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Work and community engagement: Shifting services and supports to help individuals have the lives they want

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Bringing Employment First to Scale

Service transformation is key to making Employment First a reality for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The RRTC and the Community Life Engagement initiative are working to move research into practice to support community providers in their efforts to move from facility based day and employment services to services that support competitive integrated employment and community life engagement.

4 Guideposts for Community Life Engagement

1. Individualize supports for each person
   - Show understanding of personal preferences, goals, interests and skills
   - Emphasize person-centered planning and discovery
   - Consider creative grouping, staffing and scheduling

2. Promote community membership and contribution
   - Start with inclusive settings and activities
   - Ensure that staff presence does not limit connection with other community members
   - Place value on not just presence, but membership in the community
   - Consider an individual's preferences

3. Use human and social capital to decrease dependence on paid supports
   - Use social capital to create natural supports
   - Teach skills to build human capital

4. Ensure that supports are outcome-oriented and regularly monitored
   - Emphasize goals rather than promises
   - Hold CLE supports to clear state and federal expectations and guidance
   - Lead to or complement employment

10 Elements for Provider Transformation

Six elements originally identified by the T-TAP Project in 2007. A Delphi panel updated the original 6 elements and added 4 more to reflect the current policy and practice environment. Further verification and development of these elements is underway through case studies with 4 providers who have closed their sheltered workshops within the past 10 years.

1. Clear and consistent goals
2. Reallocated and restructured resources
3. An active, person-centered job placement process
4. Multiple and diverse community partnerships
5. A holistic approach
6. Strong internal and external communication plan
7. A focus on customer engagement
8. An ongoing investment in staff professional development
9. An agency culture that supports values
10. Effective employment performance measurement, quality assurance and program oversight

What's next?

Toolkits are in development to help put these research findings into practice.

The Community Life Engagement Toolkit is currently being piloted in:
- Washington DC
- New Mexico

The Provider Transformation Toolkit will be piloted with chapters of The Arc in 2017