

State Employment Leadership Network

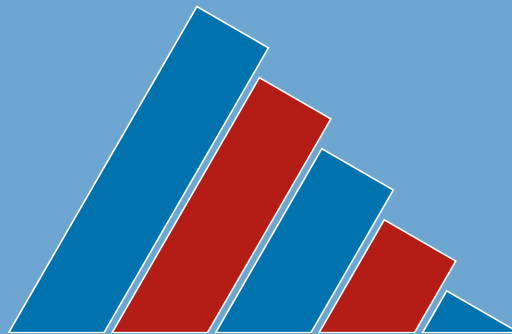
Accomplishments Report
Membership Year 2009-2010



netWORK

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The State Employment Leadership Network 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.



www.selnmembers.org

What is the SELN



The SELN is a membership-based network of state developmental disability agencies committed to making changes in their service systems to improve employment outcomes among individuals receiving support. As a community of practice, states connect, collaborate, and share information and lessons learned across state lines and system boundaries. Participating state agency officials build cross-community support for pressing employment-related issues and policies at state and federal levels. States commit to work together and engage in a series of activities to analyze key elements in their systems to improve the integrated employment outcomes for their citizens with developmental disabilities.

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

The SELN helps states develop, implement, and support integrated employment initiatives that are designed to improve employment outcomes for people with developmental disabilities.



Why Work is Important

People with disabilities are standing up and demanding system changes that allow for greater opportunities for economic self-sufficiency with employment being a key to making that happen. As we hear over and over from self-advocates and families, people want: “REAL WORK for REAL PAY”.

- The SELN provides a forum for states to:
- Dialogue on common questions or barriers to employment
- Share strategies that work
- Use data to guide daily systems management
- Inform federal policy

The Network membership meets monthly to discuss relevant topics, share updates and strategize on where the Network focus should be for upcoming discussions. This list illustrates the range of topics from recent discussions:

- Workforce development competencies/training efforts underway in states
- Employment Security Department Wage Data for DDD Clients in Washington State and data site demo
- Transition – school to work, including updates from special education resources
- Postsecondary options and projects
- National Service experience as an option on the path to employment
- Support services at Bank of America
- Pilot projects at work in several states
- Understanding and using labor market information
- Collaborating with other state agencies such as vocational rehabilitation where those partnerships strengthen shared goals
- Accessible transportation options

Top Discussion Topics of 2009-2010

- Waiver service definitions
- Employment First policies and strategies
- Funding and rate methodology changes
- Sharing data across state agencies

SELN provides an ongoing focused emphasis on raising competitive and integrated employment expectations and outcomes. This emphasis from an outside source helps assure that “we” don’t become complacent without efforts.

—Joe Longcor, Michigan

Nevada has greatly benefited from the resources and shared information from the other collaborative states in SELN. The sharing of resources’ is an invaluable benefit to being a member of the SELN. ... having regular meetings to help share ideas, information greatly enhanced the state’s efforts.

