



Preliminary Findings and Observations

State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) Project Team Visit
September 10-12 2019

State: Louisiana

Process for development of Findings and Observations

SELN team reviewed:

- Louisiana's Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) responses to the SELN State Strategic Employment Full Assessment
- State policy documents and resource materials
- Participant feedback collected during the SELN site visit focus groups with representatives from the state core internal leadership team, employment service providers, leadership, advocates, Louisiana Rehabilitation service (LRS), Department of Education (DOE), service recipients, self-advocates and family members
- Data sources from the following:
 - SELN Supplement survey (stakeholder) responses
 - SELN Individual and Family survey responses
 - National Core Indicators (NCI) data
 - StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes (2017)
 - Louisiana's 2016-2017 National Core Indicators (NCI) report

SELN Project Team

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Introduction

The SELN is a membership-based network of state intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) agencies committed to making changes in their respective service systems. The SELN is an active and engaged learning community where members meet to connect, collaborate, and share information and lessons learned across state lines and system boundaries.

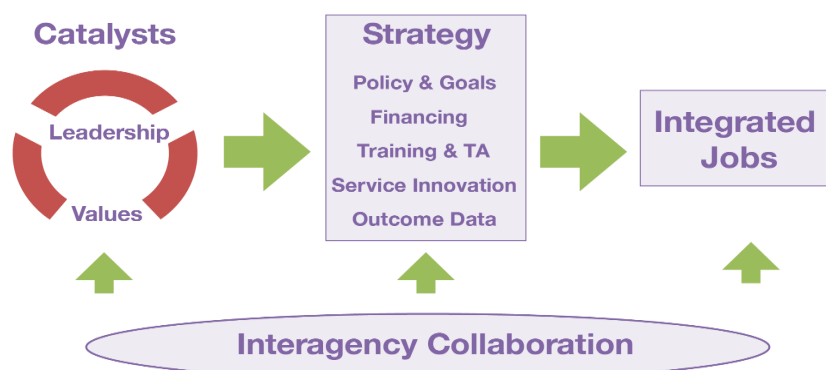
Participating state agencies build cross-community support for pressing employment-related issues and policies at state and federal levels. States commit to work together and engage in a series of activities to analyze key elements in their systems to improve the integrated employment outcomes for their citizens with IDD. States receive customized technical assistance to meet the unique needs of their state based on the current system of supports and goals for improvement.

The SELN project team guides member states through a detailed process to both assist the SELN project team with learning about the state system and to assist the state member with organizing and planning for future system changes needed to increase both those seeking competitive integrated employment and greater community inclusion.

To aid Louisiana in the prioritizing and decision-making process, OCDD completed a review of its system. OCDD staff completed the SELN State Strategic Employment Full Assessment describing the state's infrastructure. OCDD also invited stakeholders, partners and customers to participate in online surveys and in-person focus groups to gather input on current perceptions and experiences. Participants who responded to surveys and in-person focus groups contributed to the goal of developing a better understanding of the context for integrated employment in Louisiana. Information gathered throughout the process contributed to this Findings and Observations report prepared by SELN staff.

Organizing the Report

This report is organized based on the seven key elements in the Higher Performing States Framework, that are essential to improving and achieving success as a system in supporting people to become employed in community jobs. Research suggests that states that have been successful in improving employment outcomes have established a consistent and clear message and policy that prioritize employment outcomes within each element.



Hall et al (2007)

Executive Summary

Key Themes

- (1) Stakeholders including support coordinators, service providers, LREs, and LRS staff do not show a consistent understanding of OCDD policies and services. This is reflected in stakeholder understanding of OCDD employment definitions and priorities, implementation of the settings rule and sequencing of services between OCDD and partner agencies.
- (2) Service definitions and rates are not aligned to incentivize and support the policy goal of increasing the number of people in competitive integrated employment.
- (3) The investment in resources and staff who have responsibility for implementing OCDD employment first policy varies at the local and regional level.
- (4) There are substantial opportunities for increasing OCDD/LRS collaboration including increasing the number of shared providers, establishing consistent provider qualifications, along with a shared investment in training and capacity building and collaboration on the implementation of Section 511.

Priority Action Items

The SELN team recommends early attention to these action areas.

