

Report of State Initiatives and Activities to Improve Integrated Employment Outcomes

**State Employment Leadership Network (SELN)
Accomplishments Report**

MEMBERSHIP YEAR 2017-2018



EMPLOYMENT...

**connects
people**

**is a path to
opportunity**

**means
equity**

Accomplishments Report 2017–2018



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**Institute for
Community
Inclusion**

NASDDDS



What really unites us?

At the start of each network membership year in July, our team celebrates the new opportunities to interact with people around the country. We revisit our discussion topic lists, prioritize written materials to develop, and brainstorm ways for the SELN Hub to remain a valuable resource for our members. Writing the accomplishments report signals a time to take stock and remind ourselves why our work matters.

As a project team, our work with you is the integration of policy, values, and practice. The current systems we are all part of—national, state, and local—have been around for decades. To be effective, these systems must evolve to keep pace with new needs and constraints.

As Robin Lawton says, ***“Innovation is the process of making a desired outcome easier to obtain.”*** Innovation fuels all our endeavors as a network, and this report recognizes our progress toward our shared desired outcomes.

Our biggest adversary is ignorance combined with apathy: believing the ship is too big to steer on a different course, or that it’s someone else’s job to change direction. The challenges are many, and so are the opportunities. A vital starting point is making sure our core message is clear, and is shared far and wide.

What unites us is our shared effort to tell everyone the importance of employment, of economic self-sufficiency, of reciprocity and contribution, and living an everyday life. Join us in celebrating the past year of small and large wins and accomplishments.

Suzanne Freeze, ICI

Rie Kennedy-Lizotte, NASDDDS



New to the SELN? Want a refresher on what we're all about? Let's get back to the basics.

Here's our project team's vision about what employment should look like. We support you, our SELN members, to help make this vision a reality for the people whom your agencies and partners serve.

Employment is a path to opportunity.

Like everyone else, many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities want an opportunity to do paid work. They want and need to contribute to the economy, and to their communities. They're hungry for their skills and talents to be recognized and valued. They want a chance to give back, without being restricted to publicly funded services.

Your state's employment system stands behind people as they struggle, succeed, fail, and succeed again--just as we all do. And our project team stands behind you, as your state and local systems adapt to changing expectations, and find new ways to meet employment goals.

Employment connects people.

When employment's working well, people get jobs that match their interests, and gain a whole new personal and professional network. They build relationships with coworkers, and get more control over their own destiny.

Employees with disabilities may learn new things about themselves and grow personally. This may also lead to seeking a particular career path, or changing jobs to find new challenges, improving who they are, learning who they want to be, and engaging in their community.



Employment means equity.

At its core, **employment** simply means a person working at an individual job in a local business, as part of the general workforce, earning the prevailing wage. All employees are on the business's payroll, and everyone gets paid the same way. Finally, everyone gets the supports and accommodations they need to thrive in their roles.

Employment means increased economic opportunity.

Earning wages at and above minimum wages provides opportunity for individuals to become more financially self-sufficient, to build assets, and to lead more independent lives.

That's not to say these goals come easily. You know from interacting with families, individuals, and staff walking out onto the front lines every day. Funding streams shift, acronyms come and go, laws change, and it gets harder to fight the good fight.

But through your work, and the energy and tenacity of the people you serve, we're all getting closer, day by day, to making this vision of employment into a reality.



2018 SELN Annual Meeting

Theme: Sustainability and Growth through Partnerships

The 2018 annual meeting gave staff from state IDD and VR agencies an opportunity to discuss the importance of clear information and true collaboration to sustain progress and support growth.

Sustainability and Growth Takes Information

The SELN project team discussed the relevance of using performance measurement to demonstrate progress. 4 states presented on how they are making strides in employment data collection, analysis, and sharing:

*Alabama (Byron White), Maryland (Staci Jones),
New Mexico (Carrie Roberts), Oklahoma (Regina Chace)*

Dinner Speaker: Gary Blumenthal

Vice President, Strategic and Special Projects, Pennsylvania Advocacy and Resources

Mr. Blumenthal spoke to the attendees about changes that providers must make to their business models to comply with federal requirements, make a cultural shift in beliefs, and set the expectation that people with IDD should work. He emphasized the importance of helping provider organizations restructure their business practices to achieve greater employment and community engagement outcomes. He urged state staff to talk about the benefits of employment with everyone.

Never underestimate the importance of data sharing.

Staffers must promote the message that the wave of the future is inclusion.

Sustainability and Growth Takes Partnership and Collaboration

Steve Wooderson

Chief Executive Officer at CSAVR

Mr. Wooderson provided the group with an overview of Vision 2020, an initiative to demonstrate at the national level that the VR program works. CSAVR conducted an internal and external scan that revealed VR is a role model in the disability employment community. They learned:

- ▶ VR is proactive and responsive to the principles of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- ▶ VR is mission-driven and dual-customer-focused.
- ▶ VR leads change through innovative and cutting-edge practices.
- ▶ VR customizes services to meet the needs of each individual and business customer.
- ▶ VR creates partnerships to maximize resources and opportunities.

In our members' words...

Most interesting/surprising thing I learned at the annual meeting:

- ▶ We must collaborate with other system partners such as VR to influence the counseling individuals receive and ensure they know fully inclusive and integrated options exist.
- ▶ Recognizing that people's rights may be violated if we do not assure they have the needed experiences to make informed decisions.



Town Hall with Federal Partners

Attendees joined in a discussion with Carol Dobak (Acting Director, State Monitoring and Program Improvement Division, Rehabilitation Services Administration) and Ralph Lollar (Director, Division of Long-Term Services and Supports, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services).

Ms. Doback and Mr. Lollar addressed the following questions:

- ▶ How different states are sequencing and braiding services and funding across systems
- ▶ How states are supported to meet the intent of the definition of competitive integrated employment as outlined in the WIOA
- ▶ What the federal requirements are for ensuring people are provided opportunity for informed choice

Lindsey Weinstock

Trial Attorney, Civil Rights Division, Disability Rights Section, US Department of Justice

Attorney Weinstock provided an overview of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Ms. Weinstock defined the integration mandate as it applies to the human services system. Public entities providing or funding services must comply and avoid unnecessary segregation and thus, discrimination. Her presentation also touched on the ADA and the Supreme Court's Olmstead decision as it applies to people at serious risk of unnecessary segregation in sheltered workshops.

Ms. Weinstock emphasized the importance of understanding true informed choice, ensuring individuals have the knowledge needed to make decisions. She also recognized that individualized planning is key, and each person must have support to communicate preferences, wishes, goals, and skills.

“The variance of data collection between the states was eye opening. It was wonderful to become a resource for states where the data collection and analysis process was behind ours, and at the same time to identify contacts within other states where the process is more established. In addition, the discussion gave me direction in where I believe we need to focus our attention in data collection to support integrated employment in the future.”

–Sean D. Murphy, Missouri DDD

...public entities providing or funding services must comply and avoid unnecessary segregation and thus, discrimination.

One thing to take back to my team:

- ▶ Transition and starting early is really important and many states, even those with strong relationships with others such as the education system, feel there is much work to do.
- ▶ Review clear and specific language for memorandums of understanding with VR.
- ▶ Recognize what the IDD system is best able to do with individuals prior to making a VR referral to ensure the individual is successful on the employment pathway.
- ▶ IDD system needs to strongly influence those who are facilitating conversations with individuals and ensure informed choice really happens and is not just talk.
- ▶ Person-centered thinking must be pervasive, and the system must be person-centered at all levels, in all experiences.
- ▶ Remind people that experiences of the past do not dictate what you are going to experience in the future.



Monthly Network Meetings

In these critical policy and practice discussions, member states wrestle with the need to strategically plan for changes to service delivery and achieve desired employment outcomes, as well as the barriers arising with such shifts. Meetings look critically at the challenges, identifying solutions and progress being made.

2017-2018 topics

ODEP's Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program

The Office of Disability and Employment Policy (ODEP) provides mentoring, intensive TA, and training to help states transform existing policies, service delivery, and reimbursement rate structure to reflect an Employment First approach.

- » *Yasmina Bouraoui, Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council*
- » *Amy Gonzalez, ODEP*
- » *Joe Longcor, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services*

ICI's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center employment consultants' study

Recent research on the effectiveness of employment consultants confirmed that investments must be made to improve direct staff competency, retention, and work balance.

