

State Employment Leadership Network
Accomplishments Report



netWORK

Membership Year 2010-2011

From the Project Managers

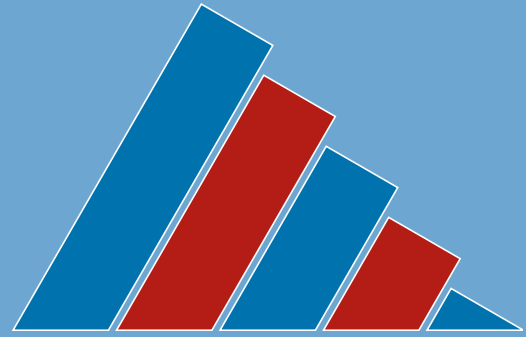
As we wrap up the SELN's fifth year of operation, we wish to acknowledge the significant efforts and contributions occurring in states and localities around the country. The SELN is best viewed through a wide lens, noting the strategy and leadership required over the long run to keep various priorities moving. But a short-term view is equally important, examining the need for rapid day-to-day attention and consistent communication on the importance of integrated employment. By creating and implementing a plan to address the variety of issues affecting integrated employment outcomes and vying for stakeholders' attention, states are taking the first steps necessary to address barriers and challenges.

Many states are also pursuing additional grant and funding options to further address their challenges. A multi-faceted approach can help sustain momentum and provide options for which activities to focus on while state budgets fluctuate. Our team discussions routinely include an update on all the ways state staff pay attention to employment-related activities, and a reminder to concentrate on a few key priorities first before moving on.

We are delighted that nearly half the states in the nation are now SELN members. As integrated employment gains momentum across the United States, our combined efforts are truly making an impact—as this report details. Thank you for your participation!

Rie Kennedy-Lizotte, NASDDDS

Suzzanne Freeze, ICI



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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.seln.org

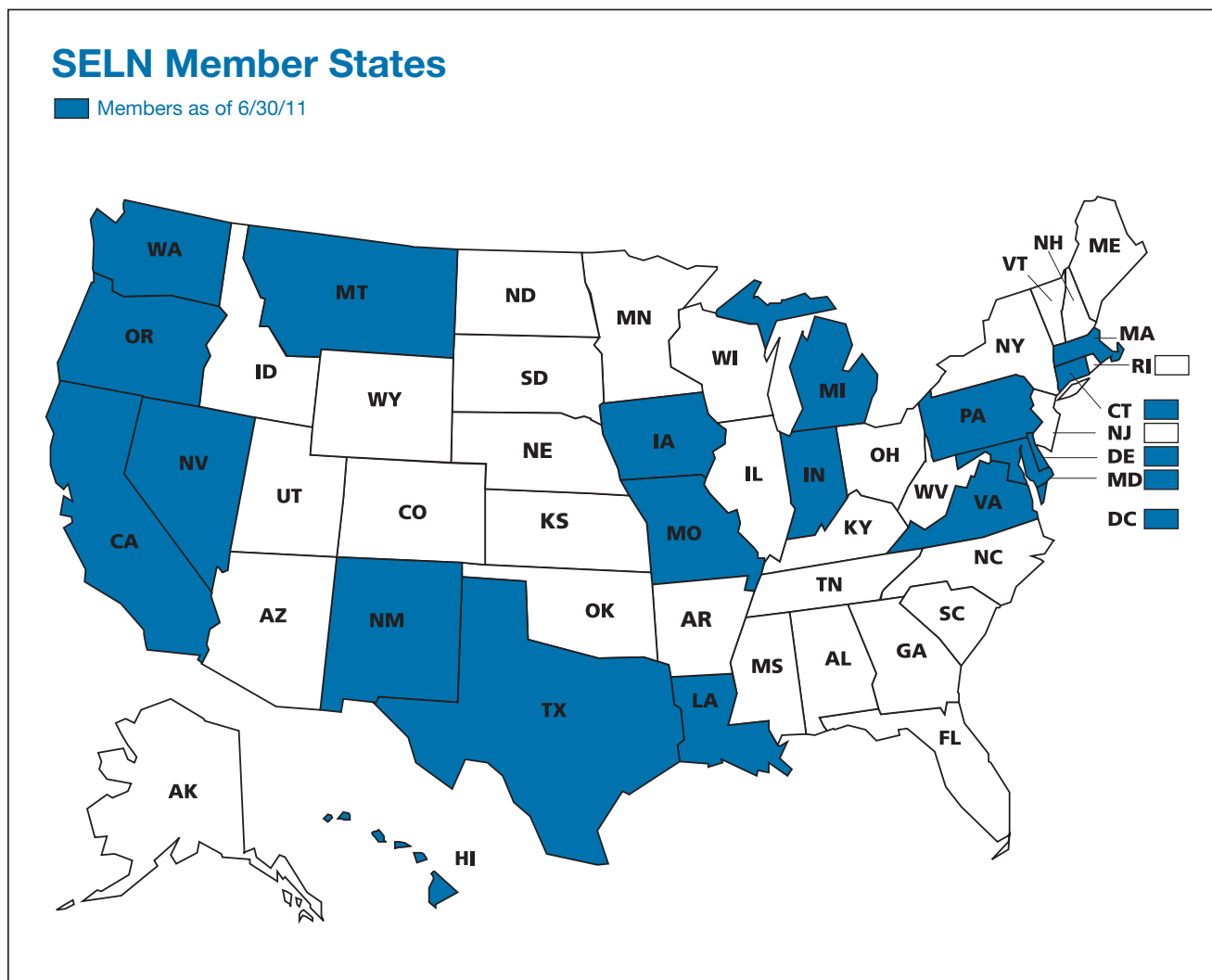
What is the SELN



Launched in July 2006 the SELN supports states to improve integrated employment outcomes. The SELN is a membership-based network of state intellectual and developmental disability agencies committed to making changes in their service systems.

SELN members meet regularly to 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 to analyze key elements in their systems to improve the integrated employment outcomes for their citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

With the membership year running July 1 to June 30, each state focuses over twelve months on a customized work plan unique to its circumstances. The SELN helps states develop, implement, and support integrated employment initiatives that are designed to improve employment outcomes for people with IDD. The 2010-2011 year concluded with 20 member states.