- (1) Develop uniform service definitions for employment and non-work day services across all home and community based services waivers in preparation for the long term movement to a single waiver in the future.
- (2) Review and explore how to update rates for individual supported employment, including extending funding for ongoing (follow-along) supports to the Residential Opportunities Waiver (ROW) and Supports Waiver or clarifying and or reframing the use of the initial job coaching service for this purpose.
- (3) Develop and implement a reliable employment outcome data reporting system.
- (4) Develop a process map and guidance that documents the employment process and addresses sequencing of services between OCDD, LRS, and education.
- (5) Develop guidance for LGEs and support coordination on using existing services to provide follow-along supports to individuals who are employed and have exited LRS services.

Narrative

The report summarizes the results of the review process as “Key Findings” and suggests opportunities for improvement in “Potential Focus Areas.” The state agency and other partners may use the report as the basis for the development of a work plan detailing the outcomes, activities to achieve set goals, and strategies to pursue in the months and years ahead.

- I. **Leadership: Clear and unambiguous commitment to employment in individual community jobs, from top leadership through all levels in the system. Local and state-level administrators are identifiable as champions for employment.**

Key Findings

- a. Louisiana has been working to strengthen competitive integrated employment and community engagement outcomes for all individuals with disabilities as exemplified by:
 - Governor’s Office of Disability Affairs (GODA) *2018 Louisiana Employment First Report*
 - The Louisiana Department of Education Jump Start career and technical education program (2014)
 - Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
 - Louisiana’s Home and Community Based Services Transition Plan, which will no longer allow payment of subminimum wage as of 2020
 - OCDD’s Employment First statement
- b. OCDD and the Louisiana state government as a whole have taken many actions to increase support for employment, which needs to be recognized and celebrated. The recent restoration of rates to 2008 levels has strengthened the provider community. OCDD does recognize that the current rate structure incentivizes group employment and traditional services.
- c. OCDD has established a goal of combining the four current waivers into a single comprehensive waiver. This will provide an opportunity to align service definitions and clarify messaging.
- d. OCDD encourages the local governing entities to establish initiatives to support employment. The “Partners in Employment” initiative in one LGE is working to educate employers and stakeholders on the benefits of employing people with disabilities.
- e. While there is a clear lead staff identified at the state level, the investment in resources and staff who have responsibility for implementing OCDD employment first policy varies at the local and regional level. Implementing the scope of change that OCDD has identified may require additional staff investment at the OCDD

level, and leadership visibility to fully implement and scale the state's employment first goals

- f. State staff and stakeholders recognize how the characteristics of different areas of the state influence the achievement of employment goals, including urban vs rural communities, the pockets of growth around highly skilled oil industry jobs, and transportation options in the general community versus those supported by disability services funding. While state staff recognize these significant regional differences, efforts should focus on the goal to achieve consistency in delivery and outcomes across the state.

Potential Focus Areas

Louisiana currently has several major initiatives around employment; the Supported Employment pilot project to encourage provider transformation, the transformation of facility based work concurrent with ending support for subminimum wage payment and, in the long term, the development of a comprehensive waiver with standard service definitions and comprehensive rate restructuring. In terms of leadership, the following are suggested focus areas to support these initiatives.

- a. Develop an implementation plan for the phase out of financial support of facility-based employment that addresses goals at the individual, support coordination, provider, LGE, and state levels. This plan should clearly establish the state's goals for this service and provide a timeline for full implementation. Develop the infrastructure to support the providers showing a good faith effort to transform their services.
- b. There are examples of good employment practices happening around the state. OCDD should initiate a strategy for identifying and developing emerging leaders to act as ambassadors throughout the stakeholder community. Additional visible leadership at the local and regional levels will be highly beneficial to fully implement and bring the state's employment first goals to scale.
- c. Establish and support a consistent employment leadership resource strategy within each LGE to support strategy and capacity building at the local level. This may be in the form of having an ambassador to become more conversant in employment processes and "cheerleading", represent the LRE in statewide meetings, collect and disseminate local best practices, having someone who can reach out to have questions answered and problems resolved quickly and use the existing employment first network to scale them up to statewide programs.

- d. Establish an employment leadership team to guide planning, policy, and strategy that represents key stakeholders within OCDD and externally.