- » *Allison Hall, ICI*
- » *Alberto Migliore, ICI*
- » *Kelly Nye-Lengerman, Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota*

Realign funding and create an efficient use of resources to improve employment

States must change funding structures to focus on employment as a priority outcome. Tennessee created an Employment and Community First waiver, which allows individuals with disabilities to apply for long-term services and supports.

- » *Lisa Mills, Deputy Chief of Long-Term Services and Supports, Bureau of TennCare*
- » *Shannon Nehus, IDD Long-Term Care Program Director, Bureau of TennCare*
- » *Jeremy Norden-Paul, Director of Employment and Day Services, Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*
- » *Wanda Willis, Executive Director, Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities*
- » *Jennifer Bose, ICI*

Improving outreach and engagement with key players

All stakeholders must be engaged in designing and implementing outreach initiatives and programming, especially individuals with IDD and their families.

- » *Marissa Catalan, Delaware Developmental Disabilities Services*
- » *Tony Gantenbein and Dean Ritzman, Minnesota Disability Services Division*
- » *Duane Shumate, Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities*
- » *Jennifer Bose, ICI*

Changing the transportation mindset

Approaches to transportation must be individualized and align with current expectations for community engagement and employment.

- » *Charlie Dickson, Deputy Director, Community Transportation Association of America*
- » *David Hoff, SELN project team*



Collaborating to make community employment for youth with disabilities happen

VR agencies are required to partner with schools to provide transition services to youth with disabilities. IDD systems should collaborate with VR to ensure community-based best practices are used, especially those related to family engagement.

- » *Brenda Simmons, WIN-TAC*
- » *David Hoff, SELN project team*

Project team updates

• Case management online curriculum

States must provide training and professional development opportunities to case managers to help engage individuals with IDD identify a path to fulfilling work.

- » *Nancy Nickolaus, SELN project team*
- » *Jeanine Zlockie, SELN project team*

• Community life engagement (CLE) workgroup

Review of themes from the SELN CLE working group, and discussion of where states are addressing the Higher-Performing Framework elements as applied to CLE.

- » *Allison Hall, ICI*
- » *Jennifer Sulewski, SELN project team*

• Managed care organizations workgroup

States with managed long-term services and supports structures must organize their discussions and expectations of employment outcomes differently from states not working within that framework.

- » *Suzanne Freeze, SELN project team*
- » *Jean Winsor, SELN project team*

Workgroup: Role of Managed Care Organizations in Employment and Day Services for Individuals with IDD

Individuals with IDD often need services to support community inclusion across their lifespan, including one-to-one supports and personal assistance. Traditionally managed care has focused on building cost savings and fiscal efficiencies for short-term services, such as health care. As managed care is extended to long-term services and supports (LTSS), states must include new information about the long-term community support needs of individuals with IDD. This is especially true for supported employment services, which assume individuals may require intensive career exploration and job development followed by long-term job coaching and employment maintenance services. States must be aware of and account for these potential needs to ensure employment for people with IDD. The SELN hosted a 4-part managed care organizations (MCO) workgroup to give states an opportunity to discuss employment within the context of managed care LTSS. Participating states discussed challenges and shared strategies they have been using to increase and improve the quality of specific service outcomes.

The workgroup is a launchpad for future network-wide discussions and product development.

Our state has some providers truly devoted to delivering good integrated employment services, but they face increasing challenges as they try to do the right thing and receive adequate compensation for it.



SELN HUB: A closed online community for member state contacts and partners that enhances networking with colleagues in other states.

156 MEMBERS

SELECTED ACTIVITY:
7/1/2017-6/30/2018

MOST POPULAR TOPICS



Families
Person - centered planning
Self - advocates
WIOA
Capacity building
Transportation



2,941

TOTAL USER ACTIONS

929



RESOURCE / DOCUMENT DOWNLOADS

TOP 5:

- #1 Blueprint for Success: Employing Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities in MA
- #2 Qualities of High - Performing Case Managers
- #3 New Restrictions on Subminimum Wage Under WIOA
- #4 Get Going Mini - guide
- #5 Getting to Work: Addressing the Transportation Challenge



VALUE OF OPEN CONVERSATION

Hub users have the chance to talk candidly with each other, building their relationships and strengthening the network overall.



MOST VIEWED DISCUSSIONS



CLE or day hab rules, policy, manual
Pushback on WIOA CIE definition
Guidelines /standards for self - employment
Prevocational services time limits

WWW.SELNHUB.ORG

MEMBERS HELPED EACH OTHER WITH:

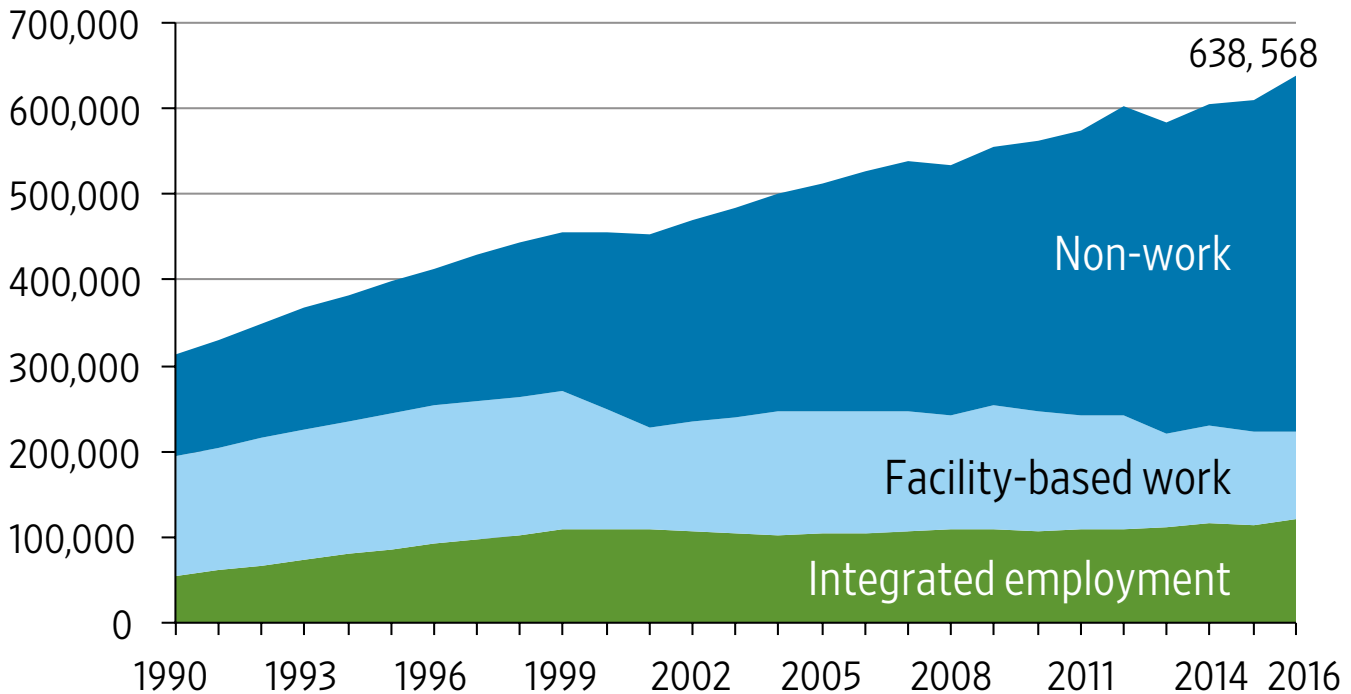
- >>Value - based purchasing or outcome - based payments and tiered rates
- >>Rules, policies, and practices to enhance day service activities
- >>The use of waiver funding to support transition - age youth to work
- >>Guidelines for number of hours worked, earnings, and support requirements





A feature of the SELN is the emphasis on the overall systems dynamic and the importance of balanced change across all of the Higher-Performing Framework elements. Given the shifts being made at state, regional, and local levels, it is important to acknowledge the time needed for changes to take effect, and to radiate throughout the system long enough to take hold, for the right data to be collected, and for the data to then reflect new results.