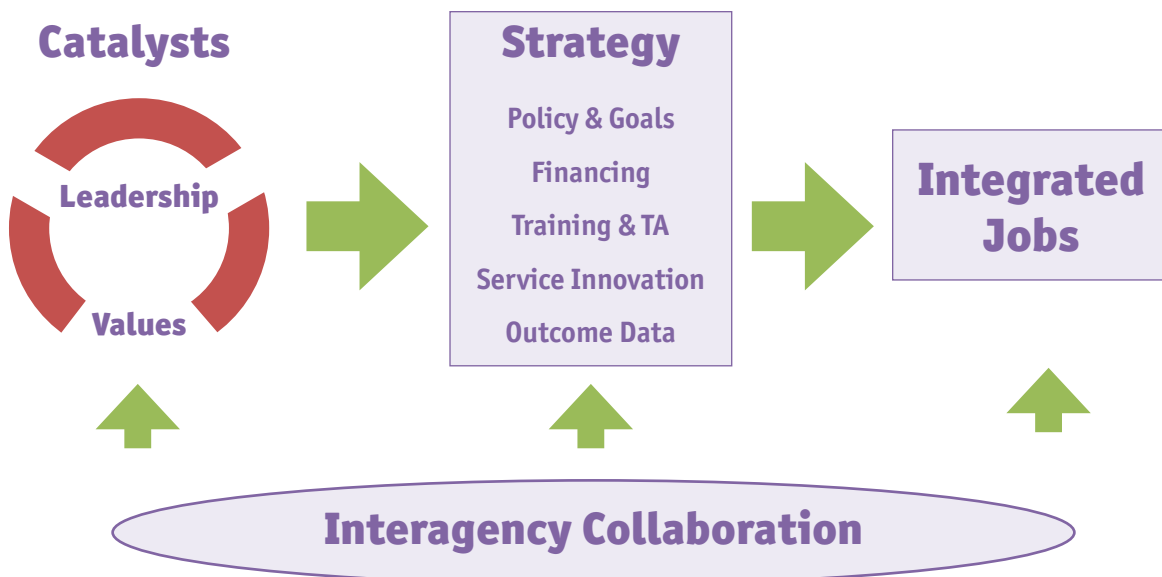
—Rosemary Melarkey, Nevada

The Employment Framework

The Framework for Employment, developed through extensive experience and research conducted within states, is used to guide SELN strategic implementation for system improvements. The elements represent practices and outcomes known to be effective at enabling states to develop and sustain high-performing 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.



Hall et al (2007)

Leadership.

States demonstrate 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 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.

High performing employment systems invest in the development and maintenance of a strong, competent workforce, building the skills of job coaches and developers, first line supervisors and key employment staff.

Interagency Collaboration and Partnership.

Building relationships with key state and local agency partners such as vocational rehabilitation, education, mental health and the state Medicaid agency removes barriers that hamper the ability to provide employment supports as people transition from one funding stream to another.

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. State policies emphasize innovation and the implementation of support strategies with demonstrated effectiveness. Supports are designed to encourage individuals who may not elect to participate in community employment at a given point in time to become involved in purposeful activities in local businesses, public or nonprofit organizations and other groups.

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 used to evaluate and track results, inform policy, and improve provider contracts and service agreements. Data are shared with other state agencies and interested stakeholders to report results and improve quality.

SELN’s technical assistance capacity is unmatched. The SELN framework for analyzing state systems ...quickly and efficiently illuminates systems issues in need of attention.

—Robert Bacon, Iowa

Moving Forward: Summary of SELN State System Change Activities and Progress



State developmental disabilities agencies participating in the SELN are changing the structure and functioning of their service delivery systems to improve employment outcomes of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities receiving support. State developmental disabilities service systems vary, sometimes significantly, across the country. The strategies being employed by the SELN members reflect the unique operational, financial, cultural, and political characteristics of their particular state systems. Some states are moving forward on several fronts simultaneously, while others are focusing more narrowly on particular barriers or issues that must be removed before progress can be made. This is particularly the case among states that already have solid systems for training, interagency collaboration and data management. Regardless of the approach being used, each state is involved in the difficult process of revising policies and practices across the seven elements of high performing systems, by aligning: leadership, strategic goals and operating policies, financing and contracting methods, training and technical assistance, interagency collaboration and partnerships, services and service innovation, performance measurement and data management.

SELN activities have been invaluable. From the start, helping us to bring together a collaborative team to identify shared goals, providing excellent training and access to information.

—Denyse Curtright, California


State Initiatives and Accomplishments

California

State Legislators passed Assembly Bill 287 which requires the State Council on Developmental Disabilities to form a standing Employment First Committee and implement an Employment First Policy by July 1, 2011. The new legislation requires an annual report to the Legislature and the Governor describing the committee's work and recommendations. The report, due by July 1, 2011, will include the Employment First Policy and steps to achieve a significant increase in the number of individuals with developmental disabilities who engage in integrated employment, self-employment, and microenterprises, and in the number of individuals who earn wages at or above minimum wage. The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is involved with these efforts and represents individuals with developmental disabilities at the table.