Why Work is Important

People with disabilities are standing up and demanding greater opportunities for economic self-sufficiency, with employment being a key to making that happen. Putting an end to poverty and exclusion are not just lofty goals; they are the essential drivers of systems change, and this change begins with individuals and families.

The SELN provides a forum for states to:

- Talk openly about common questions or barriers related to employment
- Share strategies that work
- Learn how to use data to guide daily systems management
- Inform federal policy

As a network, states benefit from hearing what's already been tried, what works, and what should be on the radar for a strategic direction.

SELN members meet monthly to discuss relevant topics, share updates, and strategize on where to focus next. This list illustrates the range and breadth of this year's monthly network meeting discussions:

- Workforce development competencies/ training efforts underway in states
- Wage data comparisons across state IDD agencies and state unemployment insurance
- Transition from school to work, including updates from special education resources
- Postsecondary options and projects
- National service experiences as an option on the path to employment
- Support services at employers such as Bank of America
- Understanding and using labor market information
- Collaborative work across IDD agencies and the vocational rehabilitation system
- Accessible transportation options

In-Depth Topical Discussions of 2010–2011

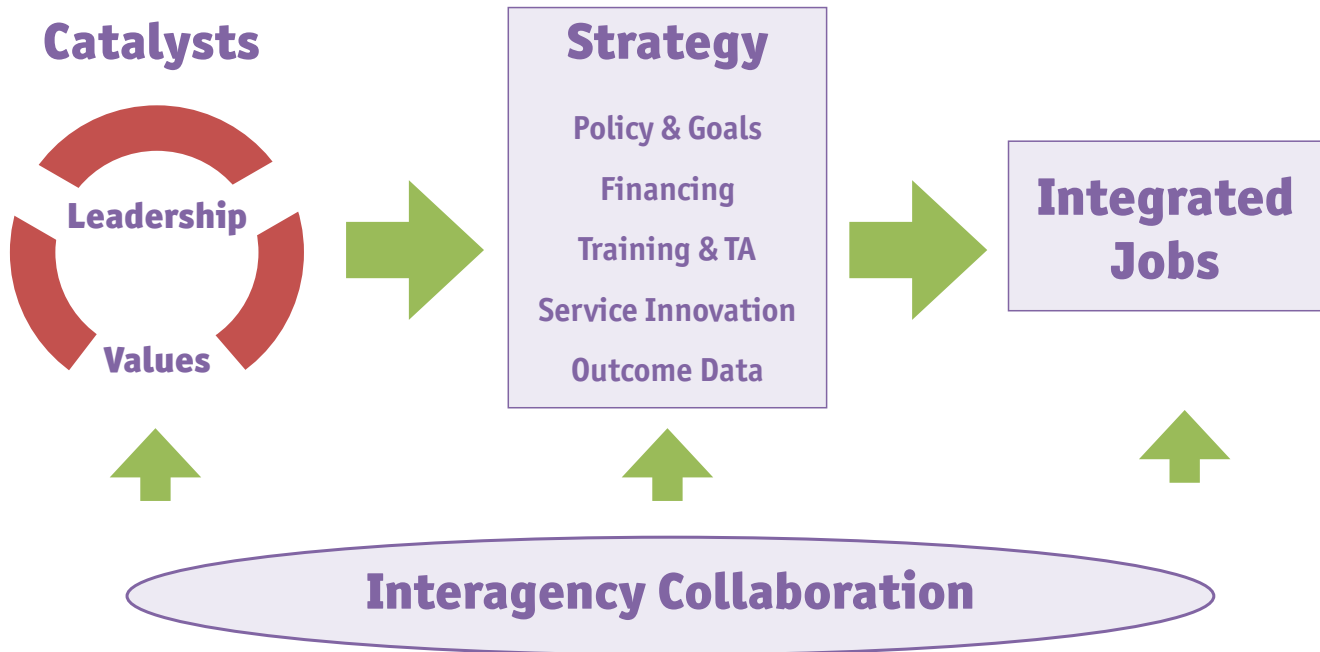
- Waiver service definitions
- Employment-first policies and strategies
- Funding and rate methodology changes
- Sharing data across state agencies
- Role of case management in career planning

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 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.

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.

High-performing employment systems invest in the development and maintenance of a strong, competent workforce, building the skills of job coaches and developers, 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 to 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 to become involved in purposeful activities in local businesses, public or nonprofit organizations, or 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.

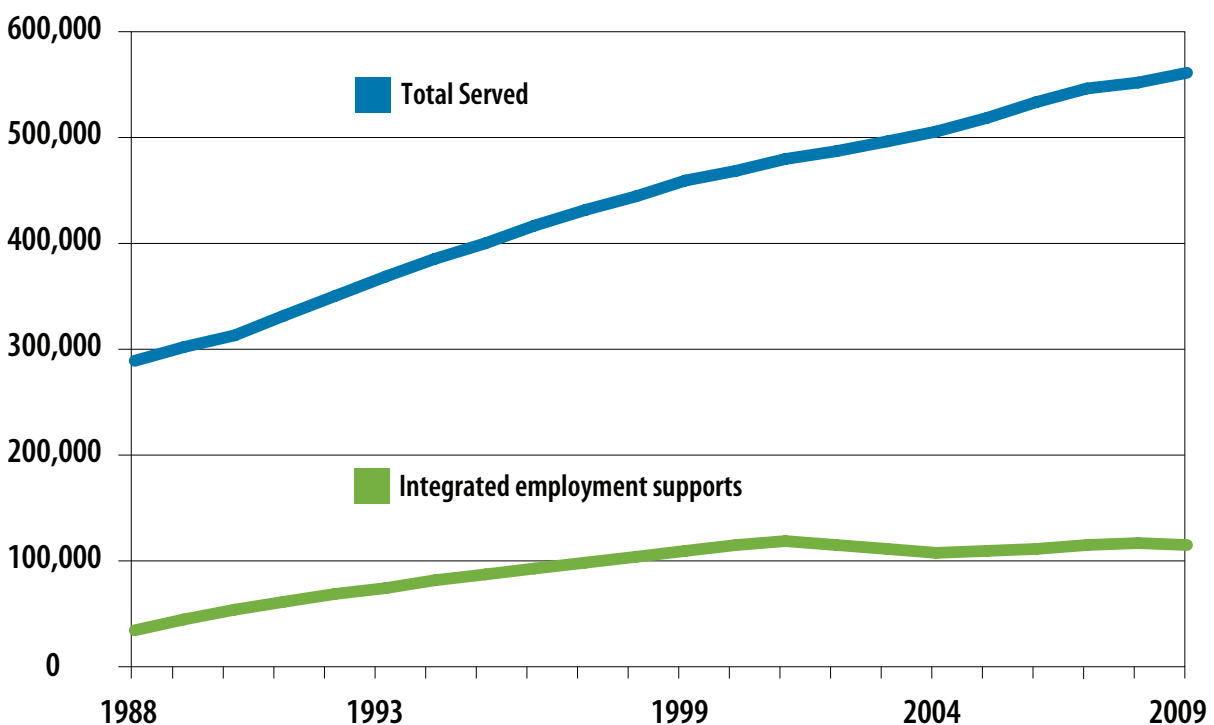
The SELN helps states formulate and achieve employment goals that lead to systems change.