Chart 1: Number in Employment and Day Services



Source: ICI National Survey of State IDD Agency Day and Employment Services 2016

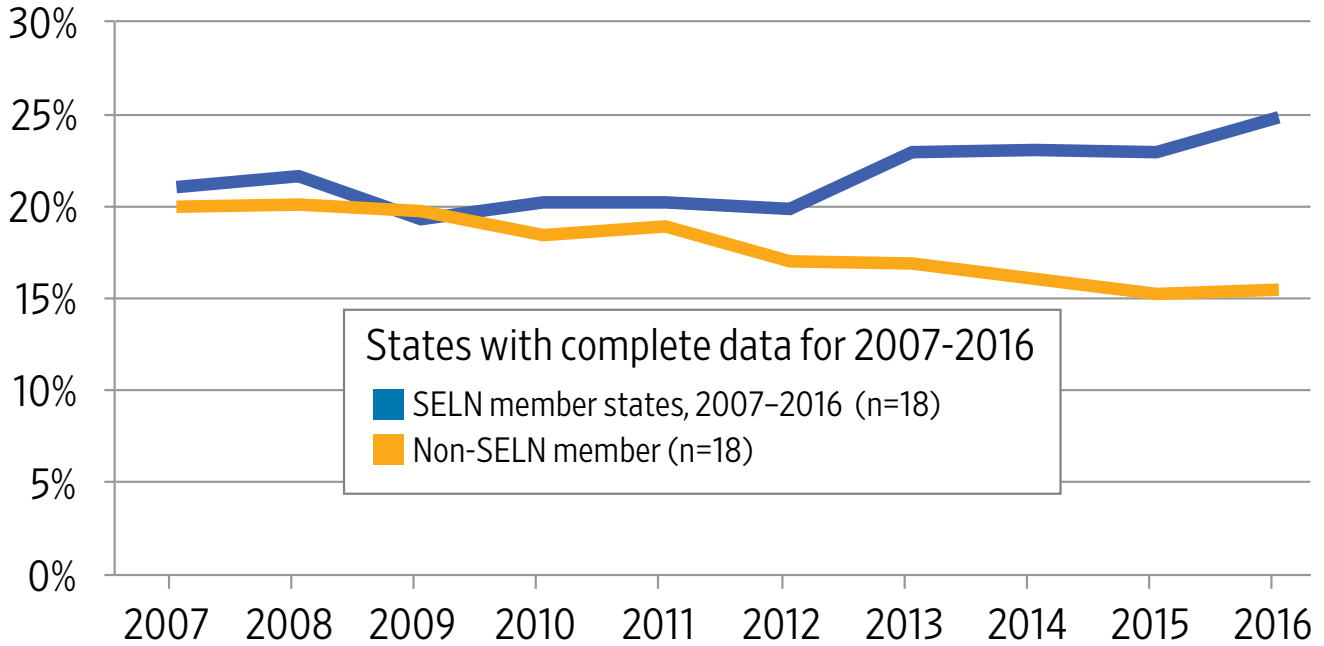
After a decade of no growth, the number of individuals who participate in integrated employment services began to rise in 2012, growing by 10% from 109,700 to 120,600. Over the past 10 years, the number of individuals receiving non-work services has continued to rise faster than any other service, while the number participating in facility-based work declined by 17% between 2012 and 2016.

Chart 1 illustrates how 3 categories of supports have changed over time: non-work services, facility-based work, and integrated employment.

Over this same time period, many states have moved to full implementation of Employment First policies and practices, with revised service definitions. These new definitions reflect a preference for individual integrated employment in the community, and draw clearer distinctions between what does and does not count as “employment.” The more detailed definition in many states of individual integrated employment has led to outcomes previously counted as integrated employment being reclassified to other service types. The SELN regularly reviews these service definitions to determine the results of states’ investments in Employment First agendas.



Chart 2: Percent in Integrated Employment Services



Source: ICI National Survey of State IDD Agency Day and Employment Services 2016

Chart 2 illustrates the percent of individuals receiving integrated employment services in states across the country. Data is collected annually on the total number of individuals who receive integrated employment services funded or monitored by the state IDD agency. Integrated employment services primarily capture services to maintain paid integrated employment, including job training, job coaching (both individual and group), ongoing supports, and services for self-employment. This category can also include career exploration, building interest in work, and job development services funded by the state IDD agency that are intended to directly result in paid integrated employment.

SELN member states (the blue line) show an overall improvement trend, compared to non-SELN states.



Employment First

Over the past decade, the concept of Employment First has emerged in the disability field. This is the idea that employment in integrated settings within the community should be the priority service option for people with disabilities, including those with IDD. Many states have passed or are working on passing legislation.

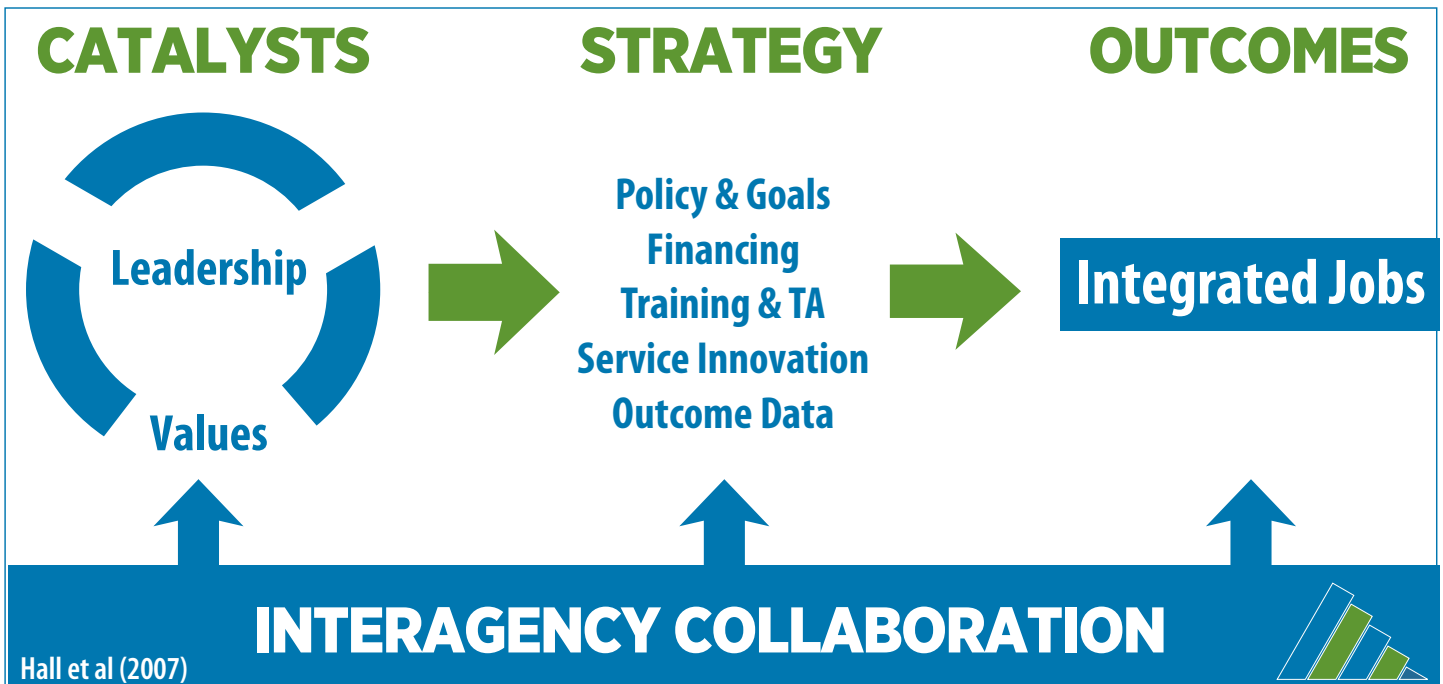
THE EMPLOYMENT FRAMEWORK



Member states enlist the support of a wide variety of key informants to participate in discussions and workgroups to determine a state's course of action. A direct member benefit is access to guidance that can lead states to a better understanding of priorities while setting that course. The Framework for Employment, developed through extensive experience and research conducted within states, is used to guide the SELN's strategy for system improvements. The elements represent practices and outcomes known to be effective at enabling states to develop and sustain highperforming integrated employment systems.

Elements of a High-Performing Employment System

This graphic demonstrates the factors that, when working together, can lead to better integrated employment outcomes. It is the dynamic interplay of all the elements that can lead to long-term systems change.





Leadership.

Clear and unambiguous commitment to employment in individual community jobs, from top leadership through all levels in the system. Local and state-level administrators are identifiable as champions for employment.

Strategic Goals and Operating Policies.

Employment is identified as the preferred outcome in state developmental disabilities policy, and is supported by program goals and operating practices that are clearly designed to achieve that objective.

