

Agency for Persons with Disabilities Area 14 Polk, Hardee & Highland's Counties Final 5-year Initiative Plan Update

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Area 14, is dedicated to the outcome of having all Floridians who want to work in jobs obtaining employment that will fulfill the needs of the employee and employer. To this end, Area 14 is committed to working with the business community, APD customers, parents, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Workforce, Waiver Support Coordinators, local school systems, and county governments in enhancing work opportunities for people with disabilities.

OVERVIEW

A survey conducted in 2003 found that 70% of people with developmental disabilities who were not working wanted a job. Armed with this data and additional national data that show that people with developmental disabilities who work have better personal outcomes than those who do not, the Agency developed a plan:

- 1) to enable at least 50% of adults (18-55) receiving APD-funded day services, such as day activity or employment related services, from the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) or any community based employment as of 7/1/2004 to achieve integrated employment by 7/1/2009

Note: An adult aged 18-55 receiving any funded day service can be through either Non Residential Support Services (NRSS), Adult Day Training (ADT) or Supported Employment (SE)) through APD for individuals on waivers and individuals funded through General Revenue (GR)

STRATEGY

Identify system barriers for people with disabilities in gaining employment and recommend positive changes that will allow more people opportunities to obtain integrated community jobs. Approaches will include identifying and addressing training needs of professionals, collaboration of community partners through memorandums of understanding and accountability to employment outcomes, special projects to address specific local needs, education of stakeholders including parents, regarding employment opportunities and asset development for people with disabilities.

GOAL #1: Enable at least 50% of adults (18-55) receiving APD-funded day services, as of 7/1/2004 to achieve integrated employment by 7/1/2009

ACTION STEPS: Collect data from AREA 14 providers to monitor employment outcomes and input data into the Supported Employment Tracking System (SETS) quarterly.

ACCOUNTABLE: Jennifer Monje, Supported Employment Liaison, is accountable to procure employment data and input results. Employment data collected from Ridge Area Arc, D.A.B Support Services, Goodwill Industries, Waiver Support Coordinators and GR Unit 875 Human Services Counselor III's (HSCIII's) staff.

STATUS/OUTCOMES: Increase # people that have jobs as of 7/1/2004 (28) as of 05/19/09 (94).

Area	Five-Year Target (Total maintaining employment by 6/30/09)	Baseline (# of people that have a job as of 7/1/2004)	Increase % of people working compared to 7/1/2004	# of people maintaining employment as of 7/21/2009	# over or under goal for FY2008-09
14	145	28	246%	97	-48
STATEWIDE	5842	2428	112%	5143	-699

“Though Area 14 missed their goal by 48 individuals, they had the highest percent of increase in the number of individuals employed---246%! WOW” (Source: APD Central Office, Sylvia Peacock)

Area	#ADT Recipients	5 Year Goal	5% Goal Per Year	#ADT recipients that have a job as of 7/21/2009	Percent of 5 Year Goal	Percent of Baseline Employed
14	351	87	18	24	27.59%	6.84%
Total	9034	2254	453	960	42.59%	10.63%

“No Area met the ADT goals. The good news is that statewide 960 individuals who were in an ADT at the beginning of the 5-year initiative are now working in competitive employment in their community. That may not have happened without the efforts made through the initiative. Congratulations!” (Source: APD Central Office, Sylvia Peacock)

Goal # 2 To address local community SE projects

Action Steps: There are currently (9) local programs/projects that are addressing specific barriers to employment of people with disabilities.

- a) 2008/2009 Supported Employment (SE) Project
- b) Direct Order (DO) for SE Services
- c) Interagency Counsel for Adult Transition Services (ICATS)
- d) Disability Mentoring Day (DMD)
- e) Florida Benefits Information Resource Network (F-BIRN)
- f) Start-Up Florida
- g) Employment Webinars
- h) Polk County Strategic Planning Team
- i) Supported Employment Pre-Service Training

Persons Accountable: Each project will be broken down with a list of stakeholders.

