assigned Grant Manager for approval. After approval, the service must be added to the agency's procedures manual.*

Each customer **must** complete this assessment face-to-face with a Barrier Reduction staff member, as part of their intake process. Each service on the needs assessment provides a summary, examples, and guiding questions that the Barrier Reduction staff can utilize when meeting with customers.

Allowable Services and Cost

Transportation Costs

A significant barrier for many customers in the JTED program may be reliable and accessible **transportation**.

- Allowable Costs: Public transit fare/cards, car repairs, gas cards, plate sticker/city sticker renewal fees, insurance fees, rideshares, or taxis (Lyft and Uber, among others, when other options are unavailable).
- Non-allowable costs: Car lease or purchase.

- Guiding Question(s): Do you have reliable transportation to and from the program? If yes, what is your primary form of transportation?

Identification and Driver's Education Fees

A **driver's license** is not required to participate in the JTED Program. However, it may be required for participation in training and employment. If customers need to complete driver's education, the program may pay the required fees for driver's education and/or to obtain a license/identification card.

- Allowable Costs: Driver's education lessons and new/renewed driver's license/identification card costs.
- Guiding Questions: Do you need help getting a Driver's License or Identification Card? Are you confident you can cover all costs of obtaining your Illinois Driver's License no later than completing the program? Are you confident you can cover all costs associated with driver's education?

Childcare/Family Member Care

Caregiving for a child or a family member can be a major barrier to customer success. The JTED grant allows for partial or total care costs. However, programs should also attempt to leverage alternative resources to help cover these costs.

- Allowable Costs: Childcare/babysitting costs, home aide costs.
- Guiding Question(s): Do family members depend on your care? If yes, will you need assistance with your family member's support/care while in the program?

Healthcare

A customer's **physical** and **mental health** can be a major barrier to success. Partial or total healthcare costs are allowed under the JTED grant. However, programs should also attempt to leverage alternative resources to help cover these costs.

Drug testing is not a requirement of the JTED Program, but customers must be made aware that drug testing may be a requirement of certain training programs and employment positions. Barrier Reduction staff must ask if customers need services to address drug or substance use concerns so that they can pass drug tests and complete trainings.

- Allowable Costs: Doctor visits, medical care, alcohol and substance use counseling and treatment, mental health counseling, trauma counseling, dental care, and vision care.
- Guiding Questions: Are there any physical or mental health needs you need help addressing to succeed in this training program? Are you able to pass the drug tests if required? Would you like to receive support to pass a drug test?

Housing

Some customers may struggle to maintain **stable housing**, which can be a major barrier to participation. It can impact their ability to find reliable transportation to the program, the accuracy of the record (i.e. driver's licenses) they need to gain employment, their physical and mental health, and access to food and the internet. While housing costs are allowed under the JTED grant, programs should also attempt to leverage alternate resources to help cover these costs.

- Allowable Costs: Rent, deposits for rent, emergency housing costs, mortgage/tax/insurance payments, emergency home repairs to maintain habitability, storage of personal effects in case of eviction, and utilities.

***Note:** customers may need assistance understanding some of these complex topics. See Financial Literacy below and the training module in Chapter 6.*

- Guiding Question: Do you need support maintaining stable housing in this program?

Financial Literacy

The ability to manage money competently is a skill that can have a positive lifelong impact on students and help them far beyond the program. **Financial literacy** courses teach customers the basics of personal finance mechanisms such as budgeting, saving, debt, and investing. These courses may also cover items such as explanations of pensions, retirement funds, and fringe benefits, among others.

- Allowable Costs: Course materials (handouts, workbooks, etc.), course/class fees, and financial literacy online course fees.
- Guiding Question: Do you feel confident managing your finances, including budgeting, saving, investing, or debt management? Would you like support with managing your cash flow?

Nutritional Assistance

Hunger is a major barrier to successful participation in the JTED Program. Hungry people are not in a position to learn. Some programs may maintain a food pantry, and others may choose to provide funds to help customers purchase groceries.

- Allowable Costs: Groceries and gift cards to grocery stores.
- Guiding Questions: Do you need assistance buying food to be successful in this program? Are you interested in applying for SNAP?

Legal Assistance

Some customers may require **legal services** to clear the way for their placement into a JTED program or employment. Under the JTED Grant, partial or total funding of legal services necessary to complete the program and be placed in employment.

- Allowable Costs: Costs associated with expunging or sealing records, obtaining or reinstating revoked or suspended driver's licenses, untangling outside court debt issues, assistance with child support orders, certificates of rehabilitation, assistance preventing illegal evictions, resolving credit report problems, filing for domestic abuse restraining orders, assisting veterans with accessing healthcare, education grants, and housing services.
- Guiding Question: Would you like to receive legal assistance services like help sealing or expunging your record?

Technology Assistance (Broadband and Hardware)

Most programs require customers to have access to computers and/or smartphones for communication with program staff, virtual learning activities, homework, and job/apprenticeship search activities. If customers do not have the proper **technology** to participate in the program, the grantee may utilize funding to assist the customer. It is **recommended** that organizations attempt to enroll customers in existing broadband and technology assistance programs before directly paying for or purchasing goods and services.