Financing and Contracting Methods.

The outcome of employment in integrated community jobs is emphasized and supported through the state's resource allocation formulas, reimbursement methods, and rate-setting practices.

Training and Technical Assistance.

Investment in the development and maintenance of a strong, competent workforce. Skill-building emphasizes an expectation for employment across job coaches and developers, supervisors, key employment staff, case managers, job seekers including young adults who are still in school, and families.

Interagency Collaboration and Partnership.

Building relationships with advocates, families, businesses, civic groups, key state and local agency partners (vocational rehabilitation, education, mental health, state Medicaid agency) and removing barriers to employment supports.

Services and Service Innovation.

Service definitions and support strategies are structured and aligned to facilitate the delivery of employment supports to all individuals with developmental disabilities regardless of the intensity of their needs. Non-work supports encourage individuals to become involved in typical adult life activities, building employment skills, such as community service and volunteering opportunities.

Performance Measurement and Data Management.

Comprehensive data systems are used to measure progress, benchmark performance, and document outcomes. Information is gathered on key indicators across employment and other related systems and is used to evaluate and track results, inform policy, and improve provider contracts and service agreements. Data are shared with other state agencies to report results and improve quality.



The network of members benefits from the synergy of learning and sharing across states to address common policy and practice questions so often associated with systems change. State systems engaged in the SELN broadcast the value of high expectations and a fulfilling community-based life which, for most people, includes paid work.

Read on to learn about the many ways they are focusing on tangible and realistic changes needed to address their short and long-term integrated employment goals.

ALABAMA

Two new services promote employment success

The Alabama Department of Mental Health/Division of Developmental Disabilities (DD) received Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) approval for two new services to the Intellectual Disability and Living at Home Medicaid waivers: discovery, and benefits planning and reporting. Discovery will be used to determine an individual's employment goals prior to referral to VR. The benefits planning and reporting service is most often used by provider agencies with a staff member performing benefits management tasks and meeting with individuals or families. It supplements the services available from AL's certified work incentive counselors.

New employment resource specialists

DD hired three regional employment resource specialists (ERSs) to provide TA, training, and other supports to provider and case management agencies. The ERSs also serve as liaisons to the local VR agencies in their regions.

The hiring reinforces the Division's commitment to employment and community inclusion as stated in Alabama's State Transition Plan. ERSs are boots on the ground, identifying areas of need and local issues individuals with disabilities encounter when they engage with their communities. Common questions and concerns are circulated on a regular basis between the ERSs and the Division, **ensuring continuous learning opportunities are shared across the state.**

The ERSs also monitor whether entries to the Division's employment outcome data system are made by providers on a timely basis. Finally, ERSs work closely with certified work incentive counselors to reinforce the importance of understanding benefits management during the career search.

Partnerships support governor's job fair

In October 2017, DD partnered with United Ability, a provider organization in Birmingham, and state agencies, including the Department of Labor, Department of Rehabilitation Services, and Governor's Office on Disability, to host the Alabama [Governor's Inaugural Disability Job Fair](#). Individuals with IDD networked with 95 employers, some of which accepted applications onsite, conducted interviews, and made job offers during the event.

Over 1,100 people attended, including job seekers, employers, and other supporters. The event received a large amount of positive press, reinforcing the message: employment is the first option in Alabama.

ARIZONA

Executive order emphasizes employment

Governor Doug Ducey issued an [Executive Order](#) establishing Arizona as an Employment First State on November 15, 2017. This action codified the work of Arizona's Employment First coalition of advocates, educators, employers, service providers, family members, state agencies, and the University Centers for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities during the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

New employment service

The Arizona Department of Economic Security (ADES) Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) developed and executed the [Career Preparation and Readiness \(CPR\)](#) service: the state's first Long-Term Services and Supports Value-Based Purchasing initiative. This service assists those supported in center-based employment to move into competitive and/or integrated employment.

The vendors providing CPR can obtain a maximum of 2 lifetime outcome payments per person: first when the individual moves to



competitive and/or integrated employment, and then upon the person's successful retention of the employment opportunity for 120 calendar days.

Improving the VR and DDD process

In 2018, ADES collected feedback from community members about their experiences with the VR and DDD process. ADES established a shared annual improvement plan, which is transparent and accountable through all levels of the organization. Through this effort, a supported employment pilot program was initiated to **identify best practices for improvements in referral, collaboration, and job placement.**

DDD also established monthly data sharing with VR to coordinate services, promote discussion between the offices, and inform policy and practice for individuals dually enrolled in both programs.

COLORADO

Annual roundtables and online series

Colorado's Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) and the Division for Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) hosted 6 annual regional supported employment roundtables. Participants including employment providers, school transition coordinators, IDD case managers, and DVR counselors discussed changes in supported employment processes, services, and best practices, such as job discovery and community integrated employment.

Piggybacking off the roundtable discussions, HCPF and DVR and the SELN hosted a 4-part webinar series on the importance of building capacity and providing individualized supports to lead to community-based jobs. The sessions included strategies for success on the job, foundational understanding of individualized supports, getting to know the job seeker, and customized and negotiated job development.

250 employment specialists participated in the series.

Building staff competencies

The 2018 Colorado legislative session passed Senate Bill 18-145. The bill mandates that all providers of supported employment services for persons with disabilities earn a nationally

recognized certification: the Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP). The HCPF and DVR will implement the new provider qualifications and track compliance.

The legislation also provides funding to reimburse providers for the cost of the training and obtaining the CESP certification. It will be implemented by July 1, 2019.

CESP

The Association for Persons Supporting Employment First (APSE) developed the Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) credentialing to improve critical competencies for employment professionals supporting individuals with disabilities.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Joint intake to identify interests

The Department on Disability Services implemented a new joint intake process for the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) and VR. The intake uses a guided conversation to identify a DDA applicant's interest in employment. A separate application for VR services is no longer required, and DDA and VR share eligibility information about new applicants, thereby streamlining the process for both staff and applicants.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

WIOA, passed by Congress in 2014, is designed to strengthen and improve our nation's public workforce system and help get Americans, including those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers and help employers hire and retain skilled workers.

New Assessment Process

The DDS began piloting a new assessment process for Ability One placements to determine whether the setting complies with WIOA and the HCBS Final Rule (2014) to ensure people are truly engaged in competitive integrated employment. The process outlines the steps to be taken if it is determined a site is not compliant with one or both of these requirements.

Training the trainers

Through the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, DDS provided



a training-of-trainers for over 25 state and provider staff on the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) competencies so they can train others, since ACRE training or CESP certification is required for all VR, supported employment, and employment readiness providers. DDS also provided training on the business case for employing people with disabilities to help staff more effectively engage employers.

Expanding opportunities

DDS received final approval from CMS for the statewide transition plan and a new home and community-based services (HCBS) waiver. To encourage employment and community life engagement, the waiver time-limits the employment readiness service so people can get to work faster, requires a person to use employment or community-integrated day services for a year prior to entering day habilitation, limits use of day habilitation for people with a low level of need, and limits the amount of time per week any person can use the service. The waiver also includes a flexible assistive technology service.

Supporting decision-making

The District of Columbia passed the Disability Services Reform Amendment Act, which formally recognizes supported decision-making. The District continues to work in partnership with self-advocates and families to raise expectations for employment.

DELAWARE

Accessing perceptions and experience to identify priorities

Delaware Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS) and the SELN conducted a review of the state system to identify priorities and inform policy and funding decisions. DDDS staff completed the SELN State Strategic Employment Assessment describing the state's infrastructure. DDDS also invited partners and customers to participate in online surveys and in-person focus groups to gather input on current perceptions and experiences. DDDS is developing a work plan based on the findings report to address the areas identified for improvement.

Starting early

Delaware's Department of Education (DOE), local education agencies, and Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) began a complete re-evaluation of the Early Start to Supported Employment Program, a state-based initiative aimed at transition-age youth. Launched in 2005, Early Start was identified as having great potential to expand and to assist transition-age youth with IDD to achieve employment after high school. However, to become more effective, Early Start will need to be revised to embrace the expectations and requirements of WIOA, and to incorporate the new services and supports available via Delaware's Pathways to Employment Medicaid State Plan Amendment.

Youth earning credentials

With the DOE as the lead, DDDS and DVR are collaborating on a pilot project providing direct TA to 3 local education authorities. The goal is to train career and technical education teachers to support students with disabilities who wish to access career and technical education **pathway opportunities in middle and high school, including obtaining credentials or certifications in their chosen career.** These efforts are expected to improve post-high-school employment outcomes and increase engagement in higher education and training opportunities.