Marking Progress

Focusing on employment outcomes clearly communicates employment-focused policy intent. The ICI National Survey of Employment and Day Services serves as one benchmark of a state's performance and investment. For this annual survey, the ICI requests each state to report the number of individuals participating in integrated employment services. Over the past ten years, participation in integrated employment has not grown nationally, while the total number of individuals in employment and day services has grown steadily. (Integrated employment includes both individual employment and group supported employment.)

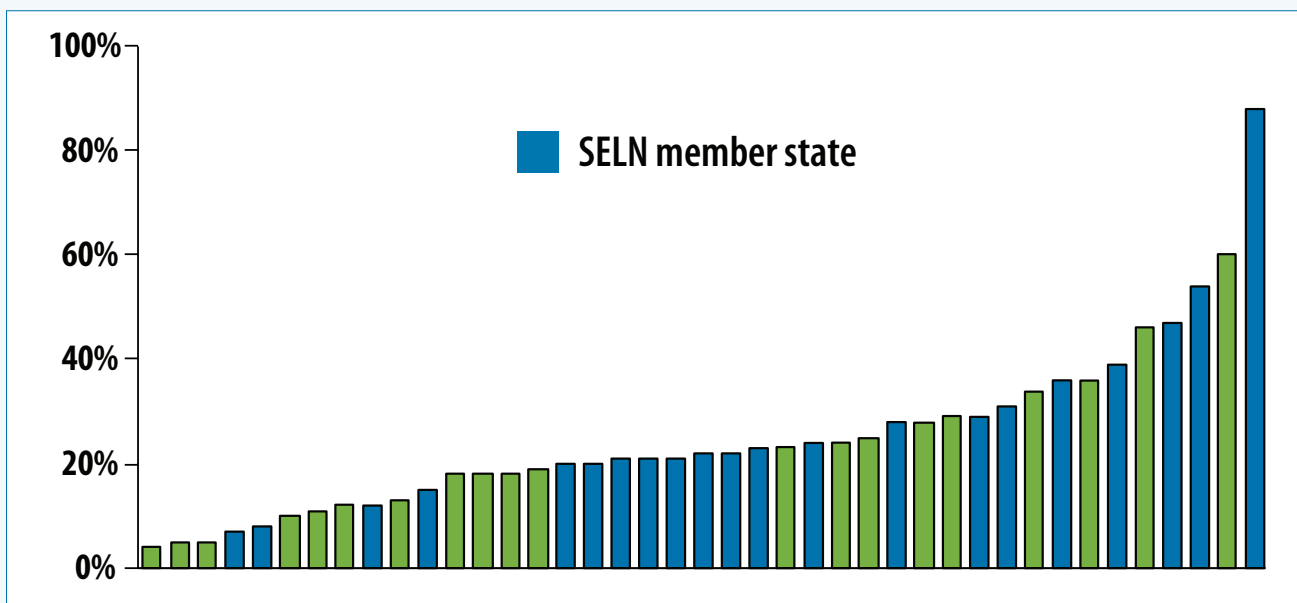
Employment and Day Supports



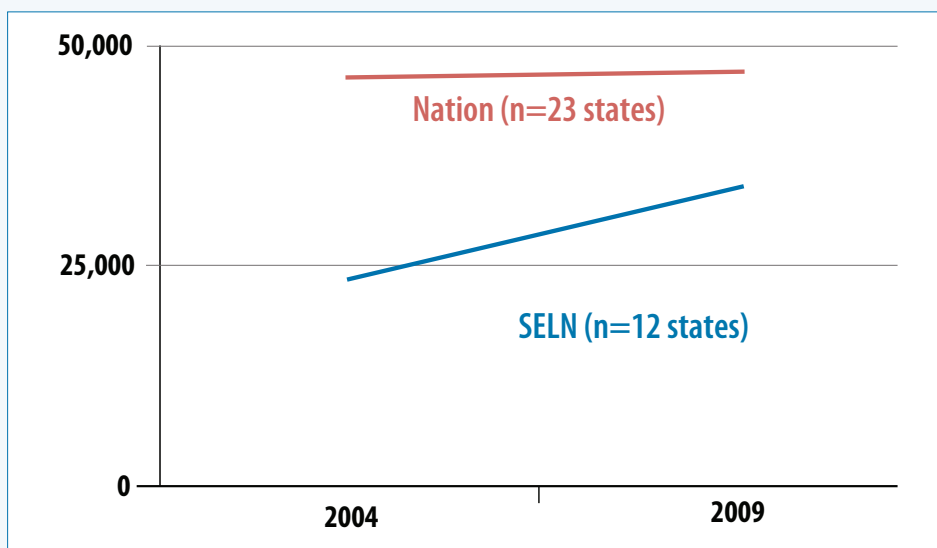
source: 2009 ICI National Survey of Employment and Day Services

How Data Motivates Network Activities

Despite the national trend, some states have been more successful in sustaining a priority for integrated employment. The SELN Framework for Employment is based on case studies of higher-performing states, and a belief that we can learn from states that have been more successful compared to their peers. SELN members represent a wide range of implementation of the framework and level of participation in integrated employment.