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Financing and Contracting Methods
- ✓ Training and Technical Assistance
- ✓ Interagency Collaboration and Partnership
- ✓ Services and Service Innovation

The budget crisis that has caused rate reductions and funding freezes across virtually all state agencies and programs has permitted some flexibility for state agencies to make prudent investments in certain program areas. Through the implementation of a rate increase to supported employment in the last few years and a



wage enhancement for day programs that are at least 50% community-based, the state has experienced a slight increase for supported employment funds and a decrease in funding for sheltered work programs.

In collaboration with the Department of Education (CDE), Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) and other state-level agencies, DDS has launched statewide training opportunities in job development, job coaching, workability and other areas. By expanding outreach for partners beyond the typical developmental disabilities constituency, DDS has influenced the way California State agencies work together toward the shared goal of increasing employment of people with ID/DD statewide. DDS participates in the Community of Practice (CoP) developed by DOR and CDE which also focuses on transition work experience through “workability” programs. The CoP sponsors an annual symposium focusing on the transition of students including students with developmental disabilities and provides statewide leadership to local workability programs and teachers.

Connecticut

With funding provided by the Connecticut Department of Social Services Connect-Ability Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG), the Department of Developmental Services’ (DDS) developed marketing materials (brochures and videos) to improve the visibility of employment for persons with developmental disabilities and to publicize the department’s commitment to increasing opportunities and options for integrated community-based employment statewide. The materials were widely circulated both in Connecticut and across the country, promoting success stories and the importance of local, community commitments.

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Financing and Contracting Methods
- ✓ Training and Technical Assistance
- ✓ Services and Service Innovation
- ✓ Performance Measurement and Data Management

DDS continues to improve its rate and reimbursement systems to strengthen employment outcomes among people with developmental disabilities receiving support. The focus on financing has led to recognition of the importance of clarity in service definitions when shifting to a unit-of-service model payment system. As the number of individuals choosing sheltered workshops has steadily declined, new funding has focused on alternative work opportunities in the community.

DDS is engaged in several active competency-development projects including: developing an “Individual Planning Buddy” training curriculum that pays consumers to be peer buddies at individual plan meetings; increasing the availability of webinars and teleconferences to provide training to state and local staff; improving asset development activities for individuals working in the community and/or looking to increase their weekly hours; and increasing the availability of job development training.

District of Columbia

A small leadership group within the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) was formed to move the agency forward shortly after joining the SELN. The committee finalized a clear vision statement for employment and is implementing a communication strategy for publicizing the key aspects of the plan across the District's provider system.

DDA requested providers to submit strategic plans for assisting consumers in transitioning from day programs to a path to employment and held a Day Provider Forum to support their efforts to move to employment first strategies. The Administration also is analyzing its current prevocational service definition and the impact of removing it and is planning on piloting an employment first focus with providers. DDA has added an employment module to their data management system that will provide them with more accurate information on who is working, at what wage level.

The Administration also embarked on a system change effort around values-based training. The goal is to develop pilots for people who want to make a difference in their own life or the life of someone else, illustrating the impact of people being valued, contributing to their communities and being part of a whole. DDA is actively engaging with providers to address conversion from facility-based services to community employment and individualized supports.

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Strategic Goals and Operating Policies
- ✓ Training and Technical Assistance
- ✓ Services and Service Innovation
- ✓ Performance Measurement and Data Management

Hawaii

Several funding-related efforts are in play and involve the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and the Hawaii Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Committee. Key initiatives include working with the vocational rehabilitation system to fund additional self-employment options (microenterprise), examining the viability of Medicaid Buy-In (MBI) for people with developmental disabilities and improving funding for supported employment services.

In collaboration with the University of Hawaii Center on Disability Studies, the state has committed resources to increasing case managers' understanding of the value of paid employment in the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through regular training opportunities on different islands.