II. **Strategic Goals and Operating Policies: Employment is identified as the preferred outcome in state developmental disabilities policy and is supported by program goals and operating practices that are clearly designed to achieve that objective.**

Key Findings

- a. OCDD has made concerted efforts in recent years to emphasize the role of integrated employment in people’s lives. The development and inclusion of the “Path to Employment” conversation guide for support coordinators provides a tool for addressing employment as part the Comprehensive Plan of Care.
- b. OCDD recognizes the critical role the service provider network plays in the achievement of employment outcomes and the limitations of the state’s current structure. Since 2016, OCDD has participated in the federal Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) EFSLMP community of practice and the Core State project funding to address provider capacity issues.
- c. Statewide policy, service options, and expectations are not consistently understood throughout the state, *as expressed by the following comments from these representative groups.*
 - Support coordinators and providers do not always understand or use available OCDD employment services, particularly in the area of ongoing supports
 - Support coordinators do not routinely implement a clear employment conversation
 - Support coordinators expressed confusion about prevocational policy changes and do not seem to be preparing for changes in service planning
 - Understanding of state priorities regarding the HCBS settings rule and the definition of employment outcomes varies widely.
 - Few employment providers are dual LRS/OCDD providers.
 - There is not a clearly identified systematic approach to coordination between OCDD and LRS across the LGEs.
 - Support coordinators and providers do not express a consistent understanding of how to leverage and sequence funding across services and agencies, such as linking services across the HCBS waivers and vocational rehabilitation.
- d. Currently, as an outgrowth of the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs (GODA), Louisiana has an Employment First workgroup that has been working on the State as a Model Employer initiative as well as the Employment First Initiative. This group has expressed a desire and willingness to work with state agencies to

increase employment supports.

- e. *OCDD released a position statement and employment definition on July 1, 2011. "Employment will be the primary outcome for all persons receiving OCDD services who are of working age. Employment is characterized by typical jobs with competitive compensation that are fully integrated in the workforce."*
- f. OCDD engages stakeholders to address transformation of "legacy" day services and works to bring stakeholders into the process of transforming services to a more community-based system to meet federal regulations as well as the stated desires of individuals being served. OCDD is committed to the belief that individuals need to have the necessary experiences and knowledge to make an informed choice about employment.
- g. The role and goals of non-work community supports are not yet well defined, and National Core Indicators data suggest that individuals participate in community settings at a low rate.

Potential Focus Areas

- a. Develop, with stakeholder input, a clear process map and guidance that documents the employment process and addresses sequencing of services between OCDD, LRS, and education to assist internal and external stakeholders in navigating the system, working through the planning and service authorization process and addressing how services related to employment will need to fit together for good outcomes.
- b. Develop a communication strategy for OCDD policies and goals for employment services, emphasizing the important role of competitive integrated employment and community participation as priority outcomes of the adult service system.
 - Identify audiences and tailor communication specific to each audience,
 - identify multiple dissemination methods for key messages, and
 - establish clear messaging strategies across a variety of channels (across OCDD, providers, support coordination, individuals and families, etc.) to communicate priorities and assist with accountability.
- c. Develop a strategy for family and potential job seeker outreach. Consider developing success stories for families and other stakeholders, explore how conversations about early expectations and looking for what a person and their family see as a positive steps for a good job in the community through Supporting Families (Charting the LifeCourse), explore finding family members who can support peer to peer connections to brainstorm positive working experiencing, addressing barriers to employment and sharing ideas on using community connections for finding jobs.

- d. Develop a strategy for OCDD and LRS collaboration in support of implementation of Section 511 under the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to engage individuals currently working in 14c (sub-minimum wage) employment who express interest in competitive integrated employment.
- e. Work collaboratively with LRS and other state agencies to develop a new MOU, guided by a goal of seamless transition between Medicaid and LRS funding.
- f. Develop/strengthen written guidance on OCDD expectations for the implementation of prevocational, non-work services, and group supported employment, emphasizing OCDD's vision of competitive integrated employment as a priority outcome of all employment and day services.
- g. Work with the State Medicaid Authority to consider the potential advantages of adding the use of tiered standards in the LA Home and Community-Based Program Statewide Transition Plan, if not already explored.
- h. Identify policy to build capacity in the provider community including:
 - Recruitment of new providers to the state aligned with the goals and outcomes that individuals and families are seeking.
 - Determining what support is needed to assist current providers that are early adopters, enthusiastic about employment, into expanded employment and becoming ambassadors to mentor others.
 - Explore and leverage what may be available through UCEDD, college and community college resources, along with state partner agencies, to assist with professional development or provider reciprocal resource sharing to increase staff competencies.