SELN member states¹ reported a 37% increase in the number of individuals in integrated employment between 2004 and 2009, compared to a 1% increase during the same period for states that were not members of the SELN².



¹ States that joined the SELN between 2007 and 2009

² 23 represents the number of states that submitted integrated employment data for the time period noted

Continuing to Advance: Summary of SELN State Systems Change Activities and Progress



State IDD agencies participating in the SELN are changing the structure and functioning of their service-delivery systems. The goal is improved integrated employment outcomes. State IDD service systems vary, sometimes significantly, across the country. The strategies being employed by 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 on a particular barrier or issue 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, each state is involved in the difficult process of revising and aligning policies and practices across the seven elements of high performing systems: leadership, strategic goals and operating policies, financing and contracting methods, training and technical assistance, interagency collaboration and partnerships, services and service innovation, and performance measurement and data management.

What follows is a brief description of each member's work over the past year. Due to space limitations, we were not able to include all the details of each state story here. You can learn more from the state's contact person or a member of the SELN Project Team (see the list at the end of this report). We encourage every reader to learn about the work occurring in each SELN member state. While change often happens slowly, those who rely on nimble and smart systems benefit from a strong, statewide commitment to integrated employment.

As you read each state's summary, consider a few key questions about your own experiences:

- Is integrated employment a valued outcome in your state? How do you know?
- Do you routinely hear about integrated employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities?
- Do you know which community providers value employment and excel at offering high-quality opportunities for individuals to learn and grow?



State Initiatives and Accomplishments

California

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) has acknowledged both systemic and economic barriers influencing employment outcomes in California. DDS continues to partner with the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), the Department of Education (CDE), the Employment Development Department, and community partners to further the goal of helping consumers achieve competitive employment in natural environments making at least minimum wage.

The current system has pockets of excellence led by collaborative teams and champions.

DDS continues to collaborate with DOR and CDE to focus on transition issues. DDS supports the efforts of local teams consisting of regional center, DOR, school district, and service providers. The current system has pockets of excellence led by collaborative teams and champions. DDS in collaboration with the Sacramento City Unified School District developed an internship program with the Community Transitions Program for youth ages 18 to 22.

DDS has also assisted with the Youth Leadership Forum, an intensive training program DOR conducts each summer to inspire and inform youth about the world of work and community inclusion. The California Model Employer Initiative project is a collaborative effort with DOR, the State Personnel Board, the Department of Personnel Administration, the Department of General Services, and others to develop a statewide training system for hiring supervisors and managers. The Post-Secondary Education Workgroup is a collaborative effort with UCLA Tarjan Center, DOR, Community College Chancellor's Office, California Health Incentives Improvement Project, and others to assist youth in transitional choices to post-secondary options such as community colleges, four-year colleges, and employment through volunteerism.

Budgetary efforts include a net increase in the rate and fees paid to SEP providers since FY2006/07 and new flexibility in services to achieve customized employment options. New service flexibility is being achieved through Tailored Day Services (alternative services within existing day programs to develop customized services) and Vouchered Community-Based Training Services (a new service to allow consumers to self-direct their day services). Both options are in lieu of existing day services and have the ultimate goal of improving consumers' earnings by exploring all pathways to employment such as customized job development, and self-employment options, including consumer-owned businesses.

DDS continues efforts to assist individuals with significant disabilities to become state employees and secure a civil service job.



Connecticut

CT Department of Developmental Services (DDS) introduced a new employment policy that requires all individuals with a Level of Need (LON) score of 1, 2, or 3 and all new graduates to have an employment goal in their Individual Plan. The design of this policy was heavily influenced by the Employment First information provided by SELN.

CT DDS has worked closely with SELN Project Team staff to rewrite day service definitions. While these new definitions have not yet been incorporated into the waivers, they have influenced the design of a new Career Planning Assessment process that will be used with all employment providers. DDS plans to amend future waivers with the new definitions.

CT DDS continues to improve its rate and reimbursement systems to strengthen employment outcomes among people with IDD receiving support. A number of funding incentives have been created to assist providers to overcome barriers that prevent people with intellectual disabilities from obtaining “real work for real pay” and to move from group supported employment to individual community-based jobs.

With funding provided by the Connecticut Department of Social Services Connect-Ability Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG), CT DDS was able to host two employment conferences in the past year. The primary audience for the July 2010 conference was private providers and DDS employees. The primary audience for the March 2011 conference was DDS consumers and their families and school staff. Both of these conferences provided state-of-the-art employment information obtained through the SELN. The March conference was so successful that it is going to be offered a second time in December 2011 by the Department of Education.

The MIG funds also allowed CT DDS to hire consultants from the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) to provide job developer training and to provide technical assistance and training on benefits and employment. Through collaborative efforts with Connect-Ability, the SELN, and the ICI, CT DDS continues to develop a variety of training and marketing materials that promote and support the employment of people with intellectual disabilities.

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District of Columbia

The leadership within the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) continues to work on moving the agency forward toward a clear Employment First initiative. DDA and DC’s vocational rehabilitation agency, DC Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), are both part of the DC Department on Disability Services (DDS) and, as such, have worked in

DDA, along with RSA, has supported extensive outreach to youth and families to guide their transition activities into employment.



concert on many of this year's employment initiatives.

DDA, along with RSA, has supported extensive outreach to youth and families to guide their transition activities into employment. DDA and RSA staff have been active in (a) DC Partners in Transition, which has created collaborations and a resource map of the different initiatives and supports available to youth and families; (b) DC's Secondary Transition Community of Practices, which has developed a state-wide strategic plan to promote employment outcomes for youth with disabilities; and (c) participating in three Youth Transition Forums for youth with disabilities and their families, teachers, and service providers.

A focus on organizational change supported a significant number of DDA staff and providers to attend the National Organizational Change Conference in Fall 2010, returning to work with agencies committed to rebalancing resources to promote employment for people in day activities programs. DDA coordinated additional technical assistance to those agencies in moving their plans forward.

