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Delphi Panel Findings, Brief #3: Collaboration Across Agencies

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Background

This is the third in a series of briefs on the findings from a Delphi process conducted by the Employment Learning Community in 2013–2014. More information on the Employment Learning Community and the Delphi process can be found in Brief #1 (Introduction, Values, and Overall Themes).

This brief focuses on the panel's recommendations related to collaboration across state systems, which was the second-highest overarching priority identified by the Delphi panel for improving employment outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Collaboration recommendations

There were no identified sub-categories within this area, so all identified policy and practice recommendations were ranked as one group. Eleven collaboration-related policy and practice recommendations were prioritized:

1. Sharing funds and resources through blending and/or braiding (76*)
2. Recognizing that partnerships are essential to achieving successful employment outcomes. No single individual, agency, or organization can do this alone. Partnerships across agencies, organizations, employers, schools, individuals with disabilities, and family members are all important (64)
3. Developing state vocational rehabilitation (VR) and intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) agency memoranda of understanding that clearly, concretely define the collaborative process, including referrals, plan development, service definitions, provision of services, and what each state agency will pay for (60)
4. Providing services and supports based on the individual's needs, dreams, and connections to the local community (60)
5. Developing training collaborations across agencies, including VR, IDD, education, and other partners (54)

The Employment Learning Community has been developed to assist states in improving employment systems and services that will increase inclusive, competitive employment for individuals with IDD. To gain insights on the most cogent policies and priorities to promote such systems change, the project convened a panel of national subject matter experts to participate in a Delphi process. Nineteen Delphi panel members, including employment researchers, service providers, state vocational rehabilitation directors, developmental disability agency directors, educators, self-advocates, family members and representatives from related programs and initiatives, participated in four rounds of data collection. The values, policies, and practices that emerged from this effort are being presented in this series of seven briefs:

1. Introduction, Values, and Major Themes
2. Transition From School to Work
3. Collaboration Across Agencies
4. Education and Training for Job Seekers
5. Processes Within State Agencies
6. Generation and Use of Data and Evidence
7. Paths Toward Fair Wages

6. Using community rehabilitation providers that can work with both VR and IDD systems to ensure continuity with short- and long-term supports (52)
7. Sharing cases closed/successes across agencies. Developing shared definitions of employment and the ability to measure outcomes across agencies (52)
8. Having a statewide affinity group that meets quarterly, to include state agency and service provider staff. The group can be co-led by the VR specialist for supported employment and the IDD specialist for the same area (50)
9. Presuming eligibility for VR for individuals who are eligible for IDD supported employment services, and considering these individuals Category 1 for Order of Selection (48)
10. Making sure a staff person within the state IDD agency is knowledgeable across VR, IDD, and education, and having that person collaborate with a similar staff role in the VR agency (46)

Five additional recommendations emerged but were lower-ranked. These included having VR counselors and provider staff meet regularly as a team to discuss and plan around

* Numbers in parentheses are the standardized scores of the item's ranking across panel members. The standardized scores were calculated as follows: Standardized Score = (sum of scores - minimum score) / (maximum score - minimum score)



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individuals served in common (43), better determining which people with disabilities need VR services and which can have their needs met at a One-Stop Career Center/American Job Center (39), fostering collaboration through agency administrators (38), encouraging people served by the VR and IDD systems to register for state workforce agencies' online job matching websites (30), and identifying funding sources specifically to foster or seed collaboration (29).

Conclusions

The Delphi panel identified collaboration among state agencies as the second-highest systems change priority after improving the transition from school to work. Some specific, concrete activities within the collaboration area were blending and braiding of funds, development of interagency memoranda of understanding, collaborating on training, and engaging with service providers that can provide supports across multiple systems or funding streams. Other recommendations were recognizing the importance of partnerships and maintaining a focus on the individual across agency boundaries.

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The Employment Learning Community (ELC) is a project of ThinkWork at the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston. ThinkWork is a resource portal offering data, personal stories, and tools related to improving employment outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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