Status/Outcomes: Listed under each project

(Project A) Supported Employment General Revenue Project for FY 2008-2009

Persons Accountable: APD, Ridge Area Arc, D.A.B. Services, HSCIII's

Status/Outcomes:

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities is committed to increasing the number of individuals employed in integrated settings in the community. This project offered limited funding for employment services to assist individuals (**on the APD wait list only**) in finding a job or maintaining a current job. The total cost for providing any one service or combination of services could not exceed \$5000.00 annually without prior written approval. Funds could be used for services such as for supported employment and employment related transportation. The provision of services must have been provided before June 30, 2009 in order to use this fiscal year's funding. Under this project the individual must be at least 18 years of age, if they have graduated with a regular diploma, or 22 years of age, if they have finished school with a special diploma.

*Under this project we had enough funds to provide SE services to 4 individuals.
Out of those 4 individuals, 3 are currently working.*

(Project B) Direct Order for SE Services

Persons Accountable:

Jennifer Monje (Contract Manager), Maria Bustamante (Budget Specialist), Eric Olsen (Program Administrator), Kelly McDavid (Administrative Assistant) Ridge Area Arc (Provider), APD and DCF Contract Oversight Unit (COU)

Status/Outcomes: DO # A0CB4B for SE Services

Many individuals with developmental disabilities who are not working want a job. Supported employment services provide training and assistance in a variety of activities to support individuals with developmental disabilities in accessing and maintaining paid employment.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of qualified supported employment providers of services in Polk County to serve the Developmentally Disabled population in an effort to obtain and maintain employment. Ridge Area Arc Employment Services is CARF accredited and is recognized as a provider of good reputation. Having a Supported Employment Provider such as RIDGE provide supported employment coaching services will assist in the acquisition, retention, or improvement of skills related to accessing and maintaining such employment.

In Supported Employment, the individual is assisted in securing employment according to their desired outcomes, including the type of work environment, activities, hours of work, level of pay and supports needed. With the assistance of the Supported Employment Provider, not only will it enhance community integration but it will allow individuals to be assisted in securing employment according to their desired outcomes.

*There are currently 13 individuals receiving services under this Direct Order.
Six of them are currently working and steady referrals are being made.*

(Project C) Interagency Council for Adult Transition Services
ICATS

Persons Accountable:

Jennifer Monje, Supported Employment Liaison for the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), John Hurt, Site Manager for the Center for Independent

Living (CIL) Carlos Battles, Area 14's local Community Work Incentive Coordinator (C-WIC) for Abilities. Victor Stewart, VR Counselor for the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Jackie Small, Disability Program Navigator (DPN) for Polk Works One-Stop Center. Cathy Lerner, Transition Program for the PCSB and Kathy Mullens, Florida Diagnostic Learning Resources System (FDLRS), Lori Reed, Goodwill Industries, Annita Nall, Florida Baptist Children's Home.

Status/Outcomes:

Interagency relations refer to the development and implementation of a coordinated, multi-disciplinary, interagency, intervention services system for students and adults with disabilities and their families. The Interagency Council for Adult Transition Services in Area 14 is committed to serving adults and students with disabilities in Polk County. Transition services may include: education, training, employment, health, social relationships, community involvement and independent living skills, housing and social service benefits. Transitioning from school to post school life is challenging and it takes the community agencies to ease with the process.

Meeting updates:

(November 13, 2008)

DMD promotional material was presented to members of ICATS. The Polk County School Board (PCSB) along with Florida Diagnostic Learning Resources System (FDLRS) both agreed to work in Partnership with APD and the Center for Independent Living (CIL) in the 2008 DMD activities for Polk County.

(January 8, 2009)

The success of Polk County's DMD Kick-off was presented in a Power Point presentation to members of ICATS.

(March 12, 2009)

Information regarding Transition needs was discussed and transition to work referral forms were handed out at this meeting. The importance of staying involved in the transition process was stressed to ensure that the needs and goals of individuals transitioning out of high school are being addressed so that they can prepare for life after high school.

(July 24, 2009)

2009 DMD promotional material was presented to ICATS. Discussion regarding implementing DMD into the By Laws, information pertaining to the Ticket-to-Work program and information on becoming an Employment Network (EN) were discussed at this meeting.