III. Financing and Contracting Methods: The outcome of employment in integrated community jobs is emphasized and supported through the state's resource allocation formulas, reimbursement methods, and rate-setting practices.

Key Findings

- a. Leadership and stakeholders were clear that service definitions and rates are not aligned with priorities of employment first efforts, nor OCDD's stated goals for employment services. *Through discussions with the various stakeholder groups the following themes were shared and expressed:*
 - Rates do not match priorities and are not consistent across waivers
 - There is limited funding for ongoing supports
 - Rates incentivize large group services. This is apparent when rates are viewed as a rate per direct support staff hour and the needed staff competencies for employment support (see Table below).

- There are no sustainable 1:1 or small group rates with the exception of ISE under the Supports waiver.
- There is currently significant investment in group supported employment in the state.
- Although there is a funding structure for long-term supports using either the rate for initial job coaching (all waivers) or the ISE follow-along rate (NOW waiver), there is a great deal of confusion expressed in the community (individuals, case coordinators, providers, and LRS staff) about the availability of long term supports funding.
- Only the NOW waiver has an explicit funding structure for long term supports.

Table: Current rates by waiver

	NOW		Supports		ROW	
	Rate	Per staff hour	Rate	Per staff hour	Rate	Per staff hour
Day hab 1:8	1.76/15m	\$46.32	2.35/15m	\$75.20	1.85/15m	\$59.20
Day hab 1:1			4.13/15m	16.56		
DH Transp reg	6.00/trip		n/a		6.00/trip	
Prevoc 1:1			4.13/15m	\$16.52		
Prevoc transp regular	n/a		n/a		6.00/trip	
Group SE crew1:8	2.13/15m	\$68.16	46.9/day	\$62.53 (6 hour day)	26.00/2.5 hours	\$83.20
Group SE crew1:3-4			62.57/day	\$41.71 (1:4, 6 hour day)		
Group SE crew1:1-2			77/day	\$25.60 (1:2, 6 hour day)		
Group SE transp regular	6.00/trip		n/a		6.00/trip	
Discovery			4.33/15m	\$17.32		
ISE initial job coaching	7.04/15m	\$28.16	13.00/15m	\$52.00	2.60/15m	\$10.40
ISE follow along	104/month		n/a		n/a	

- b. Transportation challenges were discussed throughout many of the review’s stakeholder meetings and is reported to significantly impact the employment outcomes people can achieve. Findings from these meetings include:
- Individuals using Self-administered Supports are eligible for a Daily Transportation Payment (DTP) that provides mileage reimbursement.
 - The inclusion of transportation as a separately funded service varies by both waiver and service.
 - There is a prevailing assumption that OCDD must support transportation to jobs and, as such, there is limited creative problem solving evident about

alternatives to OCCD-sponsored transportation options. Expanding transportation options will require a collaborative approach.

- Existing transportation funding is closely tied to those individuals receiving a paid service. The understanding of providers is that ““If you use transportation but don’t log into a center-based activity or service you don’t get paid.”
- c. In addition to the level of current rates, there is confusion expressed about billable activities. There will be a great benefit in reviewing the structure of rates including: units of service, non/billable activities, and the ease of using multiple services to support the provision of robust integrated employment services.

Potential Focus Areas

While understanding that rate rebases and increases are subject to appropriations and allocations, the first steps are to determine the definitions and rates in order to begin forward momentum and gain information as to what implementation would take. These steps provide a brief outline of those steps.

- a. Review and develop uniform service definitions across waivers to encourage clarity for people with disabilities, family members, providers and agency personnel.
- b. Establish rates and accompanying policies by service that seek to incentivize competitive integrated employment.
 - Continue work started under the Medicaid Innovative Accelerator Program and complete an analysis of reimbursement strategy and rate structures to incentivize CIE.
 - Complete a review of strategies and funding policies used by states to support employment including rates, units of service, support for indirect (not face-to-face) supports, and non-billable activities.
 - Analyze and model “real world costs” in order to consider staffing employment supports.
 - Consider the role of indirect and non-billable activities in employment support rates
 - Model the financial impact of the draft service codes on a sample of providers and the state budget and review the impact of the changes.
 - Consider modeling these impacts from both a fiscal and programmatic perspective to determine costs, transition and implementation efforts involved in large scale implementation.

- c. Investigate the number of people and the kinds of support needs of individuals currently receiving 24-hour 1:1 supports with a focus on individuals living in their own homes to determine impacts on employment services. This group may need unique strategies for employment. .