DDS built a Benefits Planning and Work Incentives Network, through which benefits and work incentive training has been provided to DDS and provider agency staff. DDS also piloted a Customized Employment Public Intern program, to assist people in getting jobs in DC government. Through a competitive process, DDA provided mini-grants to 6 agencies interested in pursuing organizational change to promote employment outcomes for people in day activity programs. DDS also lead an expanded Project SEARCH effort, resulting in four federal agency sites this year, and completion of a federal replication guide.

Delaware

The Delaware Division of Developmental Services (DDS) rejoined the SELN after a year's hiatus. Faced with the challenge of unintended consequences from a swift shift from a daily to an hourly billing system for employment services, DDS's full attention was on stabilizing their provider community to deliver approved employment services.

Recognizing the importance of aligning service definitions with expected employment outcomes, DDS embarked on many months of dialogue with their provider community to clarify the intent of employment services, define service types, and gather baseline data on employment services. DDS concurrently explored rate-setting methodologies used by higher-performing states to determine the optimal methodology for the delivery of quality employment services in DE.

DDS explored rate-setting methodologies used by higher-performing states to determine the optimal methodology...



Hawaii

In January 2011, the Department of Health's (DOH) Developmental Disabilities Division (DDD) implemented a pre-vocational and group employment pilot project that will operate until December 2011. Information provided by the SELN Project Team assisted DDD in developing the compensation for group pre-vocational activities to be delivered by the two waiver provider agencies participating in the pilot.

Two key features of the pilot addressed benefits planning prior to employment and independence in transportation once employed. Lessons learned include:

1) identifying and resolving problems in obtaining services from the Department of Human Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), and Services for the Blind; 2) recognizing the importance of conducting regular meetings with the waiver providers and the division to share ideas and discuss problems; and 3) defining the activities for reporting. Lessons from the pilot, experiences of other

states, and SELN input were used to develop revisions for employment-related services that were approved by CMS for DDD's five-year waiver renewal application.

The approved application scheduled for implementation on November 1, 2011 redefines the provision of employment services. The new employment services reaffirm DDD's commitment to waiver participants to assist them in preparing, obtaining, and sustaining paid employment at or above the state's minimum wage or in developing their own microenterprise. The new employment supports include pre-vocational services in both an individual and group setting and individual and group employment options. Access to individual and group prevocational services will allow people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to build skills at a level suited to their current abilities and personal preferences.

Once a participant is ready for work, he or she may receive individual or group employment supports to find a job and receive job coaching. Although group employment supports are allowed, the objective of the waiver is to focus on individual integrated employment. To avoid the development and continuation of enclaves, the waiver restricts the group size to four or fewer participants. Regardless of whether the participant receives individual or group employment supports, the goal is to reduce the number of employment support hours as the participant gains independence in his/her work.

The DDD has also developed new provider standards that more clearly define the employment waiver services. For each service (pre-vocational, individual employment supports, group employment supports), the Provider Standards Manual defines the activities that must be provided within specified timeframes. For example, within 30 days of receiving an authorization for pre-vocational services, the provider is expected to conduct an employment

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assessment and within 30 days of the assessment to perform benefits counseling.

To implement the new employment services, the DDD has developed new procedures for its case managers. An emphasis is placed on individual and family commitment, service-provider accountability, and interagency collaboration, including a new commitment form which signals availability of supports to fully participate. All participants receiving employment services will be first directed to DVR to be assessed for employment services. If DVR determines a waiver participant eligible for services, then the DVR counselor will coordinate employment services with the DDD case manager. This way, both agencies can be sure there is no duplication of services. Finally, the DDD will be reviewing and monitoring the waiver providers on a regular basis beginning in February 2012.

In collaboration with the University of Hawaii Center on Disability Studies (CDS), DDD providers have been able to access resources from the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG). With MIG funding, CDS has conducted training in benefits planning to case management staff and service providers. MIG has also provided resources to conduct individual counseling sessions with families to understand the impact of paid employment on their benefits, including SSI, SSDI, and Medicaid. Additional efforts have resulted in several funding-related projects currently underway between DDD and the MIG. Current projects include planning with the vocational rehabilitation system to fund additional self-employment options (microenterprise), examining the viability of Medicaid Buy-In (MBI), and improving funding for supported employment services.


The DDD continues to partner with the Arc in Hawaii in the second year of a three-year grant from the Walmart foundation. Staff from DDD conducts presentations at the project high schools to introduce potential waiver participants to DDD services and discuss eligibility criteria. The purpose of the Arc/Walmart grant is to connect individuals receiving special education services with employment options for their future as one way to achieve a greater quality of life.

Indiana

Indiana was one of the first states in the nation to promote Employment First as an outcome for individuals receiving disability services; this grassroots activity is now fully embraced by state leadership. Indiana's Bureau of Developmental Disability Services (BDDS) has engaged in several employment-focused initiatives across the state in recent years. With a partnership role in development of the Cross-Disability Employment First work plan with Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) support, and along with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), a focused Employment First initiative is underway in five sites across the state.

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As a new SELN member as of spring 2011, BDDS is developing goals to clarify and strengthen an Employment



First focus statewide, and to increase the state's capacity to support individuals in integrated employment. Through a close working relationship with BRS, additional work is being considered to: develop alternatives to sheltered work, including career planning as an element of pre-employment services; analyze the current rate structure's effect on community inclusion goals; reinforce the need for competency-based skills by making training available to any staff interacting with individuals pursuing integrated employment; revise service definitions to support intended employment outcomes; and generate performance measures which lead to making data available to state personnel, case managers, families, and job seekers.

Iowa

The Mental Health and Disability Services (MHDS) division of the Iowa Department of Human Services has been working on the implementation of its updated Olmstead Plan for Mental Health and Disability Services. Expanding competitive employment opportunities is a strategic priority. The observations and potential actions identified in the SELN Findings and Observations Report, along with grassroots Employment First efforts, were integral to the Olmstead Plan.

As a second-year member of the SELN, Iowa has used technical assistance from SELN to produce and use a detailed comparison of how Iowa compares to selected high-performing states. The team participated in the funding and rates work group, and now plans to address Iowa's funding and rate methodologies with additional contracted assistance from the SELN. The SELN Project Team will be providing assistance developing a data and outcomes reporting system.