Transitional Referrals are being referred through ICATS and VR!

(Project D) Disability Mentoring Day (DMD)

Persons Accountable:

APD, PCSB, VR, University of South Florida (USF), BLN, Providers, Students, Adults w/ Disabilities, Abilities, CIL, Chamber of Commerce, Bright House Networks, Publix, Lakeland Regional Medical Center (LRMC), FDLRS, Sam's Club, Big Lots, Walgreens, SunTrust Bank, Able Trust, AAPD

Status/Outcomes:

Through a collaborative effort between statewide partners and local committees, on October 15th 2008, Polk County had its first Polk County Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) Kick-Off at the University of South Florida Technology Building in Lakeland. Publix Head Quarters in Lakeland was generous enough to host a continental breakfast for our event. We had over ninety mentee applications submitted to participate in DMD activities that day. Many students and adult job seekers had the opportunity to be matched with employers for the day for an on-site job shadowing experience in an effort to promote career development through hands-on career exploration, internships, and employment opportunities. Many mentee applications were submitted to us from transition students within the Polk County School District and by adults with disabilities from several Agencies. There were keynote speakers, food, gifts for the mentees, and certificates of appreciation for our mentees as well as mentors. Some of the major local business partners that participated this year were Bright House Networks, Publix, SunTrust Bank, Lakeland Regional Medical Center, the Polk County School Board, Walgreen's, Big Lots and SAM'S. This was a great experience for the many individuals that participated. It was a successful event that targeted career skills for improvement, helped individuals explore possible career paths, and it developed lasting mentoring relationships whom many agreed to participate again next year.

Area 14 had 38 transition students participate in DMD activities last year. Southeastern University participated, University of South Florida participated, Travis Career Center participated, Warner Southern College participated and Ridge Career Center participated. We had 42 job-seekers participate that ranged from several of our Adult Day Training (ADT) programs, APD wait list, VR offices as well as our One Stop office.

- We had DMD exposure to corporate contacts from our BLN. We were guest speakers at several workshops and BLN meetings. We were able to introduce sponsoring corporations and encouraged those who wished to be more involved to do so.
- We presented DMD material at Provider Meetings and Monthly Waiver Support Coordinator's Meetings.
- We had media relations recognition through :
 - a. The Champion Newsletter
 - b. APD Area 14's Newsletter
 - c. Online: News Chief and APD Website
 - d. Lakeland Chamber of Commerce

Area 14 had over 90 mentees participate in 2008 DMD activities.

(Project E) FLORIDA BENEFITS INFORMATION RESOURCE
NETWORK
F-BIRN

Persons Accountable:

F-BIRN is composed of a diverse group of federal, state and local employees who have completed intensive training through the National Disability Institute. For a listing of current members, go to <http://apd.myflorida.com/employment/fbirn.htm>

Benefit professionals include:

- Work Incentives Planning Assistance- WIPAs (Subcontractors with SSA)
- Work Incentives Liaisons(Located in SSA field offices)
- Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) Cadre,(Located in Birmingham, AL)
- Area Work Incentives Coordinators-AWICs (Located in Tampa and Brevard)
- Protection and Advocacy of Beneficiaries of Social Security (Housed in the Advocacy Center)

Status/Outcomes:

The objective of the Florida Benefits Information Resource Network (F-BIRN) is to assist people with disabilities in locating and utilizing professionals who are trained to assist people in effectively managing their benefits.

Jennifer Monje, Area 14's SE Liaison, is a member of the Florida Benefits Information Resource Network (F-BIRN). She is qualified to assist persons with disabilities in finding and utilizing professionals who are trained and certified to assist individuals with disabilities so they can effectively manage their benefits. F-BIRN has assisted numerous individuals in Area 14 who were in jeopardy of losing services due to either a pay back situation, over payment issues or because of Medicaid reinstatement issues. The services that many of the individuals we serve in Area 14 are critical in making sure that their health and safety is maintained. Thanks to the commitment of other F-BIRN members, all issues so far have been resolved!!! Had these issues not been resolved, it could have resulted in the loss of services which could have been detrimental to many!