***Note:** Efforts to enroll customers in existing broadband and technology assistance programs can be documented as a part of the customer's case notes.*

- Allowable Costs: Broadband/hot spot fees, cell phone and data plan payments, equipment such as modems or routers to establish an in-home internet connection, purchase of laptops for lending to customers.
- Guiding Questions: Do you have steady and reliable access to the internet? Do you have a computer that will allow you to access lessons, including online instruction and videos? Do you have a current and reliable phone service? Do you feel confident using technology, including emailing, navigating the internet, and completing basic tasks on a computer?

Accommodations

JTED grantees have an ethical and legal responsibility to comply with the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. They must make reasonable accommodations to provide access to the program and facilitate the customer's learning. All buildings where training is provided must be ADA-accessible. Additional accommodations may have costs associated with them, while others may not. Staff may be able to provide some services but may need to hire or make referrals to others. The important thing to remember is that reasonable accommodations must be made to provide access to all eligible customers.

- Allowable costs: Screen reader assistance, sign language interpreters, assistive listening devices.
- Guiding Question: Do you need accommodations such as a screen reader, assistive listening device, or sign language interpreter to participate in training?

Mentorship

A **mentor** is an individual who develops a long-term professional relationship with customers to provide career guidance, advice, and support. The mentor is expected to serve as their role model, sponsor, and advocate for their mentee's professional development. Providing a mentorship program for customers can help increase the rate of long-term career success. These interactions are often structured and provided by the grantee or a partner agency.

- Allowable Costs: Mentor/mentee training, mentor-planned activities, expenses related to mentorship events, and training materials.
- Guiding Question: Would you be interested in being partnered with a mentor?

Application Fees (including Apprenticeships)

Several **fees** are related to entering or joining a program, including apprenticeship application fees. These fees may be a barrier to customers' ability to enter or continue their education or professional development training, as well as career advancement or joining a DOL-registered apprenticeship program. If a customer is not confident that they can cover the required application costs, the grantee can provide funding for this cost.

- Allowable Costs: Application
- Guiding Question: There may be fees associated with applying for advance training, continued education or joining a Department of Labor registered apprenticeship program (DOL RAP).
Application fees can vary based on program?

Other Support Service Needs

There may be necessary and reasonable costs to support customers beyond the current identified services. These services can be fulfilled through referrals, leveraged resources or, in some cases, through JTED grant funding.

Customer Support Examples

To assist grantees with responding to service needs, multiple support service examples are provided. Use the following tables to identify **potential gaps** in services and to **strategize** about how to fill those gaps.

Table 6.2 provides examples of how grantees can assist customers in overcoming barriers. These barrier reduction service needs may be delivered internally by grantees or through referrals and have allowable costs associated with each barrier.

Table 6.2: Examples of Custom Support Allowable Costs

Examples of Barriers	Customer Challenge	JTED Allowable Costs to Assist in Overcoming Barriers
Low Income	It may be difficult for some customers to stay financially solvent during the training. They may also need help getting started as they prepare.	• Attendance-based stipends • Apprenticeship application fees • Broadband/hotspot fees • Laptop purchase to loan to customers • Housing costs like rent and utilities • Financial literacy course fees or purchase of training materials
Childcare/Family Member Care Needs	Some parents may face challenges obtaining quality childcare that meets the training schedules.	• Childcare/family member care fees
No Driver's License and/or No Reliable Transportation	Many jobs require reliable personal transportation.	• Driver's education fees • Public transit fare/cards • Car repairs • Gas cards • Plate sticker/city sticker renewal fees
Lack of Industry Knowledge	Some customers may have concerns they will not be accepted on the job, and others may be unaware of the expectations and working conditions in the industry.	• Mentor/mentee training • Mentor planned activities • Expenses related to mentorship events • Purchase of training materials

Often, grantees must **leverage partnerships** with other organizations to best serve customers and ensure they have an equitable opportunity to complete the JTED training and transition to employment or continued education. The table below suggests partners that grantees can engage to assist customers with challenges requiring additional support.

Table 6.3: Other Customer Barriers and Potential Partners

Examples of Barriers	Customer Challenge	Potential Partners
Physical Health	Self-reported or family health issues may limit the ability to complete training programs and obtain/maintain employment.	Local/county health center/department
Substance Use	The trauma inflicted by systemic oppression and racial and sexual discrimination, among other social challenges, can sometimes lead to mental health and substance use disorders.	Local behavioral health centers & organizations, community mental health centers & organizations
Mental Health	Mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, and others can make active participation in programming difficult due to limited energy, disruption of normal physical functioning, inability to concentrate, and more.	Local behavioral health centers & organizations, community mental health centers & organizations
Domestic Violence	Customers who are experiencing domestic violence may find it more difficult to attend or complete training programs and obtain/maintain employment.	Domestic violence service providers, Department of Health & Human Services
Housing Instability / Homelessness	Some customers may face difficulties finding permanent housing or are homeless.	Public housing authorities, Community Action Agencies
Public Assistance (e.g., TANF, Medicaid, or SNAP)	Some customers may fear the reduction in cash and food assistance that will result from their participation, or they might be experiencing hunger, which makes it difficult for them to participate effectively.	Department of Health & Human Services, Community Action Agencies

In addition to the barriers in Table 6.2, some populations may experience **specific challenges** or a combination of challenges that require the provision of a broad spectrum of services by a broad spectrum of partners (see the table below). They must be provided with resources, referrals, and information about programs and agencies that can assist them in addressing their specific barriers.