GEORGIA

Exploring funding mechanisms

Georgia's Division of Developmental Disabilities, in collaboration with the state's VR agency, developed and implemented a new funding mechanism for supported employment services called Employment Express during membership year 2017-2018. Service providers participating in Employment Express are reimbursed with state and VR funds. Also, VR dollars and services are maximized by using state funds as a match for federal Rehabilitation Service Administration funding.

Employment Express expedites the intake process, allowing individuals to bypass the IDD waiting list. This statewide initiative is expected to increase the number of people served in supported employment by approximately 500 in the first year.



Employment First becomes official

Georgia passed legislation creating the Employment First Georgia Council in early 2018. The purpose of the council is to advise the governor, the General Assembly, and state agencies as to the adoption and integration of an Employment First policy.

The council will develop an Employment First training plan for providers of services to individuals with disabilities. In addition, the council will evaluate the funding mechanism for daytime services for individuals with disabilities and for students with disabilities attending inclusive postsecondary institutions. Lastly, the council will make recommendations to the governor and the General Assembly about activities and policies the state can put in place to encourage integrated employment.

HAWAII

“Aloha State” welcomes Employment First

Hawaii stepped forward this membership year, reinforcing the state’s commitment to ensure their residents with developmental disabilities have greater opportunity to fully participate in the general workforce.

Governor David Y. Ige [signed a proclamation](#) identifying October as Disability Employment Awareness month, and **endorsed Hawai’i’s designation as an Employment First state**. In the proclamation, Governor Ige encouraged all citizens of the Aloha State to fully participate in the workforce and bring their individual strengths and talents to augment Hawaii’s business and industry. Individuals who do not have an extensive work history, or any work history, need assistance getting started on their career path. Recognizing this, the state’s Department of Health, Developmental Disabilities Division (DDD) modified service options through their Medicaid 1915(c) I/DD Waiver, and received approval from CMS to implement.

Discovering interests, talents, and skills

DDD has incorporated Discovery and Career Planning (D&CP) as a modification to traditional prevocational services. D&CP helps individuals identify their marketable skills, personal attributes, interests, and preferred tasks before they begin seeking employment. This proactive approach uses a Discovery Pathway

all employment Medicaid I/DD Waiver providers use to assist individuals in acquiring competitive integrated employment.

Understanding how wages impact benefits

Many individuals with IDD would like to earn income, but are worried about losing their Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Insurance, Medicaid, or other entitlements. DDD has added benefits counseling as a component of the Discovery and Career Planning Medicaid I/DD Waiver services to ensure individuals are informed.

IOWA

Offering regional guidance on Employment First

During the 2017–2018 membership year, the Iowa Department of Human Services Division of Mental Health and Disability Services (MHDS) and the University of Iowa Center for Disabilities and Development (CDD) collaborated to educate staff in local government offices, providers, local case managers, and policymakers on **how to improve access to integrated employment services**. Informational webinars were developed on the foundations of Employment First, informed choice and person-centered planning, talking with parents, supported employment as an evidence-based practice, and Employment First data collaborations and outcomes reporting. In-person TA was made available from MHDS and CDD staff. Local government staff participated in the webinars, including chief executive officers, coordinators of disability services, and employment specialists.

Community life engagement (CLE)

CLE is accessing and participating in daily community activities to have a meaningful life. Just as it does for people without disabilities, this engagement provides people with IDD an opportunity to expand an individual’s personal network, build social capital, and participate in social and civic community activities. CLE supports and supplements employment by giving individuals opportunities to explore careers through experiential activities and learning around career exploration. CLE supports may be referred to as community-based day, community-based non-work, or community integration.



Retooling day habilitation services

Beginning in April 2018, MHDS and Iowa Medicaid Enterprise engaged a workgroup to revise Medicaid Day Habilitation service definitions and processes to reflect the state's commitment to community life engagement, and to comply with the HCBS Final Rule (2014).

In addition to revising state administrative rules, MHDS will offer training to help day services providers maximize clients' community inclusion and person-centered planning, and to make sure employment is considered as an option for all working-age people in day services. Workgroup members include representatives of community rehabilitation provider networks, individuals with disabilities and their families, advocates, and state policy makers.

MARYLAND

Stakeholder engagement

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) invested in provider transformation and leadership development using several resources. Through DDA's collaboration with the Office for Disability Employment Policy and the Employment First State Leadership Mentor Program (EFSLMP), 6 providers received TA focused on strengthening executive-level leadership to support organizational transformation to increase employment outcomes.

EFSLMP also provided a 3-part webinar series focusing on quality delivery of community-based day supports, as well as 2 facilitated stakeholder conversations around perceived barriers to employment outcomes. Stakeholders included providers, families, DDA regional staff, targeted case managers and other partner agencies.

Other activities included a **2-week-long, intensive leadership development program** for 15 DDA-funded provider agencies and

Provider transformation

Providers are changing the focus of service delivery away from segregated disability specific options to prioritizing integrated employment and community inclusion. Member states are providing TA and support to assist providers to move through and complete a transformation process.

their leadership teams in Maryland. The DDA and the National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities at the University of Delaware partnered to provide the training.

Advancing collaboration

The DDA and the Maryland State Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) worked over the past year to update a 2013 joint memorandum of understanding (MOU). DORS and DDA representatives spent time learning how both systems can work together to support employment outcomes. The MOU was finalized and signed in June of 2018. Regional town hall meetings are being scheduled to review the MOU and answer community questions. Highlights of the updated MOU include joint definitions of competitive integrated employment, based on WIOA language, as well as the use of Pre-Employment Transition services as a tool to support youth in a seamless transition between school and work.

Partnering for student success

Maryland state-level partners continued to receive ongoing TA through [the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition \(NTECT\)](#), with the continued goal of improving the coordination of transition services to increase outcomes for students and youth with disabilities. Partners include the Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Department of Disability, Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation, Developmental Disabilities Administration, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, Parents Place of Maryland, Worcester County Public Schools, Charles County Public Schools, and Behavioral Health Administration.

These partners engaged in intensive planning time, including monthly conference calls and face-to-face planning meetings throughout the year. Facilitated planning time during 2018 led to the group drafting a joint vision statement as well as identified joint values around transition for students with disabilities in Maryland.



MASSACHUSETTS

Expanding community options

This membership year, the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS) focused on program development and capacity building in community-based day support (CBDS) services. CBDS is a vehicle for individuals to explore and engage in meaningful and purposeful activities, including those related to employment. These activities are individualized and based on the preferences and goals identified in each person's individual support plan.

Specific areas of focus have included program design to foster more individualized services, as well as establishing smaller satellite or site-less approaches promoting stronger local community ties and presence.

DDS ran several full-day trainings for CBDS program managers and their teams, created two communities of practice for provider organizations, and gave TA to provider agencies. These efforts allowed **providers to share promising practices in service design, and to learn about tools and resources** that align with the CMS Final Rule (3/2014).

Key competencies for direct support staff providing CBDS have also been identified, and a new training curriculum will be piloted in the fall of 2018. The curriculum will emphasize ways staff can increase clients' skill development, independence, and meaningful engagement and participation in community activities and settings.

DDS expects the results of these efforts to lead to improved employment outcomes that build on the array of career-related, skills training, and volunteer work experiences provided through CBDS. These outcomes will help people receiving CBDS to create rich and full lives to maximize community integration and employment.

MICHIGAN

Addressing sub-minimum wage

Michigan has seen a **decline in the number of individuals paid sub-minimum wage under 14(c) certificates**, from 8,000 in FY2013 to 5,500 in FY2018. The Behavioral Health &

Developmental Disabilities Administration (BHDDA) credits the combined impact of legislation and partnering efforts for the change.

MI sustains a collaborative approach to developing employment policy and strategy, coordinating the work of BHDDA, the Developmental Disabilities Council's Employment First initiative, and growing support from providers. These efforts have been enhanced by BHDDA's continued focus on clearer definitions around individual competitive integrated employment.

Section 14(c) & Section 511

Under Section 14(c) of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, businesses are permitted to pay individuals with disabilities less than the minimum wage based on productivity rates. WIOA places new limits on the payment of subminimum wages under Section 511.