(Project F) Start-Up Florida

Persons Accountable:

APD, Start-Up Florida, Griffin & Hammis Associates LLC, NDI, Individuals Receiving Services, Providers, VR, SSA, Abilities, Division Of Education (DOE)

Status/Outcomes:

The Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) along with, Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities, and the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities-UCEDD at the University of South Florida are funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (DOL/ODEP) to study the impact of three self-employment models on youth and adults with disabilities. The end purpose of Start-Up Florida is to build on the unique strengths of its state's disability and self-employment systems by leveraging public and private resources to design, test, and build a sustainable and replicable model that expands self-employment choices for individuals with disabilities.

Start-Up Florida Self-Employment Models consist of the following three models:

1. METTA Model: Micro-Enterprise Training and Technical Assistance

METTA is a capacity-building program that provides intensive training and technical assistance to individuals with disabilities through Business Design

Teams that are composed of family members and friends, in addition to representatives from community organizations.

METTA Modules include:

1. Targeting the Business Concept ~ Discovery
2. Researching the Business Concept: Market Research & Benefits Analysis
3. Marketing and Financing Your Business
4. Completing the Business Plan

The last session was Session 4 of the Self-Employment Series “Completing the Business Plan”. It was presented by Tammara Geary, consultant and Lead Associate, Griffin Hammis Associates, LLC. APD hosted this training in Area 14 on May 14th, 2009 from 9:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M. This training focused on completing the business plan. Prior sessions focused on doing necessary research, determining feasibility, analyzing benefits, developing fact-based business financials, and gathering all the information needed to complete the business plan. This session focused on the components of the business plan including a review of concepts and researched information to be included in each section.

2. Fast Trac Model:

The National Entrepreneurial Training Program was developed by the Kauffman Foundation, and coordinated with Workforce One-Stop Career Center4s and local Small Business Development Centers. There are purchased instructors and classes at each site, it is coordinated with local Workforce One-Stop Career Centers and Veterans staff and is classroom-based training.

3. BOSS Curriculum Model – Bridging Opportunities to self-Sufficiency

BOSS is a curriculum that provides professionals with disabilities the tools to identify and create micro-enterprise opportunities with individuals with disabilities. It is available in a print (manual) and CD format. BOSS includes an overview of strategies for developing and implementing the self-employment process as well sample forms, training materials and resources.

Area 14 has participated in all of these Models. Several Individuals Receiving Services in Area 14 including friends, family and staff from both APD and other Agencies have also attended these trainings.. Leila’s Seasonal Wreaths and Ian’s Arts are two success stories in Area 14. They have presented their business concept at the Family Café this past June of 2009 and will be attending the 2009 Florida APSE Conference in August of 2009. Last years APSE Conference was cancelled due to severe weather conditions. One of our entrepreneurs in Area 14 was chosen to receive the “Supported Employee of the

Year Award. Since they could not present it last year, they will be presenting it this year!!

(Project G) Available Webinars in Area 14

Persons Accountable:

APD, Able Trust, VR, Providers, SSA, Individuals Receiving Services, DOE

Status/Outcomes:

Area 14 is participating in several Training Webinar series. On July 10, 2009 Area 14 hosted a Ticket to Work Training Webinar Series by the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the CESSI Division of Axiom, the Ticket to Work Program Manager for Recruitment and Outreach (PMRO) for service providers that are interested in becoming an Employment Network (EN) and current ENs to understand the support available from SSA, PMRO, and MAXIMUS, the Ticket to Work Operation Support Manager.

Webinar objectives:

- Provide an overview of the Ticket to Work Program
- Announce and review the *NEW Service Provider as an EN Handbook*
- Discuss Partnership Plus and highlight the NEW Partnership Plus Online Toolkit
- Discover how to apply to become an EN
- Learn about support and training opportunities for all EN's

We are also now in the third and final year of our self-employment initiative, Start-Up/Florida. This initiative, funded by the Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (DOL/ODEP), is a demonstration project that has geographical restrictions limiting training and technical assistance to future entrepreneurs residing in four counties: Broward, Dade, Polk and Duval.