During the 2011 legislative session, a comprehensive redesign of the service system for Iowans with disabilities was mandated. This mandate included the repeal of the current system statewide, the integration of Olmstead principles, and a requirement to report outcomes, not just activities. While a daunting task, this redesign provides the opportunity to impact core services and funding mechanisms that focus on Olmstead principles of maximum community inclusion and participation. The significant work being done reflects the commitment and buy-in of key state departmental leadership and stakeholders.

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Louisiana

During the 2010–2011 year, the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) has formed an Employment First work group consisting of consumers, family members, provider agencies, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders, all working to guide OCDD through the transition process to becoming an Employment First agency. The group continues to meet on an ongoing basis.

With the assistance of the work group, OCDD has released guiding principles and the following Employment First position statement and definition of employment:

Employment will be the primary outcome for all persons receiving OCDD services who are of working age. Employment is characterized by typical jobs with competitive compensation that are fully integrated in the workforce.

This information will be used to guide OCDD as policy, procedures, rules, and waiver service definitions are examined and aligned to support the overall goal of an increase in the number of individuals who are working in individual community employment.

Early in 2011, the workgroup began to plan and support several strategic activities for the rest of the year and into 2012. The first is collecting baseline employment/vocational data from support coordinators and employment/vocational providers to gain a better understanding of employment in LA. Another is hosting employment listening sessions in the 10 regions of the state, so everyone interested in increasing individual employment outcomes can be heard. An online survey is available for those interested in providing feedback but unable to attend the listening session in their region.

OCDD will also be partnering with other stakeholders in the state to host the first annual Employment First Summit in Baton Rouge in December 2011. Training on employment-related topics is planned for consumers, families, support coordinators, and providers to increase competency and best practice knowledge. Additionally, OCDD will be drafting a new Employment First policy.

OCDD has set a five-year goal to increase individual employment outcomes in Louisiana. The first-year target has been set at 75 people in individual jobs in the community by June 30, 2012.

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Maryland

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) is addressing several key systems-change priorities. Partnerships with the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) and the Maryland Department of Disability (MDOD), the administrator for the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, 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 support agencies as they build organizational capacity to offer customized employment services and supports to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Quarterly meetings are held to facilitate information sharing, knowledge building, discussion, and strategic thinking among the members. The DDC, DDA, and Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) staff representatives are working toward aligning state and local systems that build capacity.

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Three agencies that provide employment services and supports were able to attend the 6th Annual National Organizational Change Forum. This forum focused on strategies to develop Employment First agendas through reforms of state policies and practices. Maryland's team was able to meet, plan, share our Employment First initiative with other states, and receive feedback. The DDA improved collaboration between state agencies by implementing a memorandum of understanding between the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR), the University of Baltimore, and the 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.

Massachusetts

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) 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) created 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,

...the [Employment First] 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.



key stakeholders, and partners in identifying ways to promote and support increased integrated employment opportunities.

While there are many issues to be addressed as MA implements the Employment First policy, two major areas of focus are the transformation from facility-based work to integrated employment and transition. DDS has notified providers that it wants to discontinue the purchasing of facility-based employment services within five years. To support this, DDS is requiring all providers of these services to submit a transformation plan. DDS will be working in partnership with providers during this time to support their capacity development and address some of the many barriers that still exist. In June 2011, DDS sponsored a full day presentation by Suzy Hutcheson, CEO of Helping People Succeed, who shared her agency's story of transformation.

In the area of transition, DDS (in partnership with the SELN) hosted regional forums on the topic of transition from school to employment. Small group discussions at each forum allowed attendees to share critical issues with DDS for future planning. To capture the ideas at each forum, a summary was created and shared with participants to highlight common issues across the state. A webinar promoting successful transition practices in the state of Washington was also offered as a follow-up to the forum comments. Finally, work is underway to collaborate more effectively with VR, improving access to VR funds for initial employment supports with DDS providing long-term supports post placement.


DDS continues to focus on the expansion of the Employment Outcomes data-collection system. Currently a well-established point-in-time approach that reports employment status once a year, the system is being expanded to include real-time placement data. This addition to the data system will be piloted in the next six months.

Michigan

The development of a grassroots peer mentor pilot, in conjunction with the Developmental Disabilities Council and the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, was realized in 2011. Internships leading to certification started in March 2011 to be completed before the end of the calendar year. The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) provided technical support and the description of a reporting code for Medicaid coverage of the peer mentor's work.

MDCH now has an "Employment Works!" policy.

MDCH supported the Michigan Community Service Commission to participate in NextSTEP, a national project studying service leading to community employment. Michigan was selected by the NextSTEP team at the Institute for Community Inclusion to be one of two demonstration states to develop a program that involves individuals with developmental disabilities in national service. Through participation in structured community service, participants can develop skills that may lead to future competitive employment opportunities.



MDCH invited the SELN Project Team to review the payment and reimbursement strategies currently being used by Community Mental Health Service Programs (CMHSPs) to fund employment-related services and supports furnished to individuals with developmental disabilities in different regions across the state. A report from the SELN underscored the diverse range of payment levels across the state for various services. Work continues to focus on how to most effectively attain and track timely and effective employment data to shape future decisions. Specific employment outcomes are in the 2012 contract and include a modest incentive for the CMHSP achieving the greatest percentage increase in competitive employment.

The Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Administration of MDCH has been collecting data on individuals with developmental disabilities who are accessing services through the public mental health system relative to supportive and competitive employment. The employment figures will be analyzed by the Quality Improvement Council following the completion of the 2011 fiscal year. In conjunction with the SELN's work advising how other states have reinforced employment policies, MDCH now has an "Employment Works!" policy. This policy and collaborative work with the Medicaid Comprehensive Employment Services Grant's leadership council has led to an early stage of considering a cross-agency, statewide Employment First initiative.


Missouri

In January 2011, the Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities (the Division) implemented an Employment First policy. The policy promotes the expectation that everyone of working age and those supporting them should consider work as the first option for being fully participating members of their community. The policy describes the values, beliefs, policy implementation, and monitoring process for the Division.