Aligning policy and practice

BHDDA aligned its Employment Works! Policy with WIOA requirements, identifying competitive integrated employment as the optimal outcome. A workgroup was established with membership from regional Community Mental Health Service Programs (local service management entities in Michigan) and state contracting and policy staff. The workgroup has refined employment reporting, and serves as a steering committee for the **interpretation and reporting of employment data**, as well as long-term data collection.

New benefits management coaches

BHDDA convened a small workgroup of community mental health service programs (CMHSPs), clubhouses, providers, and state representatives to address the fear of losing public benefits. Members created a model reflecting a continuum of benefit assistance services through the intentional development of "Benefit to Work Coaches."

Coaches are employment staff from the CMHSP or community providers. They have to complete 7 online modules, participate in a 2-day in-person training, and commit to 10 hours per week advising people receiving services who have simple benefits situations. A coach will pull in a benefit planner, who has more



knowledge and skills, when a person's situation is complicated.

Over 60 individuals have participated to date, favorably endorsing the training. Workgroup discussions continue on state funding for sustainability, TA, credentialing, and cross-disability replication. Training is funded through the Mental Health Block Grant, and the work is cross-walked into the IDD system.

More efficient referral process

BHDDA completed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) to facilitate an efficient referral process and coordination of employment services and resources. Following distribution of the MOU in December 2017, 3 state-wide calls were held with local MRS offices, CMHSPs, and providers. A FAQ was distributed in April 2018 responding to over 30 questions raised in state-wide calls. Presently, joint meetings are focused on referrals and releases to expedite the service process, as well as better ways to share data.

MINNESOTA

Exploring, developing, and supporting opportunities

After a year of working with other state agencies and with TA from the SELN, Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) began offering 3 new employment services on the HCBS waivers. The services are **exploration, development, and support**. They will help people make informed decisions about employment, find competitive employment, and succeed in employment.

These new services will offer fresh resources for job seekers with disabilities, and allow for greater specificity in service planning.

Awarding innovation

In 2018, DHS will award approximately **\$2 million in disability services innovation grants**. These grants celebrate people and organizations with innovative ideas to help people with disabilities work in rewarding jobs, live where they choose, and connect with others in their communities. DHS anticipates it will award contracts to 4 to 10 grant applicants, with a maximum award of \$500,000.

Last year, the state distributed \$1.8 million in innovation grants. Previously funded projects include a discovery program at two high schools, an employment leadership group for day treatment and habilitation providers, and a housing assistance program for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis or needing psychiatric hospitalization.

MISSOURI

Strengthening workforce capacity

To support the growing number of individuals who express an interest in competitive employment and find typical job search processes ineffective and frustrating, Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) introduced two webinar series for employment staff: one on customized employment, and the other on benefits planning. Each of the webinar series had 5 one-hour webinars and a 6-hour in-person coaching session.

Participants committed to a blended training of one-hour webinars and attendance at a one-day 6-hour coaching session for each topic. As of summer 2018, **260+ professionals have participated in the trainings**, with a 90% mastery of content based upon pre-post testing.

New initiative

In October 2016, DDD launched the Empowering Through Employment initiative to reduce the gap between the percentage of individuals with an expressed interest in community employment and those accessing employment services. DDD designed a three-tiered "ribbon recognition" campaign for outreach and achievement. Regional offices and case management providers are awarded for achieving service coordination benchmarks.

At the launch of the initiative, of those accessing day and employment services, 11% received an employment service. As of June 2018, this has increased to 19.4% of individuals. To date, **24 case management providers have gotten a recognition ribbon**, and DDD launched a monthly [infographic](#) to capture the impact of the initiative.



Planning and job placement tools

Via the SELN, DDD has developed a series of five tools to be used by service providers throughout the employment process, from initial planning and exploration through job placement. The five tools are: initial information collection, job and career planning support checklist, placement plan, observational summary, and personal profile. While use of these tools is not mandated, the intent is provider consistency and comprehensiveness in terms of the employment process. These tools create a **structure for documentation of service benchmarks and outcomes** as the state transforms its provider payment system.

Employment First initiative gets funding

In FY 2018, Missouri began funding an initiative to provide intensive TA to DDD service providers. The 5-year Missouri Employment First initiative is being operated by the ICI, with 2 Missouri-based ICI staff working with providers on organizational changes to improve outcomes in a sustained and long-term fashion.

NEW MEXICO

New waiver standards focus on the person

In March 2018, the New Mexico Department of Health/Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) revised the NM Developmental Disabilities Waiver standards. New language about person-centered thinking, planning, and practice was added. The new standards clarify how to arrive at and document the process of making informed choices about employment and about other life areas.

Under the revised standards, each support team member plays a role in promoting employment and reducing barriers. The standards also define **community life engagement as an expected outcome of a meaningful day** and introduce the four guideposts of community life engagement outlined by [ThinkWork!, a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston.](#)

Partnerships for Employment and a CESP incentive

Partners for Employment (PFE), a collaboration between DDSD, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the University of New Mexico Center for Development and Disability, is in its fifth year of operation. During the 2017–2018 membership year, PFE staff from the University of New Mexico and state agency partners consulted with the Washington Initiative for Supported Employment to develop a master training plan offering on-demand and facilitated training using a guided cohort model.

The goal of the training is to support new staff as they learn their jobs, and to provide learning opportunities for more seasoned staff who need a refresher on a specific topic. Staff members who take training courses are eligible to apply for scholarships funded by DDSD to take the Certified Employment Supports Professional (CESP) examination offered by the Association of Persons Supporting EmploymentFirst (APSE). Since these training courses are not yet mandated, the CESP scholarship is an incentive to participate.

Engaging businesses

The first Meet at the Mountain retreat was held in May. This invitation-only event, run by DDSD, was developed in collaboration with the Washington Initiative for Supported Employment. The event was geared towards provider agency executives and focused on system-change efforts and strategies.

NEW YORK

Leadership conference

In April 2018, the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) held its annual Supported Employment Leadership Conference bringing together **more than 350 employment directors and managers from 200 voluntary provider agencies** across the state. Attendees participated in breakout sessions on new Federal US Department of Labor rules related to employment and volunteering; community prevocational services providing vocational experiences and career exploration; management tips related to what data is relevant to employment services; and discovery, a person-centered planning service informing job development.



Provider transformation

In 2017, OPWDD formally stated after December 31, 2020, segregated employment settings, including workshops, will no longer be funded. OPWDD is offering limited funding to assist provider organizations in transforming to an integrated agency and closing sheltered workshops.

68 providers who support 6,000 individuals submitted workshop transformation proposals.

The proposals awarded included those offering person-centered plans for individuals to determine their needs and identify the most appropriate service, a timeline for transformation, and in some cases, plans for the creation of an integrated business employing individuals with and without disabilities. The transformation will be ongoing through 2020.

Paid internships to encourage businesses and students

Pathway to Employment, OPWDD's time-limited career and vocational planning service, has assisted thousands of individuals to identify their interests and unique talents through a 278-hour-long discovery process. Through the Employment Training Program, OPWDD offers adults and high school students paid internships to encourage businesses to give individuals with IDD an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and abilities. In 2017, more than 10,000 individuals were receiving supported employment services, and 8,500 individuals were competitively employed.

400 classes for voluntary provider staff

In 2017, OPWDD organized and taught 400 classes to train 9,000 voluntary provider staff from more than 200 agencies. These classes make sure providers fully understand OPWDD expectations for service delivery, Employment First, and the philosophy of person-centered planning.

In OPWDD's Supported Employment Regulations, staff providing services must initially complete **24 hours of trainings in the Innovations in Employment Supports series and 6 additional hours** each year. The trainings are held throughout the state on a regular basis. Classes focus on practical skills and include: Job Coaching, Job Development,

Discovery and Person-Centered Planning, Employment Training Program, Pathway to Employment, Beyond Discovery, How to Deliver a Work Readiness Curriculum, and Introduction to Employment.

OHIO

Multi-agency planning aligns vision and practice

During the 2017–2018 membership year, **11 county-based multi-agency teams formed across Ohio to engage in strategic planning for systems change.** Each core team included representation from the Department of Education, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). The process, called "[Multi-Agency Planning](#)," is focused on the needs of youth in transition from school to adult life. It aligns with the core principles of the Transition Vision Work Plan developed by the Ohio Employment First Task Force.

Each team participated in regional trainings to engage in a 7-step strategic planning process. Each team developed a plan to build capacity for collaboration across systems to support transition youth. 79 county board members, 54 VR counselors, and 67 educators received intense professional development and TA, and a total of 762 informational sessions were completed on the Employment First Transition Framework.