Through connections with other states, DDD has been able to provide, in a timely fashion, access to relevant training and informational materials and promoted their use to influence work with families, state systems, and providers. As a result, a variety of activities to promote service innovation have taken hold. Examples include, piloting new transportation options to ensure community employment is accessed and the implementation of positive behavioral supports for youth and adults with ID/DD.

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Financing and Contracting Methods
- ✓ Training and Technical Assistance
- ✓ Interagency Collaboration and Partnership
- ✓ Services and Service Innovation

Iowa

The decision of Mental Health and Disability Services (DMHDS) to prioritize employment has been sustained in spite of numerous changes in administrative leadership that occurred during the year.

As a new member of the employment network, the state's leadership committee used the SELN Strategic Assessment process, as well as subsequent site visits by the project team to bring long-standing issues to the forefront. Benefitting from broad-based stakeholder participation during the assessment process, a clear mission statement including employment outcomes was written. A work plan is currently in development that reflects the commitment and buy-in of key state departmental leadership and stakeholders.

The department has launched pilot projects in three sites to examine and gather real-time feedback on the impact of shifting facility-based employees to integrated community settings on funding and other systems issues.

Fully utilizing the SELN Strategic Employment Assessment and Supplemental survey to stakeholders, SELN site visits and the Findings and Observation Report, provided the state with valuable stakeholder input into the State's Olmstead plan which clearly identifies the commitment to increase individual integrated employment at or above minimum wage for all lowans with disabilities.

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Financing and Contracting Methods
- ✓ Training and Technical Assistance
- ✓ Interagency Collaboration and Partnership
- ✓ Services and Service Innovation

Louisiana

In partnership with the state Medicaid Infrastructure Grant management team, the Office of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) is co-writing a Strategic Plan for Employment for all individuals with disabilities in the state. The plan will be guided by the Higher Level Leadership Council composed of consumers and provider agencies (public and private). The plan will be used to guide Louisiana towards improving employment outcomes for all individuals with disabilities throughout the state.

To further emphasize the shift in focus toward increased community-based employment OCDD has offered service provider training through all nine state regions. The trainings reinforce expectations through awareness-building and skill-building and encourage local networks to support each other and problem-solve when teams hit roadblocks related to job development and marketing to employers.

OCDD was able to take a step forward and improve collaboration by revising outdated memoranda of understanding to ensure they reflect current partnership priorities, and common goals among all critical players.

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Strategic goals and Operating Policies
- ✓ Training and Technical Assistance
- ✓ Interagency Collaboration and Partnership



Maryland

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) is addressing several key systems change priorities. An Employment Training Series was offered to providers and other stakeholders covering topics such as: Employment First Awareness, Customized Employment, Self Employment, SSA Benefits Awareness, and Assistive Technology and Accommodations at the Workplace. Partnerships with the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) and the Maryland Department of Disability (DOD), the administrator for the MIG, have created organizational change grant opportunities for eight providers in Maryland to improve employment outcomes. An organizational change peer network, funded through the DDC, was established to create a forum for the organizational change grantees to share stories, resources and to brainstorm solutions to overcome barriers to employment. Ten provider agencies received 1:1 technical assistance from the Statewide Coordinator for Employment Services to begin discussions of organizational change. Meetings were held primarily with senior provider staff but in some instances involved board members, family members and people receiving services establishing some relative depth for future conversations to continue this work.

The forming of a new partnership with Maryland Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid) led to the creation of a seamless system which allows simultaneous access to Home and Community-Based Services Waivers and to the Employed Individuals with Disabilities Program. A renewed partnership with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) resulted in regularly scheduled meetings between key staff of the administrations to create a clear business flow for people receiving services, including transitioning youth. Partnerships are strongly being encouraged at the local level between providers, school systems, DRS staff, One Stop Career Centers, and resource coordination agencies to organize services for transitioning youth and adults in a seamless manner.