During 2010–2011, the Division concentrated on improving waiver employment services. The Division implemented the Partnership for Hope Waiver, which is a partnership between the County Developmental Disabilities Boards, the Division, and the MO HealthNet Division. The Division and County Developmental Disabilities Boards share the cost of the match funds needed for services, which maximizes resources so that Missouri is able to support more individuals. Currently there are 74 counties participating, and an amendment is pending which will add 10 more counties and increase capacity by 300 people by autumn 2011. The state also received notification from CMS in late June that the Comprehensive and Community Support Waivers were approved for five more years. Each waiver contains new and revised employment services.

Missouri has restructured rates for individual providers of employment services as an incentive to increase individual integrated employment outcomes.

Missouri has restructured rates for individual providers of employment services as an incentive to increase individual integrated employment outcomes. The Division is also building an employment data collection system



that will be completed in 2011. Data will be used to track employment outcomes, which will be used in policy development and implementation. Memorandums of understanding are in place with the Department of Labor and the Missouri Division of Vocation Rehabilitation for data sharing.

Division employment coordinators are providing training and technical assistance to service coordinators, individuals, and families at the local level. They are partnering with schools and vocational rehabilitation on Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Community Transition teams. Community Transition teams are developing resources, sponsoring job fairs, and reaching out to local businesses to improve transition outcomes for youth.

The Division is the first state developmental disability agency to become an Employment Network under the Ticket to Work program. A series of trainings for employment coordinators and regional office staff have taken place. Additional trainings are scheduled and marketing strategies are being developed. The Division will be providing a percentage of each milestone payment as an incentive to providers that are successful in obtaining competitive community employment for individuals with developmental disabilities. A cooperative agreement between the Division and the state vocational rehabilitation agency is in place and procedures are being established to improve coordination of services.


The Division is also partnering with the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council and the Department of Mental Health Office of Transformation in the implementation of an online disability benefits calculator called DB101. DB101 is a benefits and work planning website that offers self-advocates, families, and professionals information, resources, and tools to better understand benefits and work incentives, help explore work as an option, make informed choices, and achieve better employment outcomes.

In March 2011, the Division created the Missouri Business Alliance (MBA), which is a small workgroup/think tank of geographically represented employment providers and business leaders. The mission of the MBA is to create access to expanded work opportunities by focusing on both public-sector and private-sector jobs. It is intended to be a business-led initiative.

Montana

The Montana Disability Services Division (the Division) joined the SELN in early 2011 and has worked to complete the new member process through the State Strategic Employment Assessment. Building a focused state work plan through key stakeholder input is reflective of the Division's goal to support the strong interest in improving employment statewide, across

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both urban and rural settings. The Division is continuing to engage self-advocates and families in planning efforts to create strong external pressures and demands for increasing integrated employment opportunities and the expectation of work regardless of disability.

Within the existing system of supports, the Division is considering systems change across several key themes such as improving provider competencies, analyzing existing reimbursement methodologies, facilitating a seamless transition from school to employment or post-secondary education, revising current service definitions, and measuring outcomes to inform performance 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 (ELNs). Each ELN has conceptualized and sponsored local events to highlight career successes of people with developmental disabilities and to recognize employers who hire them. The ELNs continue to meet and address both statewide and local issues pertaining to increasing integrated employment for people with developmental disabilities in their locales.


Building a sustainable, competent workforce is seen as a critical element in the systems-change work in the state.

New Mexico's Developmental Disabilities Supports Division continues to employ resources from the State's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant to sustain a comprehensive system-wide employment training plan. Building a sustainable, competent workforce is seen as a critical element in the systems-change work in the state. A curriculum to enhance the competency of employment staff including a mentorship component has been implemented. The curriculum is delivered in multiple formats (e.g., web-based, classroom, etc.) to accommodate learning styles and statewide access.

Nevada

Through support from the SELN and the Nevada Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Developmental Services (DDS) has worked to continue the strong commitment built as a result of the 2010 Regional Employment Policy Summits. Through participation in the SELN's VR-DD workgroup, a team from Department of Employment Training and Rehabilitation Division, DDS, and the

Funding was provided for: community-based exploration summer camps; a collaborative resource guide on employment; employment education; a disability resources guide; and employment networking with facility-based community providers.



Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities designed an inter-local agreement (pilot study) for a customized employment collaborative, where funding is currently being used to job-carve positions for Nevadans with IDD referred through DDS.

The Nevada Medicaid Infrastructure Grant dedicated significant funds toward integrated employment outcomes aligned with the 2010 State Employment Policy Summit outcomes in collaboration with the state's SELN work. Funding was provided for: community-based exploration summer camps; a collaborative resource guide on employment; employment education; a disability resources guide; and employment networking with facility-based community providers. The state Division of Developmental Disabilities is also working to streamline systems and to build a universal contract and provider application, as well as standards that alleviate redundancy and provide more effective services.

Through the SELN and connections with other states, the Nevada Division of Mental Health and Developmental Services has been able to provide access to relevant training and information materials to community providers and state service coordinators. Topics include career-driven individual planning, person-centered planning, and embedding employment in the ISP.


Nevada is also moving closer to committing to a clear Employment First agenda through APSE involvement; analyzing the funding and reimbursement structures of community providers to create incentives for integrated, competitive employment; and reviewing Nevada's Home and Community Based Waiver employment service definitions.

Oregon

The Office of Developmental Disability Services (ODDS) continues its engagement in restructuring the funding methodology for services through the ReBAR Project (Restructuring Budgets, Assessments and Rates) in order to match rates with the priority for employment outcomes. State budget situations have caused some delays, but implementation is expected at the end of the state's fiscal biennium.

ODDS has made progress on its employment agenda by completing the collection of baseline data across day programs...

Working collaboratively, ODDS and the Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Services Department and the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities engaged in a strategic planning effort to jointly conduct regional outreach and implementation of ODDS's Employment First policy. Nine Employment First leadership teams are receiving regular support for collaborative efforts and outcomes. Additional infrastructure activities have focused on developing improved materials for individual service planning, improving communications with stakeholders via web pages and twice-monthly newsletters, increasing awareness at the departmental and legislative leadership levels about the importance of improving employment outcomes for individuals with IDD, and implementing a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Education.



