

# State Agency Promising Practice

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## Michigan's Job Development Incentive

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### Background

Michigan's Department of Community Health, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Administration (MDCH) has expressed a strong desire to improve the state's employment outcomes among people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Set against this desire is a major obstacle: Michigan is among the states hardest hit by the continuing economic recession, with the highest unemployment rate in the nation.

MDCH delivers supports through local Community Mental Health Services Programs (CMHSPs). These CMHSPs not only experience differences in employment rates but also have high variability in their funding levels and structures, payment methodologies, and reimbursement mechanisms. Local CMHSPs individualize their contracts with providers to emphasize employment outcomes in some areas, but the practice is not consistent across the state. Within this structure, however, one CMHSP in Wayne County decided to experiment with outcome-based incentives to improve integrated employment, creating a payment system for job development supports.

### Implementation

In Michigan, CMHSPs directly provide certain services, and ensure the provision of other services through negotiated contracts with independent provider agencies. In Wayne County, which includes the city of Detroit, the CMHSP contracts with Community Living Services (CLS), a Community Rehabilitation Provider, to provide employment supports. This local CMHSP provides services for

over 2,600 people with IDD, most of whom require ongoing support.

Experiencing tremendous challenges in helping individuals find jobs, a group of CMHSP staff, CLS staff, and people with IDD came together to brainstorm new ways to address employment.

Providers reported that they could not afford to do quality job development, and demonstrated the time involved for effective service delivery. The group proposed a job-development financial incentive of between \$1,200 and \$1,400 to the CMHSP finance department. The money would be paid to the individual most responsible for finding the job. Settling on a \$1000 reimbursement, the team developed a set of stipulations for the reimbursement, referring to this as their job development protocol.

The protocol begins with the job development support person submitting a Letter of Understanding to the CLS Employment Services Department. The department then coordinates a meeting between the person receiving job development supports, the person providing those supports, and a CLS staff person. The incentive can go to anyone, and not just a professional from the provider agency. It can be a sibling, a close friend, a caregiver, or a staff person whom the individual chooses.

All job development activities must occur in accordance with the individual's Personal Plan. Similar to a person-centered plan, the Personal

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Plan is reviewed by CLS and must indicate that employment is a desired outcome. The Personal Plan must also identify any support needs, including job coaching and transportation, and suggest a plan for addressing them.

Once the person is employed at least 90 days earning minimum wage or more for 10 hours per week or more, the employee provides either pay stubs or a letter verifying employment from his/her employer. If all protocols are followed and all requested information is verified, an outcome payment of \$1,000.00 will be paid by CLS within 45 days of verification. This outcome payment is paid only once in a 12-month period for each person receiving job development supports.

## Impact

To date, 39 incentives have been paid over an 18-month period directly to those people providing the job development. In most cases, jobs were found at smaller businesses and mostly through personal networks. CMSHP and CLS staff members continue to raise awareness about the incentive among professionals, families, and individuals served by CLS. The finance department has been able to maintain the incentive even during the current budget constraints. There have been discussions among other CMSHPs about the possibility of replicating the incentive. Future additions to the job development protocol include the possibility of paying for efforts that lead to a micro-enterprise for an individual.

## Suggestions for Replication:

- » Bring your key stakeholders together to solve problems. By including providers, families, and individuals in the initial brainstorming, CMSHP was able to devise an innovative solution to a specific hurdle experienced during job development.
- » Establish a clear protocol for providing job development support. Wayne County's protocol ensures that the person providing job development support and CLS staff communicate about the individual's personal plan and the requirements that need to be met.
- » Establish clear stipulations for employment outcomes. The CMSHP and CLS established minimum requirements for employment outcomes and developed ways to verify information about the employment placement.

**For more information on this practice  
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