

Help! I want to change my Employment Service Provider

Sometimes the relationship between an Employment Service Provider or a case manager and a job seeker can break down. This may be due to perceptions that the provider is not taking into account the job seeker's personal circumstances, a personality clash, the case manager/employment service having a perceived lack of expertise in a particular area of practice such as mental health or homelessness or they might not agree to support an activity that the job seeker believes is crucial in getting employment.

This Basic Rights Qld (BRQ) Fact Sheet outlines how you can raise issues and/or change providers.

How will I know if my provider has done the wrong thing?

Employment Service Providers are managed by the Department of Employment (DE) and Department of Social Services (DSS) and they have "Service Guarantees" which are a set of standards that they have to follow. These include treating you fairly and with respect, taking account of your parenting or caring responsibilities and recognising other limits on your ability to find work. Job Services Australia Services must ensure that the standards are prominently displayed and available to people who access their services. You can ask for a copy of the service standards for your program at any time. They are also available at: <http://employment.gov.au/job-seeker-servicing-what-you-can-expect>

Within Disability Employment Services these standards must be outlined in the initial interview with you and they must also comply with the national Disability Service Standards (for more information please see <http://www.crrs.net.au/about-us/disability-service-standards/>)

If you believe your provider has not honoured these guarantees or standards, there are some steps you can complain directly to your provider, and if the issue cannot be resolved, you can change providers.

Tell them if you are not happy

It is important and fair that (where possible) you attempt to discuss your issue with your provider and give them the opportunity to address the issue before you take action to change providers. They may be unaware that you are unsatisfied or unhappy. Often issues can arise through a lack of communication or misunderstandings. By complaining you are giving the service an opportunity to change and improve its practices which will benefit not only you, but other job seekers who access the provider.

It is a good idea where possible to raise the issue with your case manager at the employment service provider in the first instance. If you are unable to do this, you can ask to speak to the service manager (your case manager's boss/manager). It is possible that your issue may be easily resolved. For instance you might be able to change case manager if you are having a difficult time or do not get on with your current case manager or you might be confused about what is expected of you and this might be cleared up by talking through it.

You can change providers if you have a reason that fits into one of these areas:

1. Better Servicing – DE & DSS will permit job seekers to change providers if the job seeker can provide reasons why they might get better service elsewhere.

This will require you to be able to explain why a different provider might be better suited to you. For example, a different provider has more culturally appropriate practices.

2. Moving locations. If you are moving, you may change your provider to one that is closer or more convenient to you.

When you register your new address with Centrelink or your provider, their systems will automatically transfer you to a new provider. You can also let your service know ahead of the move and they may be able to assist you to choose a new provider.

3. Transfer via agreement. This occurs when you and your provider have agreed that you will be better off being supported by a different agency.
4. Irretrievable breakdown. When relationships have broken down and cannot be mended you can change providers.

But remember, you already have developed a relationship with your provider and it may be easier to mend the relationship than begin a new one.

Things to consider

Your Employment Service Provider is funded to achieve employment outcomes for you. They will invest time and money into activities that will contribute to you getting and keeping employment.

Employment Service Providers are funded periodically. Leaving a service at a particular point in time may prevent your provider from receiving a payment for the time and energy they have put into assisting you.

- While Employment Service Provider's have access to an Employment Pathway Fund to help finance services or equipment, this fund is discretionary. The provider does not have to use this money for every job seeker. You should be aware that changing providers might not assist you to get what you want. Just because someone you know has been given a mobile phone, or a job with the council through their provider does not mean that you will be entitled get the same.

- Remember the Department Employment and Department of Social Services (government departments) are required to approve any such transfers and there are guidelines to be followed.
- You must continue to attend your provider meetings while you attempt to resolve your issues.

Before you change

Before you change providers it is a good idea to speak to other providers first to identify what they can do for you that a current provider cannot, for example cultural understanding.

This will help you find the best fit for your needs and help prevent a repeat of the situation that led you to change providers.

How do I change?

If your Employment Service Provider does not assist you with the request to change you should call the DE Customer Service Line: 1800 805 260 (free call from landlines). This service is available to both Job Services Australia and Disability Employment Services clients.

You may need to leave your contact details if all lines are attended. The Customer Service line will ask you to explain your issue and then they will investigate it.

If you are unsure about your ability to handle your request you can contact Basic Rights Queensland (BRQ) who can provide you with some practical advice.

Please Note:

This Fact Sheet contains general information only. It does not constitute legal advice. If you need legal advice please contact Basic Rights Queensland on 3421 2510 or if outside of Brisbane on 1800 358 511.

Basic Rights Queensland is a community legal centre, which provides specialist advocacy and legal services in Social Security law, administration and policy. We are independent of Centrelink. All assistance is free.

This Fact Sheet was updated in Nov 2013.

www.brq.org.au