

Employment First and Provider Transformation

Lessons Learned from
High Performing States

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Objectives

Learn examples of policies and practices implemented in high performance states

Understand the impact at the provider level

Consider opportunities to prioritize employment services within your organization if you are not already.

How can you come together as provider organizations to advocate and support initiatives at the state and federal level to support and sustain efforts?

5 States

- Washington 83%
- Oregon 57%
- New Hampshire 51%
- Iowa 36%
- Oklahoma 72%

SELN 2021 Data: % of working age adults receiving ID/DD waiver services



Washington

Long history of prioritizing employment as the first and primary service people receive through policy and practice

Strong collaboration between Vocational Rehabilitation and Developmental Disability AND county services

Strong investment in training and technical assistance across the state

Individual Technical Assistance offered as a service

Working Age Policies

- Began in 2004
- In March 2012, the Washington State Legislature passed further legislation to support employment as the first choice for adults of working age; to incorporate the right to transition to a community access program after nine months in an employment service; and to receive only one service option at a time, employment or community access.

Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Supported Employment Values

- Creativity is necessary
- Limitations are the major barriers to successful employment, not the functional limitations of the worker
- Traditional measures of work readiness are not predictors of ability to work



Washington- Individual Technical Assistance

With a focus on supporting individuals and their teams to achieve specific employment goals, Individualized Technical Assistance can provide assessment and consultation to individuals and their employment providers. The following are some examples of service:

- Individualized tools to increase independence and employability
- Enhanced employer connections
- Assistance to utilize social networks
- Personal coaching
- Learning preference development
- Assistive and information technology
- Accommodation and Universal Design
- Development of personal resources/assets
- Troubleshooting with existing networks to produce desired employment outcomes
- Person Centered Planning to assess abilities, interests and strategies for success leading to desired goals
- Research and connections to professional community resources



Oregon

Dept of Justice settlement Lane V Brown established timelines, “closing the front door”

Transformation grants allocated to provider organizations to access training and technical assistance

Strong investment in training and technical materials/resources assistance across the state

20 hour per week planning standard as part of the settlement

New service descriptions that promote exploration and meaningful experiences

- 20 hour per week planning standard for employment services. This standard is required by the Lane v. Brown settlement agreement, which states: “DHS will establish and promote a goal that all persons with I/DD who want to work in the community will be afforded an opportunity to pursue competitive employment that allows them to work the maximum number of hours consistent with their abilities and preferences. DHS will issue guidance to VR counselors, ODDS staff, CDDPs, and Brokerages that the recommended standard for planning and implementing Supported Employment Services will be the opportunity to work at least 20 hours per week. This guidance will recognize that based on individual choice, preferences, and circumstances, some people may choose to work at that level while others may not.”

We believe all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities must have access to supports in the most integrated setting and access to a real community life with dignity, respect and our civil rights.

~Oregon Self-Advocacy Coalition, [Letter to Patricia Baxter](#), Interim ODDS Director, regarding Oregon's HCBS Transition Plan, June 5, 2014

The Purpose of ODDS Employment Services is:

To support people to explore, pursue, secure and advance in individual, integrated employment. Although these services are available through the Comprehensive Waiver and Support Services Waiver, none of these services is a pre-requisite for pursuing or securing individual, integrated employment. Rather, these services are resources that a person may choose to access. Each chosen employment service must have, at minimum, one outcome that is related to exploring, pursuing, obtaining and/or advancing in integrated employment.

- **Employment Path:** Learning and work experiences to develop general, non-job-task-specific strengths and skills that contribute to employability in integrated employment.
- **Small Group Employment:** Works with a group of 2-8 people with disabilities at a community business. Earns at least minimum² wage. Does not include vocational services provided in facility based work settings. While Small Group is integrated employment, remember that its ultimate goal is individual, integrated employment.
- **Discovery/Career Exploration:** A person-centered, comprehensive employment planning and support service that provides assistance to obtain, maintain or advance in a competitive employment setting. The outcome is a completed Discovery Profile and a referral to Vocational Rehabilitation.
- **Initial Job Coaching:** May include short-term supports as a person learns their new job. This is time-limited.