IV. Training and Technical Assistance: Investment in the development and maintenance of a strong, competent workforce. Skill-building emphasizes an expectation for employment across job coaches and developers, supervisors, key employment staff, support coordinators, job seekers including young adults who are still in school, and families.

Key Findings

- a. OCDD and the Governor’s Office of Disability Affairs are making a concerted effort to work on the culture in the provider and business communities to support people with disabilities working. There are many regional presentations to stakeholders on the benefits of community-integrated employment. These presentations have a training component, designed to show stakeholders how employment services can work.
- b. OCDD has purchased access to online training using the Direct Course College of Employment Services.
 - OCDD extended the use of CES to include support coordination and requires that support coordinators complete designated CES coursework. Support coordinators stated that some of the required CES modules do not clearly address their needs and completion of modules on topics like job development and support may contribute to support coordinator confusion about their roles.
- c. The Human Development Center at Louisiana State University holds a contract to provide benefits counseling through the SSA Work Incentive Planning and Assistance program. The Human Development Center’s employment first initiative provides 40 hours of employment specialist training based on APSE competencies on a fee basis. The training meets LRS requirements, although it was not clear at the time of the SELN visit if the training has been approved for ACRE certification.

- d. Participation in the ODEP EFSLMP initiative has supported technical assistance to selected providers to support organizational transformation.
- e. Training and technical assistance requirements and initiatives do not appear closely coordinated across OCDD, LRS, and Education. As with many states, OCDD and LRS do not have comparable standards for provider qualifications, which can create barriers in furthering employment.
- f. Many providers are only approved to work with either LRS or OCDD which can complicate the coordination of services and transition between OCDD and LRS funding during the employment process.
- g. OCDD developed a “Pathways to Employment” tool to help guide the conversation between support coordinators and individuals about employment options. This guide includes a tool to track information gathered during the planning phase of services about the employment desires of the individual. This is a positive development and as some stakeholders report wide variation in how support coordinators use the pathways guide, this is an opportunity to review the use and integration of “Pathways” so it is seen as a valuable resource rather than another checklist as can occur without context and continued mentoring.
- h. One component of maintaining the usefulness of training is mentoring, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of best practices. During the onsite meetings, it was reported frequently that there is limited oversight (monitoring) of a support coordinator’s performance. Support coordinators identified a desire for clearer instruction and follow up on how they can assist people to find and keep employment.
- i. In speaking with all the groups during the site visit there was confusion expressed about who had the authority and responsibility for increasing the use of employment services in Louisiana. The different stakeholder groups spoke about not knowing their exact role in the employment initiative was. As in some other states, there can be tensions between providers and support coordinators and in LA, some of the providers said they were not clear if support coordinators accurately reported all outcomes to OCCD. Similarly, some support coordinators shared a belief it was their role to provide job development s and ongoing employment support services due to a goal in their job descriptions to have a certain number of people on their caseload employed.

Potential Focus Areas

- a. Work with state level system partners and the provider network to outline a statewide capacity building and training strategy and consider the development of a learning community to reinforce the state’s current training efforts, assure ongoing opportunities

for practicing skills, and explore the possibility of offering the mentoring needed to provide top notch employment services. Consider the best way to develop local level experts to support the implementation of new skills, establish local level networks to identify and disseminate best practices, and facilitate on going and long term improvements in employment services.

- b. Work through strategies to strengthen and clarify provider qualification requirements. Determine what it would take to establish a clear shared standard for qualified providers across LRS and OCDD along with a shared approach to recognizing qualifications.
- c. Develop a strategy and resource plan for supporting provider transformation and the phaseout of facility based employment and non-work services that sustains and expands the work of the ODEP EFMLP initiative including strategic assessment, planning, restructuring, and internal capacity building. This will include ascertaining what resources, both in terms of funding, staffing and buy-in, that would be needed for such a plan and what may be needed to obtain buy-in and support for its approval and implementation.
- d. *Identify the roles and relationships between employment, day, and residential staff roles in supporting employment. This should be paired with guidance on how these different types of staff could best work together to fully support individuals in their employment and community engagement goals. When outlined, there will likely be a need to develop new processes with concomitant support for the skills the staff will need to learn and guidance as to how staff can best support people across the service environments of residential, day and employment to create more seamless days.*
- e. Review current training requirements and analyze how to develop and what it will take to implement a more streamlined training curriculum for support coordinator competencies to include:
 - Ensuring informed choice and supported decision making
 - Engaging in employment conversations
 - How to use the array of employment services offered by each system (including the role of the VR system for those needing long-term employment supports)
 - Supporting experiences that create a path toward employment
 - Strong supervisory leadership and mentoring

V. Interagency Collaboration: Building relationships with advocates, families, businesses, civic groups, key state and local agency partners (vocational rehabilitation, education, mental health, state Medicaid agency) and removing barriers to employment supports.

