

Youth Services & JSA's:

A Brief Unofficial Guide to Supporting Young People

1. My young client wants a job! Where do I start?

Job Service Australia or JSA providers are Government funded employment services that anyone may access, and those receiving a Centrelink benefit may *have to* access as a condition of their receiving payment.

For more information: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/JSA/Pages/faq.aspx#17>

Registering with a JSA is easy and can usually happen on the spot with a walk-in appointment. Do your homework and find out about good agencies in your area, your client or their friends will probably be registered with one already if they're no longer at school.

If a young person has applied for a Centrelink income, Centrelink should initiate this process and an appointment with the nearest JSA should be made automatically. This is where a different/closer provider may be requested.

A few good pointers.....

- Make sure your client has primary ID.
- Make sure your client is as ready as they can be for the interview, because from that point on they will most likely be in some form of working relationship with the JSA, and will therefore have obligations. Remember the basics too; talk to you client about personal presentation and hygiene, communication skills, having some idea of what they might want to do for work etc. A quick refresher never hurts and will help them focus.
- Most youth-servicing agencies work easily with JSA's with no overlap of service or funding. JSA's usually work well with organisations who are also there to support the client, particularly if you too have time and/or funding to offer. JSA's should also welcome you attending appointments with your client.

For more information: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/JSA/JobSeekerSupport/Pages/youngPeople.aspx>

2. What's a Job Capacity Assessment?

When a jobseeker registers with a JSA, a Job Capacity Assessment (JCA) is conducted to determine the level of support they may require to find work, and is largely focussed on *identifying jobseekers barriers to employment/ability*. It takes into account a number of key factors including:

- Not finished grade 12, limited formal study
- Indigenous
- Ex offender
- Homeless (unstable is homeless)
- Current drug/alcohol use
- ANY physical health issues or disability
- ANY mental health issues (inc depression, anxiety)
- ANY other reason the jobseeker can identify that is/will/may stop them from gaining OR keeping a job.

The result of this assessment will determine whether a jobseeker starts getting referred to work straight away, or if other barriers or developmental factors must be addressed first.

An ongoing injury, mental health issue or disability will also be a consideration in how a young person is assessed for service delivery.

3. What's a "Stream"?

A "stream" simply describes the level of support a jobseeker is eligible for from the JSA, as determined by the Job Capacity Assessment. An overview of these are below:

Stream 1 limited.

This is where a jobseeker may register *temporarily* with a JSA for 60 days. No funding is allocated to this stream and therefore no real service will be provided at this level. Jobseekers can get help with resumes or access to their computers for job searching but that's usually about it. What you *can* get (and the reason why most people sign up for a temporary registration only) is to access PPP courses **see below*

Stream 1.

Stream 1 jobseekers are assessed as the most independently capable of finding work by themselves, and will therefore receive limited assistance. They will probably not be referred to jobs and they can get nothing paid for (like courses or clothes) because they have \$11 to their name. Stream 1 jobseekers have often completed grade 12, have minimal disruption or chaos in their lives and present reasonably well. Youth service clients by nature are rarely Stream 1, and this should be looked into if your client is assessed as such.

Stream 2.

Identified as requiring *some* support, these jobseekers should be referred to jobs and can be financially assisted with courses or job-related items to the value of around \$500. PPP courses can also be accessed. These jobseekers should be attending fortnightly appointments with the JSA.

Stream 3.

Stream 3 is assessed as having a number of barriers to employment, but still employable. They should definitely be referred to jobs and the JSA may work intensively with this client to get them job ready and working. Stream 3 have around \$1000 available for training and *work related* expenses.

Stream 4.

The classic youth service client. Disengaged with multiple barriers to employment, needing lots of support and are not usually employable straight away. There is a mild stigma in some JSA's around "Stream 4" because they can be unreliable and hard to work with, which as youth service providers we may know may be true. A stream 4 however who has social barriers but is dead serious about wanting to work and getting ready for work, and is prepared to put in the effort will get maximum attention and money spent on them. They also have around \$1000 but due to their inherent barriers, this funding can be used more flexibly *at the discretion of the JSA* for a whole range of personal support expenses, including rent, travel, clothes, etc that will help them get stable.

Work Experience (WEX)

After 12 months of being with a JSA (18 months for Stream 4), if you are still unemployed you enter what is known as the "Work Experience Phase". This is to keep the jobseeker actively engaged in some form of volunteer work while they continue to look for employment. It is also an opportunity for a jobseeker to explore a new field if their current goals are not being achieved.