Iowa implemented Medicaid rebalancing of employment services and supports in its waivers and in its Habilitation State Plan. These actions helped the state:

Rebalance funding and regulations to support competitive integrated employment;

Changed the service definitions to match CMS guidance;

Implement a set of capacity-building and staff capacity standards that did not previously exist; and

Totally change the reimbursement methodology to incentivize individual supported employment over facility-based services

Oklahoma

Outcome based
payment system

Outcome based payment system

Rewards the provider for consumer outcomes

Defined Service structure

Defined fee structure

Tiered payments to valued outcomes

Offers incentives to serve individuals with high support needs

Criteria for Performance Excellence in Provider Transformation

- **Leadership**
- **Strategic Planning**
- **Customer Focus**
- **Workforce Focus**
- **Operations Focus**
- **Measurement, Analysis & Knowledge Management**
- **Results**



Leadership- Progress



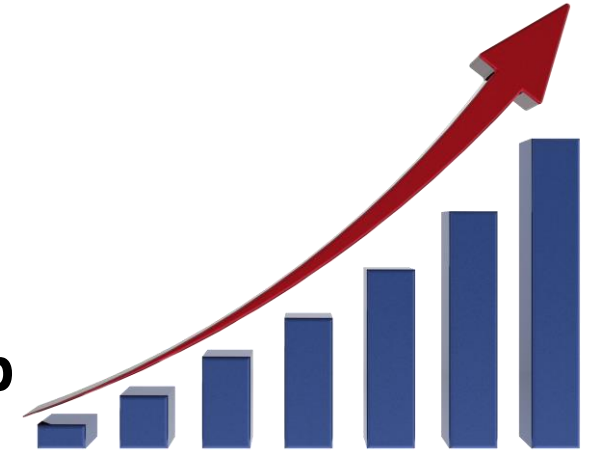
- **The Board and leadership team are very supportive** of the Employment First Transformation process after Transformation training
- **COO in transition to CEO/COO leading transformation effort**
- **Working on new 2-year Strategic Plan**
- **The board passed a resolution to sell the** manufacturing building, where contracted workshop activities take place.
- **A series of presentations regarding the sale of the workshop** building and plans to transform services were provided to parents, board and staff members, and leadership
- **Developing a Communication Plan:** Working on website redesign to emphasize an Employment First focus, redesigning all print marketing materials, reached out to all families and update contact information. Tracking all community resources.

Leadership-Next Steps

- Complete 2 Year Strategic Plan
- Complete Communication Plan including a photo library of community inclusion activities and success stories
- Work with referral sources to increase referrals
- Continue to educate Members of the Board and leadership and report progress data
- Continue succession planning for leadership transition



Operations Focus- Progress Example



- **Exploring transportation alternatives with local car dealership**
- **Reviewing service data base programs**
- **Attempting to re-envision a workshop program (golf ball recycling)** that includes selling building and moving employees to contractor's payroll. When the building sells, resources will be redirected to community-based services and supports.
- **Developed min. wage contract with Medical Center moving workshop participants to a community-based setting** and increasing community employment opportunities
- **Negotiating a new fee schedules with referring agencies** to foster financial stability for community-based services and outcome-based incentives
- **Implementation of weekly community exploration and discovery activity schedules** (group and individual) as well as routine data collection forms set for October 2023

Operations Focus- Progress₂

- The agency has sound **separate budgets for each service**
- **Agency has created a strong partnership with the local Community Mental Health agency including a part time assignment to provide employment service coordination, assessments, and employment goal development and support**
- The agency plans to allow their **Subminimum Wage 14C Certificate to expire** at the end of March 2024
- **Participants have exponentially increased time in community-based activities and the agency has expanded placement services with new staff, anticipating the addition of another job placement staff November 2023**
- **Agency transitioned individuals to supported employment services, decreasing in-house skill building services**
- The agency has four divisions: assembly, retail, mobile crews and employment placement. The latter is a new service and now draws on the first three training opportunities. **Ending the practice of using the first three “training” experiences as final placements**