Transformation series fuels innovation

DODD sponsored a 2-phased initiative called "Transformation Series: Building Innovative Service Models." The series connected experienced providers to those early in the different stages of transformation.

Phase 1 of the series invited providers to visit and learn from organizations that have started to shift their service models to more community-based emphases and structures. These "Transformations-at-a-Glances" were hosted in person and online by provider agencies selected based on their efforts in one or more of five subject matter areas: assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation, and service innovation. 185 provider representatives attended in-person or virtual sessions.



Phase 2 was the Transformation Summit, which built on Phase 1. Agency providers worked directly with transformation subject matter experts and connected with agency peers. 193 providers attended the summit from around the state. Ongoing learning and connection with provider organizations is happening through www.loopohio.org, Ohio's virtual community of practice.

OKLAHOMA

Case management employment symposium

In March 2018, the Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) sponsored a case management symposium on supporting individuals' employment outcomes. Energetic keynote and breakout sessions provided opportunities for group discussion on the impact of national influences, overcoming roadblocks using person-centered planning tools, and creating unique employment pathways.

"I learned a lot in these sessions and it was nice bouncing ideas and thoughts off of others who work with individuals as well."

Sessions were presented by members of the SELN project team and Scott Harrington of Sierra Behavioral Solutions. The Department of Rehabilitation Services presented on new WIOA

requirements, and partners from the Oklahoma Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Project shared information on work incentives.

A total of 145 case managers and case management supervisors attended the event, along with state staff from DDS. 99% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed the information was professionally relevant.

Updating the individual planning process

DDS made major revisions to the state's individual planning process and individual plan document. DDS used a Lean/Six Sigma Green Belt project to guide the revisions, focusing efforts on improvements to ensure individuals had ample opportunities to achieve competitive integrated employment.

In Oklahoma, individuals are guided through a person-centered assessment, which can inform ideas for desired jobs to pursue. If an individual is not employed in a competitive

integrated job, or their current job does not meet their preferences or abilities, the process prompts the team to identify a pathway with opportunities to overcome the obstacles. This pathway is reflected through an outcome and/or action steps in the individual plan.

Improving performance

With guidance derived from CMS [presentations](#) on the HCBS Final Rule (2014), DDS developed a tool to assess service settings' compliance with quality standards. Case managers are tasked with completing the documentation, evaluating the settings, and communicating to DDS if every setting accessed by individuals they support meets the standards in the rule.

DDS found only 2 out of every 3 forms were accurately completed and has been conducting trainings to ensure case managers understand this task. 10 trainings have been completed to date, and DDS is evaluating the need to continue this activity. The value of the trainings has been learning what local struggles may be inhibiting individuals' access to full community integration and inclusion and helping case managers feel empowered to support individuals to reach their life goals.

OREGON

Accessing providers

This year, Oregon's Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS) added a new function to the Employment Outcomes System online database. Providers are now able to enter their capacity in specific areas, such as job coaching, job development, and discovery services. Individuals and family members, VR counselors, and case managers have access to the data. **The database uses a red, yellow, or green light system to indicate the level of availability for staff** in the specific areas, making finding a provider even easier.

Providers are sharing their data on a consistent basis, which enables ODDS to identify where there are capacity gaps in the regions. ODDS uses this information to inform case managers, self-advocates, and families of current provider capacity across the state.



Summer work options

Beginning in April 2017, ODDS, the Department of Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation released a request for application looking to fund programs blending and braiding agency funds to achieve the best employment outcomes for young people with disabilities. Chosen applicants must demonstrate **a sustainable summer work-experience program supporting student employment** and higher education preparation, as well as community engagement.

Examples of these activities include paid summer jobs, job shadowing, volunteering, internships, apprenticeships, and work readiness. As of June 2018, 22 programs have been funded throughout the state.

PENNSYLVANIA

New state data system

In April 2018, the Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) compiled a report containing the first full set of employment data to be gathered statewide. The data in this report came from adding several different questions to the statewide Support Coordinator Monitoring Tool regarding where a person might be on their employment path.

Support coordinators asked these questions and recorded the data during a monitoring visit. Data was then shared with the four regions of the state. The purpose of compiling this report was to give all stakeholders a sense of where they stand in comparison to other regions, and to get them to start thinking creatively about employment targets and better ways to reach them.

Redesigning service definitions

On July 1, 2017, ODP began implementing its new and redesigned employment service definitions developed to align with Pennsylvania's Employment First Executive Order. A new umbrella service called Community Participation Support was implemented to encompass licensed day habilitation and pre-vocational services, as well as the advanced supported employment service, which is focused on discovering a

person's interests and skills and matching those with a customized approach to the right job match. These services are offered statewide through ODP's Intellectual Disability/Autism Waivers.

Regional forums challenge groups to collaborate

In April and May 2018, ODP and the SELN hosted 4 regional forums on employment and community inclusion with regional employment leads, county staff, supports coordinators, providers, and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation counselors. ODP used the forums to reinforce the importance of collaboration among these groups. This is important because individuals often interact with multiple agencies and professionals as they pursue competitive integrated employment.

RHODE ISLAND

An online look at community engagement and employment

In April 2018, BHDDH and SELN hosted an online event for provider organizations currently shifting their service delivery model from sheltered workshops to models focused on community integrated employment and community life engagement (CLE).

Staff from NASDDDS conducted a Q&A session about the relationship between CLE and employment, followed by a presentation from NuPath, a multi-purpose provider agency. NuPath provided details on how their organization puts CLE into practice across their 21 locations.

Provider organizations in RI gathered groups of staff to watch the event together and to discuss it afterwards.

New payment methodology

In January 2018, the RI Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals launched its second year of the Person-Centered Supported Employment Performance Program (PCSEPP), building on the goals and outcomes of the PCSEPP 1.0 (the first year of the initiative). PCSEPP is a payment program promoting integrated employment by linking the disbursement of funds to providers with the achievement of performance goals, numerical



targets, and implementation timelines.

PCSEPP 1.0 supported 444 individuals through 22 providers with a placement rate of 38% and a retention rate of over 90%, at both the 90- and 180-day job placement benchmarks. 499 individuals are supported by PCSEPP 2.0. Data shows trends towards similar outcomes as the first year, with a current employment placement rate of 16%.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Defining employment

On June 1, 2018, the South Dakota Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), with guidance from the SD Employment First Alliance, developed and began implementing new service definitions. The services were approved by CMS.

The revised definitions reflect core beliefs: all individuals with developmental disabilities can work, and **working-age people should be given the supports necessary to gain and maintain employment**, advance in their chosen field, and explore new employment options as their skills, interests, and needs change. The new services include individual supported employment, group supported employment, career exploration, and day services.

Two important changes are the creation of a career exploration service, and the splitting out of group and individual employment services. Career exploration was developed as a new time-limited service with an outcome of sustained paid employment and work experience.

Participants have 18 months to achieve their employment goals. If the outcomes are not met in the 18-month time frame, there are limited opportunities to continue with this service with the approval of DDD staff.

In the past, individual and group supported employment services were provided at the same time under the title “supported employment.” Splitting them into separate and distinct services allows DDD to capture accurate data, track who is receiving which type of service, and determine where there is movement toward new career goals.

DDD hosted 2 in-person trainings for community-support providers, case managers, individuals,

families, guardians, and advocates to explain the new service definitions, address questions, and generate interest in the services. The [CHOICES Daily Life and Employment Toolkit](#) was provided to participants. The toolkit includes policies and procedures related to the changes in definitions, service delivery instructions and guidance, and examples of the way each service can be used.

TEXAS

System cross-training

Texas’ Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWC-VRS) are providing **cross-training on VR and long-term supports and services systems to 39 community centers** across Texas. Trainings include 1915(c) community-based service waiver providers (the funding authority used most frequently in Texas for employment), managed care organizations, and VR staff.

Additional topics

- ▶ Texas’ Employment First policy
- ▶ HCBS Final Rule (2014)
- ▶ Social Security Administration disability benefits and work incentive programs
- ▶ Employment services and billing under HHSC 1915(c) and 1115 demonstration programs
- ▶ TWC-VRS overview and relation to long term supports and services
- ▶ HHSC employment recruitment coordinator statewide activities and video
- ▶ Report to Texas Legislature on Occupational Training Programs for Individuals with an Intellectual Disability

Expanding occupational opportunities

Texas’ HHSC and TWC-VRS is conducting a study of occupational training programs for individuals with IDD. The study will determine regions in the state where training programs should be improved or expanded, and will determine strategies for helping individuals find fulfilling jobs.