DDA improved collaboration between state agencies by implementing a memorandum of understanding between the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, University of Baltimore and Maryland Department of Disabilities. Funded through the State's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, the partnership is tracking employment outcomes for people with developmental disabilities, using unemployment insurance data.

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Strategic Goals and Operating Policies
- ✓ Financing and Contracting Methods
- ✓ Performance Measurement and Data Management

Massachusetts

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) established a cross-stakeholder statewide planning team and work group (comprising providers, family members, DDS staff at the regional and area levels, and individuals with intellectual disabilities) to create a Strategic Plan for Employment. This document provides a blueprint for planning and includes a series of recommendations to promote and support increased integrated employment opportunities.

DDS adopted an Employment First Policy effective August 2010 following recommendations in the agency's strategic plan. The ongoing commitment and efforts of the statewide employment planning team helped move this policy from an idea to a reality. Recognizing that implementation will be a long-term process, the policy provides clear direction and strategic focus for the DDS, key stakeholders and partners in identifying ways to promote and support increased integrated employment opportunities.

DDS embedded employment first language into their competitive bid process for employment and day program services; heightening awareness of the priority for employment outcomes in service delivery.

Our key work has been on participation in their cross-stakeholder team and continued development and implementation of the data collection system. This past year the system was enhanced to provide more list management and reporting options to providers, tab based navigation, and direct data download. Project staff developed annual reports for DDS on employment outcomes.

Michigan

Development of a Joint Interagency Agreement between Michigan Rehabilitation Service, Commission for the Blind and the Department of Community Health to increase competitive employment has improved partnership and collaboration in implementation of employment services. This partnership has led to the solidification of a Joint Interagency Aggregate Data Sharing Agreement.

Michigan's Mental Health and Substance Abuse Administration (MHSAA), Department of Community Health, is working to raise provider expectations for employment in integrated settings throughout the state developmental disabilities system. MHSSA has revised contracts with managed care entities including an expected percentage increase in the number of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities working within the general workforce who previously received typical congregate day/employment services.

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Strategic Goals and Operating Policies
- ✓ Financing and Contracting Methods
- ✓ Performance Measurement and Data Management

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Training and Technical Assistance
- ✓ Interagency Collaboration and Partnership
- ✓ Performance Measurement and Data Management

Missouri

Through a detailed employment work plan, the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) leadership sought additional resources for employment service coordinators and waiver funding for individuals transitioning from school to post-secondary activities.

The Division increased the rate of reimbursement for supported employment which is available in the Home and Community-Based Services waivers. In addition, numerous trainings to regional office staff and technical assistance on implementation questions were provided to increase implementation and use.

Stakeholders came together to address gaps in the service delivery system with a keen commitment to assuring integrated employment as an outcome in supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Residential providers are developing a better understanding of the importance of their role, cooperation and consistency in achieving these outcomes.

By strengthening relationships with the Transition Coalition and the formation of a Community Transition Team, partnerships with local schools and vocational rehabilitation have improved. Monthly training to parents will also be provided in conjunction with the start of school.

DDD also developed and piloted an employment outcome data collection system.

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Training and Technical Assistance
- ✓ Interagency Collaboration and Partnership
- ✓ Performance Measurement and Data Management

New Mexico

New Mexico's persistent emphasis on building system capacity to support their citizens' with significant disabilities in employment has been strengthened through the implementation of Regional Employment Leadership Networks (ELN's). Each ELN has conceptualized and sponsored local events to highlight career successes of people with developmental disabilities and recognize employers who hire them. The ELN's continue to meet and address both statewide and local issues pertaining to increasing integrated employment for people with developmental disabilities in their locales.

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Services and Service Innovation
- ✓ Training and Technical Assistance
- ✓ Interagency Collaboration and Partnerships

Encouraged by the strategies other states have employed to utilize Medicaid Infrastructure Grant resources, New Mexico's Developmental Disabilities Supports Division is employing resources from the State's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant to develop a comprehensive system-wide employment training plan. Building sustainable competent workforce is seen as a critical element in the system change work in the state. A curriculum to enhance the competency of employment staff including a mentorship component is being implemented. This curriculum will be delivered in multiple formats i.e. web-based, classroom, etc. to accommodate learning style and statewide access.