Key Findings

- a. OCDD has worked to build productive, collaborative activities with staff from the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) at the LGE level, and recognizes a statewide effort is necessary. Recently the Department of Education (DOE) has joined collaborative work on employment options, and this creates an opportunity. This effort is key to Louisiana achieving increased economic and engagement outcomes for people with IDD.
- b. There is an existing MOU between OCDD and LRS that emphasizes both agencies' commitment to "improve competitive and integrated employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities in Louisiana". Each of the agencies has agreed to work in partnership and each has committed to listed actions. This MOU expires in June of 2020.
- c. The leadership of both LRS and OCDD support increasing opportunities for people with disabilities to work in their community. There are concerns expressed as to whether this shared focus is consistently understood and embraced at the local levels. It was shared that some of the agreed-upon actions in the MOU are not happening uniformly across the state.
- d. It was noted that there is variable LRS-OCDD coordination and sequencing of services across LGEs. There are few dual providers and most LRS providers are not Medicaid providers. As mentioned earlier, there seems to be confusion about how to use and sequence available employment services in general across the two agencies with a particular issue related to how to support a person from LRS services into ongoing waiver funding supports to maintain employment.
- e. In some cases OCDD providers have shared difficulties becoming qualified to provide LRS services. There is a belief from some that LRS is not willing to "accept DD only providers." LRS in turn indicates that specialization is acceptable, but there are concerns about providers who are unwilling to accept outside referrals for job placement.
- f. There is great benefit in creating a strong connection between special education, LRS vocational services, and waiver support services. When these three types of support exist strongly together, with clear procedures to follow to support a transitional aged person, families are less likely to become frustrated and there is a greater likelihood of success.

Potential Focus Areas

- a. Develop a clear process map and guidance that addresses sequencing of services between LRS and OCDD and the department of Education and clearly identifies support options available and sources at each stage of the employment process.
- b. Develop a process and relationship to increase the collaboration with other state entities to assist in the establishment of uniform state policies and practices for employment services (within and outside OCDD). These can then be carried into a new MOU that emphasizes a seamless flow of employment services and other supports for the individual.
- c. Develop a plan that creates opportunities to expand the number of joint OCDD/LRS providers. Consider streamlining approval processes, and, as noted above, determine how to develop shared standards for training and provider qualifications.
- d. Collaborate with the Governor's taskforce initiative to analyze how it may be possible to establish Louisiana as Model Employer of People with Disabilities and educate business community on the value of hiring people with disabilities. This may be a longer term recommendation after the capacity areas are first addressed and anchored. .

VI. Services and Service Innovations: Service definitions and support strategies are structured and aligned to facilitate the delivery of employment supports to all individuals with developmental disabilities regardless of the intensity of their needs. Non-work supports encourage individuals to become involved in typical adult life activities, building employment skills, and community service and volunteering opportunities.

Key Findings

- a. There are currently employment and day habilitation services (i.e., non-residential services) in the three adult I/DD HCBS waivers (NOW, ROW, and Supports Waiver). The non-residential services in each of these waivers have different definitions, types of services, and rates of pay, which can create difficulties for providers and individuals to navigate the system and determine the appropriate service to meet a person's needs in the area of employment. OCDD has committed to develop a system that helps people achieve competitive employment and integrated, fully inclusive day activities. OCDD shared that rates will be developed for these services based on current guidance from CMS regarding these activities. OCDD shared their understanding of potential fiscal impacts associated with this rate development, and OCDD thinks that this may be accomplished through waiver efficiencies and other means of financing if necessary.