An electronic survey was developed and deployed across the state to providers, advocates, family members, and other interested parties. The project will culminate with a report to the Texas legislature in December 2018.



VIRGINIA

Life Course and collaboration

As part of Virginia's Employment First plan, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) developed a memorandum of agreement with the commonwealth's Department of Education to advance employment initiatives for individuals with developmental disabilities, particularly elementary-age youth. This collaborative effort will **help elementary and middle school youth explore pathways to employment** as the first and priority option, using [Life Course](#) tools to educate families and children on employment.

Additionally, DBHDS formalized its partnership with the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) by developing a memorandum of agreement to advance employment initiatives and efforts on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities. This partnership allows for the streamlining of people with Medicaid Waivers into employment services, through either agency, so individuals do not experience a delay in service.

Data trends

DBHDS completed its seventh semi-annual report on employment, with **100% provider participation**. Data are collected every 6 months from providers across the commonwealth. The latest round of data collection showed a significant increase in individual supported employment, a slight decrease in group supported employment, and a significant decrease in sheltered employment. Waiver-funded individual supported employment increased by almost 10% this period, and has **doubled since initiation of the commonwealth's Employment First policy**.

Data indicate Virginia's efforts around employment are working, and demonstrate a sustained increasing trend regarding the number of individuals employed. The Employment First data subcommittee is analyzing data collected for the past 2 years, and will be developing a separate trend report.

Collaborative training initiative

Four Virginia state agencies—DBHDS, DARS, Department of Education, and Virginia

Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)—worked with several nationally recognized training organizations, through a competitive bid process, to implement customized employment in the commonwealth. This training is designed to create and sustain quality competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Over **150 employment professionals received 40+ classroom hours** of training and fieldwork. In collaboration with the [ACRE](#), a basic certificate in community employment with a concentration in customized employment was awarded to all participants who completed the training. DARS, DBHDS, and DBVI will be using this training to certify employment service organization vendors as having a qualified customized employment specialist.

ACRE

The Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators provides a Certificate of Achievement based on ACRE approved curricula.

WASHINGTON

Ending segregated employment

On July 1, 2015, the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) closed the front door to pre-vocational services (PVS). New clients will **no longer be able to enter into PVS**, and providers must focus on moving all clients receiving PVS into integrated settings.

DDA is working with provider agencies to develop business plans for transitioning to a fully integrated service model, including TA to support planning and provider staff training. Since June 2015, over **200 clients have been transitioned out of PVS** into integrated services. As of June 2018, only 98 individuals continue to receive PVS. DDA is on track to have these individuals moved into integrated services by March 2019.

Improving the quality of employment outcomes

DDA has been working with internal staff, county partners, and employment providers to improve the number of people working



and the quality of employment outcomes, such as increasing paid hours. Strategies include setting change targets at the state and county levels, and strategic discussions in regularly scheduled implementation committee meetings with county and provider representatives.

Over the past 3 years, DDA has been supporting systems improvement goals established by the governor. FY2018 goals are to increase the percentage of working-age adults (21-61) with IDD reporting wages from 66% to 67% (1%), and to increase the percentage of working-age adults receiving DDA employment supports who are reporting minimum wage or higher from 58.12% to 60.12% (2%).

Setting system strategies

DDA has set a goal that the number of hours an individual works **matches the number of hours they want to work**. DDA establish a strategy for defining desired work hours and collecting the information through the CARE data system at the client's assessment.

DDA is tracking and reporting this data on an individual level. Case resource managers and employment providers will discuss possible **gaps between desired and actual weekly employment hours for clients**. The goal is to at least annually review the information, ask pertinent questions about the client's employment goals, and make progress towards the desired work hours.

The collected data will be input into CARE, and will be analyzed to see how well DDA meets the desired work hours of the clients. This analysis will be shared with DDA staff, counties, and employment providers. DDA will provide training to decrease the gap between desired and actual weekly employment hours.

WISCONSIN

Formalizing Employment First!

Wisconsin became an **Employment First state on March 28, 2018** with the passage of 2017 Wisconsin Act 178. The new law requires the Department of Health Services (DHS), the Department of Workforce Development, and the Department of Public Instruction to jointly establish competitive integrated employment (CIE) as their priority policy. The agencies are also mandated to work together, and with other stakeholders, to set benchmarks and goals for improvement in CIE rates across Wisconsin.

DHS issued [guiding principles](#) for CIE, which are built on the value of full inclusion of people with disabilities, and are researched-based.

Pay-For-Performance initiative

Wisconsin also designated CIE as its 2019 Pay-For-Performance initiative. DHS will withhold a percentage of payments made to each managed care organization (MCO) in 2019 which the MCO can then earn back, including incentives, by meeting benchmarks set by DHS to increase CIE.

Data management efforts

DHS is developing a wage collection system to more accurately **capture the number of individuals enrolled in long-term care** programs who participate in CIE. To develop this system and collect improved baseline data, DHS is entering into an interagency agreement with the Department of Workforce Development to improve data collection for individuals with disabilities who participate in CIE. These changes will allow Wisconsin to reach its goal of increasing the employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities who have identified they wish to work in their communities.



Every year, we are struck with the broad range of state activities and investments in systems change. It is not unusual for the best laid plans to be set aside to address emerging priority issues. In this way, human services is like any system that translates futures planning into concrete action steps: always prepared to shift as needed.

What's tricky is making sure the work gets back on track after leadership changes, political pressures, or other unexpected impacts shift assignments and workloads. In our SELN discussions we emphasize the importance of building leadership capacity at all levels of the system, and the responsibility everyone should feel for keeping strategic priorities on track. Developing sustainable systems cannot be dependent on a single person and must be built to withstand the unexpected.

At the heart of our work is a focus on helping people achieve more meaningful lives. A balance in addressing the High-Performing Framework elements is critical to achieving new employment and community life outcomes.

Each state's short activity descriptions represent significant investment and leadership in transitioning our focus to supporting individuals in competitive integrated employment and real engagement in the community. This past year, a few poignant topics rose to the surface as systems refine what is meant by employment:

- ▶ We must define the role of true informed choice guided by the answers to questions of what most interests people, what they are best at and what is needed to support a desired lifestyle. More often the question is not "if" but "how."
- ▶ Wrestling with the dignity of risk is essential. We must expand individuals' experiences as those lead to new choices and decisions. A safety net may be needed, and paid supports are a part of this.
- ▶ Get real about waiting lists. People have waited long enough and should be presumed capable. Funding public supports to keep people in never-ending cycles of dependence, or earning low wages not commensurate with similar positions for non-disabled peers, is not acceptable, and is a poor investment of resources.
- ▶ Everyone's path is different and our role as the paid support system is to help each person figure theirs out. A one-size-fits-all approach to person-centered planning, or that people only get one chance to try work, short-sells what our field is best at.
- ▶ Language is revealing and powerful. How we talk to one another, how we refer to people, and how we describe the work we do to friends, family, and our communities says a lot about how we approach our role. Our language, like our actions, must presume competence and set high expectations for everyone!

The real benefit of our network experiences and generating this report is in taking the time to learn from one another and celebrate both small and large victories along the way. States are shifting to a stronger focus on integration and inclusion, and it takes persistence and time for the cultural, generational, fiscal, and political shifts to take hold. Thank you for taking that path with us. Here's to many years ahead of new discoveries and new successes!

Visit www.SELNhub.org for links for more information on the various state activities and projects.

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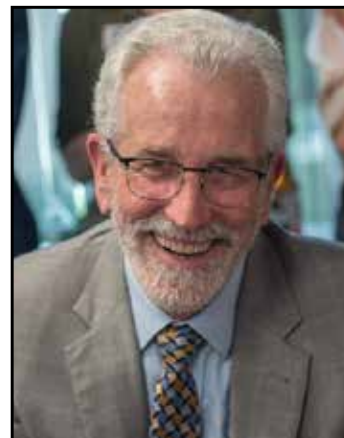
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State Employment Leadership Network

The SELN is a place for states to connect, collaborate, and create cross-community support regarding pressing employment-related issues at state and federal levels for individuals with developmental disabilities.

The SELN was launched in 2006 as a joint program of the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services and the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston.



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