For more information: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/JSA/Pages/faq.aspx#13>

4. My young client is still in school, can they access a JSA?

Yes, but with some conditions. A young person who is still at school may register with a JSA so long as they are at least 15 years old and are experiencing *identifiable* personal and social barriers that would be obviously impacting their attendance of school, or ability to engage in education effectively. Repeated visits to the Guidance Officer, or non-attendance due to choice or suspension would qualify as a reasonable flag. A crisis of health, housing, safety, family disengagement or other major event would also be a good indication. Contact any JSA to discuss your young person's situation and their eligibility.

5. Early School Leaver (ESL)

An Early School Leaver is a young person who has not completed their educational requirements of Grade 12 or the equivalent of an industry Certificate II qualification, so they must either complete Grade 12 or a Cert II of their choice. For Early School Leavers, this obligation of completing education or training supersedes the usual obligation of finding employment and only employment will get them out of this. Young people should be encouraged whenever possible to meet this training obligation *first* before entering the workforce.

For more information: <http://www.youth.infoxchange.net.au/news/items/2009/08/288859-upload-00001.pdf>

6. Activity-Tested Jobseekers

An activity-tested jobseeker is one who is in receipt of a Centrelink payment and therefore has an obligation to engage with a JSA and looking for work as a condition of their receiving payment.

Any plans arranged with the JSA are then binding and enforceable by the JSA and Centrelink. If a jobseeker agrees to attend appointments or an activity, job, course etc and they *do not*, the JSA will report this non-compliance to Centrelink and sooner or later the breach will result in a penalty or suspension of income. If this is repeated, the penalty can become significant with income suspended completely until the jobseeker agrees to re-engage.

- Activity-tested jobseeker, the pros: It gets you off the couch whether you like it or not and sometimes that's a good thing. It can make you learn that money comes from having to engage with the world in some way.
- Activity-tested jobseeker, the cons: If working just aint your thing, or if you're genuinely going through a personal rough patch or for many other valid reasons, having to attend regular appointments and do the whole job search and training thing can be frustrating.

7. Voluntary Jobseekers

A voluntary jobseeker is anyone who accesses a JSA *by choice* and not out of a Centrelink obligation. This usually means the jobseeker is *not* in receipt of any type of payment and is not activity-tested. A jobseeker may also be deemed "voluntary" or more accurately "suspended" for a set period of time if they have a young child, or if they are suspended from job searching due to a temporary injury, illness or other serious circumstance.

"Voluntary" status does not affect someone's Stream level however and you could just as easily be a Stream 4 with all the support available, but as a voluntary jobseeker.

Voluntary jobseeker, the pros: You attend appointments and access everything by choice, if you *do not* do these things you cannot be penalised in any way.

Voluntary jobseeker, the cons: If you don't have to, why would you? JSA's may be cautious with young voluntary jobseekers because of the amount of time and money they could spend for potentially no result if the jobseeker decides to change their mind.

8. My young client was assessed as a Stream 1. What the...?

Remember a Job Capacity Assessment is like a reverse-interview; its purpose is to identify *gaps and barriers* to employment, not strengths and skills. Because many young people (or their advocates) do not understand this, the young person attends the assessment with the intention to impress, while downplaying barriers completely. So they tell the assessor how awesome they are, that they're totally employable and nothing is stopping them from working, and that's exactly what is noted: no barriers identified = not requiring assistance = Stream 1.

The other reason a young person may be incorrectly assessed as Stream 1 is not because of what they said, but because of what they *didn't* say. One word answers like "nothing", "yep", "fine" or "uuurgh" gives the assessor nothing to go by. While disclosure of personal/social issues can be uncomfortable for young people, if they do not lay out their baggage in this assessment, there will be limited evidence of that baggage and they will not receive the appropriate level of support they are entitled to.

You cannot always assume you will get an intuitive, youth-friendly assessor who will naturally ask all the right prompting questions to gather this information. Being able to *identify and name the barriers* in the clients lives can be the other problem, particularly when their whole life is like one big barrier. If you've always been transient, had mental health concerns, grown up around violence or drugs/alcohol, *that's just life*; not a barrier to life, so you simply don't think to describe it that way or even mention it. As a youth advocate, this is a very important conversation to have with your client in preparation for the JCA.