- b. Stakeholders shared that when individuals express interest in integrated employment they are generally routed through VR regardless of the individual’s level of preparation for engaging in the employment process. OCDD has developed path to employment materials, but support coordinators noted that this strategy is sometimes used as a “check the box” process rather than for full conversations in order to be able to access waiver supports. This is in contrast to making a determination to refer the individual to VR after a discussion about where the individual is on the employment pathway and which system is best suited to assist the individual at this point in time.
- c. Consistent with federal mandates, LRS has shifted to providing Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for youth in school that include: job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on post-secondary opportunities, workplace readiness training and training on self-advocacy. Although much effort has occurred to implement Pre-Employment Transition Services called for by WIOA, there is still confusion expressed related to which system (e.g., education or DVR) to access for employment supports and at what time during transition planning.
- d. The delivery of employment services varies across the state due to factors such as staffing resources, practitioner skill level, and access to adequate funding to serve the geographic area. There are also a limited number of providers who have expressed willingness to be joint VR and DSPD providers.
- e. Although there are some resources for benefits planning to give assistance related to building economic self-sufficiency, asset management, there is a limited capacity for benefits management across the state and across different service agencies. This may be exacerbated as the resources available are not widely understood and it is expressed they are not widely used.
- f. OCDD is setting expectations for day services providers to increase individuals’ access to the community. Providers have been directed to provide a plan for transition detailing how they will become compliant with HCBS settings requirements.

Potential Focus Areas

- a. Work with internal and external stakeholders to develop a clearly understood pathway to ongoing supports that is understood by LGE, Provider, LRS, and support coordination staff and that each stakeholder feels comfortable with their role as well as with the roles of others.
- b. OCDD can establish working groups with other state agencies with input from stakeholders to develop a new MOU which focus on aligning services provided by different agencies across a person’s work life. These workgroups can draw from model agreements in other states and still fit the context of LA.

- c. OCCD should review support coordination resources to ensure there are guidelines, toolkits and conversation guides to support pathways to employment addressing:
 - How and when to interface with service providers and other service systems and for what purposes,
 - What kinds of information on the topic of benefits planning would be helpful to dispel myths and provide enough information for the family until they meet with a benefits counselor,
 - How to help individuals gain experiences and grow beyond their current comfort zone, and
 - The importance of advocacy within their roles as support coordinators.
 - Resource sheets and conversation guides to assist with these roles

VII. Employment Performance Measurement, Quality Assurance and Program Oversight: Comprehensive data systems are used to measure progress, benchmark performance, and document outcomes. Information is gathered on key indicators across employment and other related systems and is used to evaluate and track results, inform policy, and improve provider contracts and service agreements. Data are shared with other state agencies to report results and improve quality.

Key Findings

- a. Stakeholders and OCDD staff expressed that they do not feel confidence in the existing system of collecting employment outcome data. This lack of consistency is reflected in part by inconsistency in data reported to national initiatives such as National Core Indicators and the Institute for Community Inclusion National Survey of State IDD Agency Day and Employment Services.
- b. There is misunderstanding in the support coordinator community on what data is required to be collected around employment. Providers report that they share outcome data with support coordinators but are not always sure if or what information is shared with OCDD.

Potential Focus Areas

- a. Research how to develop a reliable employment outcome data reporting system within OCDD in collaboration with service providers and support coordination to track individual outcomes and system quality measures. Initiate a thorough review of the current data management system capacity with a goal to determine future strategy toward employment and community engagement outcomes:
 - Determine the needed collection frequency (e.g., bi-annually, monthly, etc.)

- Use the development process to communicate outcome priorities
 - Develop public reporting of employment participation and outcomes at the provider and regional levels
 - Integrate employment outcomes into provider quality review processes. It is understood that data collection strategies may take time and/or resources depending on the current resources and data systems available. Having an implementation plan with steps that can be taken quickly can begin the process and show the importance of having metrics while larger scale implementation is considered and planned for with additional time and/or related resources.
- b. Work toward establishing a strategy for regular and transparent reporting and use of employment outcome data to drive decision making. Establish performance goals at the provider, LRE, Support Coordination agency and state levels. Begin by sharing the importance and purpose of such strategies and help others understand why the reporting is of benefit. This should assist in moving such an agenda forward.
- c. Explore how to build the capacity to enter into data sharing agreements with other systems such as LGEs, LRS, Workforce Development, department of Education, and Medicaid to understand who is seeking what supports, service utilization, quality management, and the relationship to what OCDD offers.

State Employment Leadership Network



The State Employment Leadership Network is a network of state intellectual and developmental disability agencies working together to improve employment outcomes for individuals. The SELN is a joint program of the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services.

www.seln.org
NASDDDS