

Qualities of a High-Performing Case Manager



For the past year, the State Employment Leadership Network has been hosting a series of online events about the role case managers can play in improving employment outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

The role of the case manager/support coordinator is changing and becoming more complex. Case management requires knowledge and expertise in many areas, and community-based employment is just one of them.

To be competent in community-based employment services and outcomes, an effective case manager must demonstrate new competencies. The recent SELN online series, including the September 23, 2014 session, provides an overview of these competencies and examples of best practices of high-performing case managers/support coordinators. You may view the recording and materials, as well as past sessions, at:

<http://selnmembers.org/webinars/casemanagement>

Key takeaways:

Today's case managers and service/support coordinators:

- ❖ Recognize that families are the nation's true long-term care systems of support. Case managers must partner with and rely on families by cultivating trust and open communication. Presenting new ideas may take time and might be rejected many times before the ideas are accepted into a family's culture.
- ❖ Understand challenges to community-based employment for people with IDD, including difficulty navigating available resources, which system provides which services, and a local community's cultural attitudes and biases.
- ❖ Listen, interpret, and assimilate the information gathered day to day with individuals and families. Person-centered thinking is evident in all activities with the individual.
- ❖ Emphasize specific and concrete employment goals in the individual service plan (ISP), and use tools to discover an individual's needs

and interests and to plan long-term objectives. These tools include relationship mapping, communication charts, and learning logs.

- ❖ Have a basic understanding of work incentives and Social Security benefits, and know where to point families and individuals to delve deeper into the specifics and details.

State IDD agencies depend upon strong case managers/service coordinators to improve employment outcomes. Therefore, agency leaders must hire people who believe in and are committed to employment for all individuals with disabilities. These staff members must also be able to build relationships, network, negotiate, and manage conflict.

To ensure that case managers are successful, organizations should orient and train new staff, and provide ongoing professional development opportunities. With this support, staff members can build upon their current skills and learn new best practices in the field.

The State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) is a cross-state cooperative venture of state intellectual and developmental disabilities that are committed to improving employment outcomes for adolescents and adults with developmental disabilities. SELN online discussions are chosen based on conversations with individual member states, as well as high profile and critical issues circulating around the country. Summary documents provide an overview of the sessions and highlight the resources available and knowledge required to achieve best practices.

The SELN is a joint program of the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services.