If a young client has obviously been incorrectly assessed as Stream 1, you must go back to the JSA or Centrelink immediately. Reviewing or altering a Job Capacity Assessment is not easy and there is a limited window of time for you to effectively appeal. Work *with* your client and do it right the first time.

9. What's an Employment Pathway Plan? (EPP)

When a jobseeker attends their first appointment, they will work with their consultant for the purpose of developing an Employment Pathway Plan or EPP. This is a legal document signed by the jobseeker and is a binding agreement with the penalty for breaching this agreement as *possible* suspension of payment.

The Employment Pathway Plan is exactly that; a plan for the jobseeker to achieve their vocational goals and their desired field of employment. It can include relevant courses, clothing and other resources required, plus the most desired and suitable jobs. If they are Stream 4, this may also include attending a personal or social support services. The EPP also outlines the services to be provided *to* the jobseeker by the JSA.

Every time a jobseeker agrees to attend a course, a job interview or other activity, this should be entered into their EPP and signed by them.

A jobseeker who is **activity tested** (in receipt of Centrelink payment) will have financial penalties imposed should they not attend what they agreed to; this could range from a one-off breach to a permanent suspension of payment until the jobseeker agrees to meet their obligation.

A jobseeker who is **voluntary** may be enforced by no such penalties, and agreements detailed in the Employment Pathway Plan may act as a guideline for service provision only.

10. Is a JSA the same thing as a recruitment or labour-hire company?

No. A recruitment or labour hire company is a for-profit business, as different to a JSA which is a government funded service. Labour hire companies can be an excellent resource for finding employment, but they may not always be suitable for *younger people* who have limited skills and/or training, and/or own transport which is often required for the types of positions available through these companies. However, do not be scared to enquire.

11. PPP (Productivity Placements Program) courses

This is free (Government funded) training from a Cert II-IV level, accessible to ALL streams. You must be linked to a JSA to be referred to one of these courses but there is currently a range on offer, and for the serious young jobseeker this could be the ideal training pathway for them to enter their industry of choice and is the easiest way for them to meet their obligation as an "Early School Leaver" (see above).

For more information: <http://training.qld.gov.au/industry/ppp/training-available/index.html>

12. My young client would like to run their own business

The NEIS (New Enterprise Incentive Scheme) is available for jobseekers (18 years and over) who have given *serious* consideration to a small business idea and believe (based on some evidence) that they and the business could be a success.

The NEIS Program is a fantastic opportunity to gain this training and assistance in the start-up phase, but the process is intensive and both the jobseeker and their idea will be thoroughly scrutinised for feasibility. Any JSA can tell you more.

13. Will they always see the same consultant?

Hopefully. Most JSA site managers will recognise a rapport between a jobseeker and consultant and encourage that, but there are still reasons why your client may not get to see the same person every time:

- Staff move on; especially with JSA's.
- JSA sites are very busy and consultants have a large caseload of jobseekers to work with, sometimes if yours is snowed under and another consultant can see you, they will. As a young jobseeker, see this as an opportunity to build your relationship with the service and all the staff.....not just the one person.
- Some sites just don't work that way, and who sees you is who sees you. This can be frustrating for young people who do not get to build rapport or trust with any one person, and keep having to fill in bits of their story against a string of case notes. So they may open up to no one, and receive limited service through poor self-disclosure or motivation. Look for a JSA where you get to see the same consultant each time wherever possible.

14. My young client has a disability, can a JSA still help them?

Yes, however a Disability Employment Service (DES) will most likely be more suitable for their needs and situation. Practically for a jobseeker, a DES will provide a very similar service to a JSA, but with some key differences that will benefit the young person in consideration of their disability and unique barriers or needs.

Generally speaking, and in particular for a young person with a disability, there is simply less pressure and more personalised support with an inherent awareness that the jobseeker comes with barriers to employability. There will often be less emphasis on financial penalties for not meeting obligations, and services will work with clients for longer on many of the pre-employment basics (attitude, presentation, goal setting etc), where a JSA will have a higher expectation of job readiness from the start.

For more information: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/Programs/DES/SJS/Pages/home.aspx>

15. Where else can I find more information?

- **For all things JSA:**
<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/JSA/Pages/faq.aspx#15>
- **Or try here for fact sheets on JSA's and other employment programs:**
<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/JSA/Resources/Pages/Home.aspx#2>
- **To find a JSA in your area:**
<http://jobsearch.gov.au/provider/ProviderLocation.aspx?ProviderType=SSC&>