Nevada

The Nevada Division of Mental Health and Developmental Services in collaboration with the state Developmental Disabilities Council and other groups supported three regional Employment Summits held in Reno, Las Vegas and Elko. The meetings took place in May and June 2010 and brought stakeholders from across the state to the table, many for the first time, to make a commitment to community employment as a priority for Nevadans with intellectual disabilities. The most significant outcome of the summit was the involvement of stakeholders in the development of the state's action plan to improve individual integrated employment outcomes and the resulting improvement of interagency collaboration and communication.

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Interagency Collaboration and Partnerships
- ✓ Strategic Goals and Operating Policies

Oregon

The Office of Developmental Disability Services (ODDS) is fully engaged in restructuring the funding methodology for services through the ReBAR Project (Restructuring Budgets, Assessments and Rates). Rate models for employment and community inclusion has been the focus this year's work, prioritizing employment as an outcome preference.

Working collaboratively ODDS and the Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Services Department (OVRS) engaged in a strategic planning effort to jointly conduct regional outreach and implementation of ODDS's Employment First Policy.

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Financing and Contracting Methods
- ✓ Interagency Collaboration and Partnerships
- ✓ Employment Performance Measurement and Data Management


The Division has moved forward in its employment agenda by completing the collection of baseline data across day programs (i.e. number of people working in individual jobs, group employment). This will be used to manage the implementation of strategies related to the Employment First Policy adopted in 2008. Key performance measures will be based on a minimum of a 5% annual improvement in the percentage of individuals working in integrated employment.

Pennsylvania

The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) is analyzing its data management system in order to incorporate individual information on employment service outcomes. A number of alternatives are being considered. Philadelphia County, one of the largest developmental disabilities administrative entities in the State, is implementing a web-based data collection and reporting system to provide the state with a prototype that could be duplicated in other counties.

ODP and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation are jointly reviewing their memorandum of understanding to reaffirm the commitment of the two state

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Training and Technical Assistance
- ✓ Interagency Collaboration and Partnerships
- ✓ Employment Performance Measurement and Data Management



offices to support employment for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The process has brought the two entities together to collaborate in their efforts to train field staff and consider the advantages of braiding limited resources to strengthen the state’s ability to support individuals seeking employment.

Texas

The Commissioner of the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) underscored the state’s commitment to employment for people with disabilities through a letter to providers affirming the state’s position that individuals with ID/DD who want to work should receive the support they need to do so. This communication sent a strong message to the field and provided direction and support to DADS’ plans to move forward in this area.

With assistance from the SELN, DADS prepared a comprehensive “training and technical assistance plan” designed to reach a wide audience and increase knowledge and awareness among providers and stakeholders across the state. The SELN hosted a Webinar Series on employment topics to increase knowledge and competency and build the skills necessary to deliver employment services.

DADS launched an Employment First pilot designed to shift resources away from sheltered day services to integrated employment. This voluntary demonstration project enabled a group of providers to implement an employment first approach to service planning.

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Interagency Collaboration and Partnerships
- ✓ Services and Service Innovations
- ✓ Employment Performance Measurement and Data Management


Virginia

The Office of Developmental Services (ODS) is working to improve employment outcomes through a broad based systems change initiative that is being implemented as an ongoing, long-range effort throughout the state. Moving toward an employment first approach will employ a number of initiatives and stakeholders in a series of activities that are designed to ensure the project continues in the right direction over time. Related activities will include policy revisions, regulatory changes, modifications of service definitions, statewide trainings, requests for additional funding, researching grant opportunities, and brainstorming strategies for incentivizing integrated options.