Operations Focus-Next Steps

- Discontinue the 14C certificate ~~in~~ by March 2024
- Continue to expand the types of community experiences available to participants (Volunteer, educational & recreational)
- Complete sale of the facility-based manufacturing building
- Promote direct employment of all work crews by community work sites
- Make the 3 training services under Employment Services-time limited
- Skill building experiences-move to community and secure additional funding
- Lease additional smaller vehicles/being reimbursed mileage/use local dealership/downsize and personalize transportation
- Take on additional referral sources -local rehab. And private insurance. Rely less on Medicaid & more VR, school-age transition w VR
- Continue to increase supported and customized employment placements, collect data and report progress



Human Resources Focus-Progress

- The COO has achieved ACRE train-the-trainer certification, obtained customized employment training, and participated in a Train the Trainer Session for Family Engagement
- Employment placement staff achieved the ACRE Certificate, Employment Specialist Certificate, and Benefits to Work Coach training
- A national Subject Matter Expert (SME) provided Customized Employment training to facilitate job development and placement for people with more complex disabilities
- Hired a new job placement specialist



Human Resources Focus-Next Steps



- Implement higher staff ratios in community-based services
- Secure job coach and customized employment training for all direct service staff
- COO will be an ACRE trainer; first session is scheduled for October 2023
- COO is participating in Leadership Academy that aims to prepare future leaders with training in such areas as finance, accounting, board governance, etc.; projected graduation in March 2024
- Move forward with the anticipated addition of another job placement staff November 2023

Customer Focus-Progress



- Working with parents to prepare them for the agency's improved community-based service delivery model and the expiration of the subminimum wage certificate
- Increase from 5 to 25 Supported Employment participants in the last few months
- Connecting with current manufacturing and janitorial customers to pave the way for opportunities **within** their businesses
- Implement individual and group community-base planning and data collection (3) forms to document and share progress with parents and others

Customer Focus-next steps

- Work with parents and participants through the Communication Plan to continue to educate them about Employment First, Settings Rule, benefits counseling resources, and other topics that concern them
- Use parent training materials in future parent meetings and to train direct support staff on how to best engage with families, creating positive dialogue surrounding employment
- Implement weekly community schedules (group and individual) as well as routine data collection forms in January 2024 that reflect Person Centered Planning



Data Management & Quality Assurance-Progress

- Technology-added 4 tablets/computers-in field
- Software- allows agency to use their software & data base
- The agency has been CARF recertified



Data Management & Quality Assurance-Next Steps

- Continue to increase lap top computers availability for in-field staff
- Implement specific quality standards for job placement staff including a 65-70% placement rate as well as expected time frames from date of referral to placement date.
- Develop electronic tracking data base for all participants from referral to employment placements (time through ea. step of process, wages, benefits, positions, preferences, skills, etc.)
- Continue to monitor each service's financial status, income, and expenses monthly and report to the leadership and board
- Create data tracking for areas needing monitoring or decisions,
- Document agency's journey through the Transformation process, e.g., power point presentations, board summaries, participant success stories, etc., and plan to share at state and national venues (incorporate in Strategic Plan).
- Work towards analyzing the service costs for rate negotiating



Group Discussion 1

How will you or how do you prioritize people with whom to begin the job development process?



Internal Mechanism for Prioritization for Employment



- Determine how people will move smoothly to referral for employment
- Departments can become siloed with little communication between
- Must have a body (reps from CBDS, employment services, case management, residential services) that considers prioritization
- Must have a process for prioritization

Group Discussion 2

How do you currently or how in the future will your agency ensure that people are provided with the information and experiences that will allow them to make truly informed choices?



Group Discussion 3

What are the effective strategic steps your agency has or will take to position your agency for Transformation?



Group Discussion 4

What would be or what are the challenges your agency will face moving toward Transformation?



Group Discussion 5

How have or will you be obtaining input?

Are you already doing this? From whom?

**& providing education to key stakeholders?
How?**



Group Discussion 6



What are ways you can collaborate with other providers?

& collaborate with community partners to support your transformation efforts?

Group Discussion 7



Does your agency use person-centered principals and strategies in employment planning and job development? Describe how.

Could the process be improved? How?

Group Discussion 8

What are five or more important steps to take when establishing meaningful day support services that provide a pathway to or a wrap-around for competitive integrated employment?