ODDS has made progress on its employment agenda by completing the collection of baseline data across day programs (e.g., the number of people working in individual jobs, group employment) including all employment services, comprehensive waiver outcomes, and supports waiver outcomes. This will be used to manage the implementation of strategies related to the Employment First policy adopted in 2008. Key performance measures are based on a minimum 5% annual improvement in the percentage of individuals working in integrated employment.

Pennsylvania

The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) continues to review and analyze options to incorporate individual information on employment service outcomes into their data-management system. A number of alternatives are being considered, including the use of Philadelphia County's web-based data-collection and reporting system.

ODP's work with its state office of vocational rehabilitation on shared business processes to support employment for people with IDD is progressing.

Confirming a memorandum of agreement 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.

...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 IDD 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's plans to move forward in this area.

With assistance from the SELN, DADS continues to work with the TX Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services and the TX Health and Human Services Commission to better coordinate employment services for individuals with IDD, and has expanded the workgroup to include the TX Department of State Health Services. DADS has applied for Money Follows the Person funds to build on that collaboration through technical assistance grants to providers of IDD 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 IDD who want to work should receive the support they need to do so.



Virginia

The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) continues to work 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.

The VA SELN Advisory Group, made up of advocates, providers, and state agencies, continues to identify roadblocks and disincentives in our state system, and is developing specific strategies for implementation of a system that prioritizes employment as an outcome of services. This past year, DBHDS hired a full-time community resource manager for employment to work with the VA SELN Advisory Group. Previously the DBHDS staff person worked 50% on employment issues and 50% on housing issues.

DBHDS has committed to working on employment across disabilities, and has made efforts to expand membership in the VA SELN Advisory Group to include members from behavioral health services. The VA SELN Advisory Group designed and planned the first Employment First Summit, held in October 2011. The summit included presentations by staff from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, successful behavioral health employment programs, a state invested in Employment First implementation, and a representative from the Administration on Development Disabilities. The theme of the discussions was “What are we doing well now, and what do we need to do even better to make Employment First happen in Virginia?”


DBHDS has signed memorandums of understanding with a number of state agencies to share data and develop baseline data to evaluate progress towards increasing employment outcomes for people with disabilities. DBHDS and its partners remain committed to continuing efforts to increase Virginia’s commitment to Employment First.

DBHDS continues to work to improve employment outcomes through a broad-based systems-change initiative that is being implemented as an ongoing, long-range effort throughout the state.

Washington

Washington State’s Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) is a national leader in employment for people with developmental disabilities. The state IDD 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.

... achieving typical employment for all in the workforce requires serious, sustained commitment...



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, an opportunity for rewarding and meaningful employment for each young adult leaving school, and continued commitment to innovation.

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

A statewide stakeholder work group is working to a) determine and describe the essential elements of integrated employment, b) develop a consistent allocation methodology for county employment services based on individual support need, and c) develop a common understanding of the supports integral to achieving employment service outcomes. Based on this work, the state will begin to use information about each individual's support need acuity (high, medium, and low) and wage earning history when determining the total allocation to each county for employment.

DDD has also been in partnership with the state's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant to evaluate the return on investment in employment support services and to help establish a statewide network that provides benefits planning funded by multiple systems. Among the options there may be some opportunity to use other federal funding through the Roads to Community Living grant to support some benefits planning activities. The Roads to Community Living grant is also supporting a project that is designed to develop best practices in employing people with the most severe disabilities.

Washington collects monthly data online on employment outcomes, wages, hours, benefits, places of work, etc., and has collaborated with the ICI (through SELN membership) to make that data broadly available across the state. 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 and the data display system is scheduled to become publicly available in the fall of 2011.

The 2011 Washington state legislature made two policy decisions that affect employment for citizens with developmental disabilities. These policy decisions were made as provisos to the state budget bill. The first proviso establishes an Employment First policy and requires every Division of Developmental Disabilities client of working age (21–61) who is served in a county (day) program to participate in employment for at least nine months. If no job is found during that time, the person may choose community access. The second proviso establishes a work group to explore a new approach to employment/day services so that people can choose something other than employment. Reports are due to the legislature for both provisos by the next legislative session, January 2012. The budget bill also provided that people may only have access to one day service.

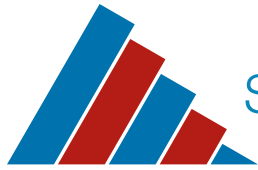
Where Are We Going From Here?

States are beginning to see improvements as they continue to build the infrastructure needed to sustain systems changes. The most meaningful changes are represented by appropriate rates, empowering policies, targeted staff competency development, and data-driven decision-making. This report provides a snapshot of network and individual activities. The real story lies with each person who makes a commitment to change the values and mindset that impede opportunities. The cultural shifts are happening across the country, and we value the hard work it is taking to make that happen. Washington's commitment to outcome-based management and quality improvement, and is scheduled to become publicly available in the Fall of 2010.

While states continue staying the course, the SELN aims to provide the backdrop for discussions emerging among states. Upcoming topics include:

- Maximizing the use of Ticket To Work (TTW) funds
- Understanding and acknowledging the importance of employment to a meaningful life
- Questioning the viability of group employment as a long-term service
- Analyzing the impact of funding and rate methodologies
- Creating incentives for individual integrated employment outcomes as the preferred option
- Aligning integrated employment options with person-centered practices and planning tools
- Learning that choice is not antithetical to integrated employment outcomes
- Increasing the active collaborations between IDD agencies and vocational rehabilitation agencies
- Measuring performance and developing data-management systems that support data-driven decision-making

We welcome your feedback and ideas to continue building a system that values and supports strong community-focused opportunities and mechanisms for building assets and getting out of poverty.



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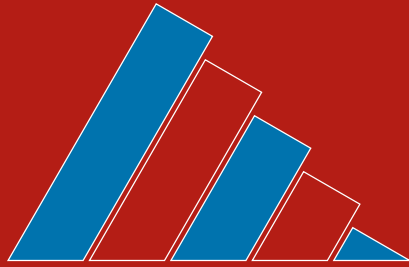
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