ODS has created an employment advisory group made up of stakeholders to develop specific strategies for implementation of a system that prioritizes employment as an outcome of services.

The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), the department in which ODS resides, is also hosting an employment advisory group to provide input to the state’s efforts to improve employment

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Training and Technical Assistance
- ✓ Interagency Collaboration and Partnerships
- ✓ Services and Service Innovations



outcomes for all Virginians with disabilities. The group has initiated case manager/provider training on employment first values with staff around the state. This process illustrates one of the most beneficial aspects of SELN involvement. Through relationships with partner agencies/groups, alliances are formed with state Division of Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Medical Assistance Services, advocacy organizations and others that are more active than ever before.

Washington

Washington State's Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) is a national leader in employment for people with developmental disabilities. The state DD system is often recognized for its sustained leadership and commitment to employment for all working age adults as the best way to achieve the greatest level of personal development and economic self-sufficiency. A key strategy in the state's approach to improving employment outcomes among people receiving support is a clear focus on the value of work for people with disabilities, including those with the most intensive needs, and the belief that with appropriate supports everyone can work and earn a living wage. Along with belief and leadership, achieving typical employment for all in the workforce requires serious, sustained commitment to: training, technical assistance, tracking and publishing data on employment outcomes, communicating success stories, opportunity for a rewarding and meaningful employment for each young adult leaving school and continued commitment to innovation.

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Training and Technical Assistance
- ✓ Interagency Collaboration and Partnerships
- ✓ Services and Service Innovations

Significant strides have been made in working with counties, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and local school districts to ensure that practices/curriculum in school transition programs lead to employment particularly in the years between ages 18 and 21 years old.

A work group was developed to determine and describe the essential elements of integrated employment. This work has led to improved understanding of what steps are needed to assist people to obtain jobs. A common understanding among employment agencies of the integrated employment business model has led to improved employment practice as well as innovation at the individual level which in turn has led to improved outcomes.

Washington collects monthly data online on employment outcomes, wages, hours, benefits, places of work, etc. and has collaborated with ICI (SELN) to make that data broadly available across the state. This past year Washington made a major investment in expanding their data management system. SELN staff built and manage a web-based data display and management tool for Washington that provides on demand reporting, including the ability to filter data by region, county, provider, and an array of personal variables including age, level of support need, and housing situation. Data are updated monthly as data is reported to DDD by counties. This data display system supports Washington's commitment to outcome-based management and quality improvement, and is scheduled to become publicly available in the Fall of 2010.

Where Are We Going From Here?

As the SELN's work progresses, new interest areas and topics of discussion emerge between and among states. These include:

- Maximizing the use of Ticket To Work (TTW) funds
- The future of sub-minimum wage
- The understanding and acknowledgement of the importance of employment to a "meaningful life"
- The viability of 'group employment' as a long-term service
- The impact of funding and rate methodologies and how to incentive individual integrated employment outcomes
- Integrating community employment with person-centered practices and planning tools

Considering Systems Change?

There is great interest among leaders and staff in the field to improve individual employment outcomes. A consistent, constant message of community employment is important for change at all levels of the system. This work can be difficult to achieve when leadership wanes, resources are constrained and competing priorities divert attention. In spite of these barriers many states are taking a strong approach to employment and experiencing success with their stakeholders.

Having a network of colleagues in other states that are all working towards a common goal creates incredible energy.

—Colleen Gauruder, Maryland

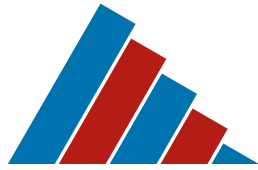
All the resources and information shared by (SELN member) states have been a true benefit to Washington.... Having a nation wide work group (team) of states with a focus on expanding and improving employment opportunities is beneficial to everyone involved.

—Jane Boone, Washington

Employment would be put on the back burner if SELN were not prompting us to think about and report on how/what we are doing in this area.

— Robin Wood, Connecticut

**This is a marathon, not a sprint—
the Network provides fuel for the journey.**



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