

## **Natural Supports**

### **Main Messages for Students and Families**

#### **What are natural supports?**

- Natural supports include relationships, tools, strategies, and workplace customs that help employees maintain and advance in their jobs. Supports can be provided at work from coworkers and supervisors, and outside of work from friends, family, and community members.

#### **Natural supports exist in every workplace.**

- Everyone, with or without disabilities, uses natural supports at work, such as mentoring, coworker assistance, checklists, and social interactions. These supports help employees navigate their roles and the workplace culture.

#### **Natural supports ensure success.**

- Utilizing natural supports can improve job retention, integration, and overall work experiences. This is because, as research suggests, the use of natural supports increases job satisfaction and success at work.

#### **Everyone can facilitate natural supports.**

- Educators, employers, and service providers should actively create inclusive workplaces by ensuring proper training, social inclusion, and physical integration. This promotes natural supports that meet the needs of all employees.

#### **Early planning should identify and promote natural supports.**

- Person-centered planning, such as the [Life Course framework](#), helps to discover existing, informal relationships among family, friends, neighbors, faith leaders, or community groups, who can provide practical, social, or emotional assistance. Leveraging the connections already present in a student's life is critical to developing a network of support.

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