

State Agency Promising Practice

YEAR OF PUBLICATION:
2009

TOPIC:
Implementation of
Priority Policy Goals

Reaching Target Employment Goals: The Five-year Initiative from Florida's Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)

by Jennifer Bose

Background

The state of Florida has implemented a five-year employment initiative for people with ID/DD. The goal is to enable at least 50% of adults (ages 18 to 55) receiving APD-funded day services as of July 1, 2004, to achieve community employment by July 1, 2009. APD-funded services include adult day training, supported employment, and non-residential supports and services. Florida is specifically targeting a total of 25% of individuals who were in Adult Day Training (ADT) on July 1, 2004, to be employed by July 1, 2009.

The impetus for this five-year initiative was multi-fold. Governor Jeb Bush created a Blue Ribbon Task Force in 2003 to provide guidance on improving inclusive community living options, transition outcomes, and employment opportunities. The development of the initiative was also directly supported by statewide survey data from 2003, which indicated that 70% of unemployed people with developmental disabilities wanted a job.

Implementation

Florida's service delivery system through the APD contains several mechanisms that encourage the employment initiative. Support coordination is required for anyone receiving adult day services through the Medicaid home- and community-based waiver; these independent support coordinators can play a key role in steering adults with ID/DD toward work opportunities. For this reason, one of APD's training initiatives has been aimed at better equipping support coordinators and employment

support providers to help adults locate and maintain gainful employment in integrated work settings. The agency is also involved in the Start-Up Florida grant, which is part of Start-Up USA. These projects focus on creating self-employment opportunities for adults with ID/DD.

Each APD area office has developed an area-specific plan that enhances the employment of people with ID/DD. These plans have target goals for each area and are updated semi-annually. Supported employment liaisons from the area offices are typically very aware of their target goals and communicate this information to their employment support providers. An APD official noted that the plans document meetings between the area offices and support coordinators, which can be an opportunity to discuss employment data and progress towards target goals. The area-specific plans are posted on APD's website and help to keep all important stakeholders aware of and accountable for the expectations that have been established.

Another important component in the implementation of the initiative is tracking its progress. APD created the Supported Employment Tracking System (SETS). Reports contain employment data, collected on a monthly basis, that indicates the number of individuals served by APD who are employed as well as quality indicators of the jobs obtained (e.g., wages, hours, benefits).

For the latest in this series, visit:

www.thinkwork.org/aie/ppsa
(state agency practices)

www.thinkwork.org/aie/crp
(service provider practices)



ThinkWork!
INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION, UMASS BOSTON

Employment data is published on a regular basis on APD's public website. A supported employment liaison in each office is responsible for overseeing the collection of employment outcome data for the area. While data for each area is added to the regional and statewide data collection effort, the area data is also useful for developing the area office's new target goals and employment plan for the following year. Data is collected on all individuals who receive services from APD and who are working in the community, and individuals who are on the waiting list to receive services and who are working. "Working in the community" is defined as: individual or group employment (not more than eight people as part of a work crew or enclave); working with or among people without disabilities; and earning at least minimum wage.

Impact

The employment initiative has received some funding and support from the state legislature. During FY 2005-06, the legislature appropriated \$2 million in general revenue to assist APD in enrolling additional individuals in supported employment services as part of the agency's employment initiative. APD used these funds to enroll more than 420 individuals who were on the wait list for waiver services in supported employment services.

Current numbers shed some light on the effectiveness of APD's initiative. Between 2004 and 2007, the percentage of people in integrated employment grew from 14% to 23%. However, sustained movement of individuals out of ADT continues to be a challenge. In July of 2008, a year away from the final goal, APD reported 4,869 individuals in integrated employment, a number that was shy of 2008's target of 5,160. One pressing concern is significant funding reductions and increasingly limited resources that have impeded APD from making greater progress up to this point. APD remains committed to reaching its target goals and putting supports in place to ensure continued growth in employment.

Suggestions for Replication

- » Set firm target goals and be clear about parameters, definitions, and expectations. Florida regularly monitors its progress and makes the data available to stakeholders.
- » Create area-specific plans. These plans should take into account the conditions unique to each local area within a state and the objectives that must be met within that area in order to reach the statewide target goals.

**For more information on this practice
contact thinkwork@umb.edu**



Promising Practices is an initiative of the Access to Integrated Employment Project, funded in part by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Administration on Community Living, US Department of Health and Human Services. Access to Integrated Employment 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.

www.ThinkWork.org