Note: For more information on developing partnerships, see **Chapter 3: Partnerships**.

Table 6.1: Barriers for specific groups/populations

Population	Challenge for Special Population	Potential Partners
Youth (under 18)	Homeless youth may have experienced trauma before and after becoming homeless; they may have been involved with the child welfare or juvenile system, experienced family conflict, racial disparities, and/or mental health or substance abuse disorders.	Department of Health & Human Services, local behavioral health center, Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) & other service organizations
Returning Residents	When transitioning from prison, returning residents may find it difficult to reintegrate into their communities; they may also face challenges such as social stigma, lack of job readiness, no ID, financial instability, and housing insecurity.	Department of Health & Human Services, public housing authorities, reentry organizations, Community Action Agencies, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA)
Undocumented Persons	Undocumented persons may face challenges such as temporary or no work authorization, no social security number, or no path to citizenship or permanent residency; they may also face negative stigma associated with their immigration status or fear of deportation.	Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), Department of Health & Human Services, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA)
Immigrants	Immigrants may experience language and cultural barriers as they develop English proficiency and adapt to a new culture.	Department of Health & Human Services, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), translation services, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA)
Veterans	As a result of experiences in combat situations, many military veterans have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which can sometimes lead to other challenges like homelessness and substance abuse disorders.	Veteran's Administration, local behavioral health center & organizations, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA)

Table 6.4 below provides examples of Student Support Services that can be provided to support customers' success in the training program. Use the table to identify potential gaps in Student Support Services and consider how to fill those gaps successfully.

Table 6.4: Student Barriers and Services to Assist in Overcoming Barriers

Examples of Barriers	Customer's Challenge	Student Support Services
Low Levels of Literacy; Lack of Basic Math, Reading, and Computer Skills	Some customers may lack the basic math, reading, and computer skills that are prerequisites for entering training programs	Tutoring by program instructors or partners
Missed Sessions	Customers may experience extenuating circumstances that could directly, substantially, and negatively impact their ability to attend all required instruction sessions and meet the minimum requirements for completion.	Make-up session(s)
Difficulty with Content Covered in Training Program	Customers may have trouble understanding certain content covered in some of the training modules and/or difficulty developing the required skills to complete a module successfully.	Tutoring by program instructors

Tracking Barrier Reduction and Support Service Needs

Once the **Service Needs Assessment** has been completed in the **JTED Reporting System**, each customer will have an itemized list of services and any associated costs. For technical instructions on how to track service needs, visit the JTED Partner Guide.

Referrals and Leveraged Available Resources

For each support service selected, grantees may provide the service in-house or refer customers to other organizations. Grantees should refer customers to other social service professionals when the other professionals' specialized knowledge or experience is needed to serve customers fully or when geographical distance dictates that the other service provider would be more convenient for the customer to access.

While JTED provides funding to address a comprehensive set of barriers to participation in workforce training programs, DCEO encourages grantees to leverage existing funding programs to provide services more efficiently to customers. Leveraging existing resources can help JTED money go further and provide opportunities and assistance to more customers.

The **JTED Partner Guide** provides information about several state, federal, and other programs to assist customers in accessing available resources for housing, food, transportation, and other needs. For additional resources, access the [Illinois workNet Service Finder](#).

Check-ins and Case Notes

Customers' needs may change throughout the program and after completion of the program (when applying for, during employment, or continuing with education). For example, the instructor may recommend that the customer get math tutoring so that they can complete program requirements, their car may break down and need car repairs, or perhaps their childcare provider falls through.

Barrier Reduction staff **must maintain regular contact with customers** to reassess needs and make sure needs are being met during training and afterward. At a minimum, the Barrier Reduction staff must check in with customers every thirty days during training and as needed. Regular check-ins should be tracked using the case notes in the JTED Reporting System.

***Note:** Case notes should be occurring throughout the entire customer lifecycle as appropriate, to ensure there is a comprehensive narrative of the customer.*

At each check-in, **staff must reassess the customers' needs** and ask if there is anything else they need support with. They must use the student support tabs to address these needs. If no additional support is needed, **staff must still enter a case note** in the reporting system explaining that the check-in was completed, and no additional assistance was needed.

They can add new services and referrals to the customer's JTED Reporting System profile and provide follow-up support.

After each check-in, staff **must** enter a case note in the customer's JTED Reporting System profile to record what was discussed and coordinate services with other staff.

***Note:** See Chapter 5: Application, for additional Career Planning information.*

Additional Resources

See the [JTED Partner Guide](#) for additional resources.