Since there is a need for training both APD staff and community providers on self-employment, Start-Up/Florida will be offering a series of teleconferences in 2009 on topics relevant to self-employment. These teleconferences will be open to all area offices.

Working with our Start-Up/USA consultants, Griffin-Hammis & Associates, we will be able to broadcast the teleconferences to nine (9) sites at any one time. Polk County is one of those sites.

Topics include:

- ◆ Discovery
- ◆ Evaluating the Business Idea and Getting Started

- ◆ Business Financing – How Do I Fund the Business?
 - ◆ Writing the Business Plan
- ◆ Using Social Security Work Incentives in Small Business Development

Area 14 has two Adult Day Training (ADT) Centers currently looking into becoming an EN!!

(Project H) Polk County Strategic Planning Team

Persons Accountable:

Jennifer Monje, APD
 Jackie Small, Polk Works
 John Hurt, CIL
 Persa Oquendo, VR
 Howard Bell, Advocacy Center
 Jeffrey Horvate, APD
 Josephine Hunt, Independent Support Coordinator (ISC)
 Terry Millican, CFAII
 Ian Millican, Potential Business Owner (PBO)
 Manyvone Champavannarath, Person Receiving Services (PRS)
 Carlos Battles, Work Incentive Planning Assistance (WIPA)
 Cathy Lerner, PCSB
 Debra Noel, APD

Status/Outcomes:

The Polk County Strategic Planning Team was developed to identify the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats to self-employment efforts in Polk County. The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and the University of South Florida are working together under the Micro Enterprise Training and Technical Assistance Project. This project identifies and helps to develop strategic plans that will ensure continued access to and education about micro-enterprise for individuals with developmental disabilities.

The main goal of the Team is to support micro-enterprise opportunities for persons with disabilities within Polk County by creating an atmosphere of knowledge and collaboration. The following objectives were identified:

Tools:

- To create a website – address will be www.selfemploymentaccess.org
- To create a network with local resources to explain what our mission is and to include them on the website.

Finance & Budgets:

- Make information readily available
- Information on Individual Development Accounts
- Networking by seasoned business owners
- METTA training both sides of Polk County

General Information:

- Address accessibility training needs for persons with disabilities
- Web-based training on how to start your own business

Supports

- Identify a Local Review Committee (LRC) to provide supports and sustainability
- To identify potential members to be involved with the METTA project
- To establish an inaugural meeting / kickoff for the METTA advisory group.

Training

- Identify training needs of the community (create survey)
- Identify training resources available through corporations

Members of the Polk County Strategic Planning Team have a 20 month Action plan in place to see that the following is met:

Tools:

- *Submit information to committee for approval.*

Finances & Budgets:

- *Information placed on website.*

Supports:

- *Advisory committee meeting held.*

Training:

- *Begin to implement training plan.*

(Project I) Supported Employment Pre-Service Training

Persons Accountable:

Targeted audiences included but was not limited to independent employment consultants or job coaches; personnel providing or considering the provision of employment services to individuals with disabilities, including supervisory staff; people with disabilities and their families; school transition personnel; APD Area Office staff; Vocational Rehabilitation staff; support coordinators; supported living staff as well as residential staff.

Status/Outcomes:

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities funded a Supported Employment Pre-Service Training through the MIG (Medicaid Infrastructure Grant) on July 16 & 17 at the Colonial Bank in Bartow. We had a great turn out of about fifty individuals attend this two day training that was provided by Leslie Wilson, President of Wilson Resources, Inc. (WRI).

She covered a wide range of topics from values and philosophy, marketing, creating a business image, customer service, and effective interviewing and coaching. This training was free of charge and WRI will be sending those who successfully completed the Supported Employment (SE) class a certificate for 12 hours of training. In order for those who attended this training to become certified as an employment specialist in the state of Florida, they had to also attend the two-day National Disability Institute (NDI) Social Security Work Incentives Training (SSWI) that was held at the Bob Crawford Agriculture Building on September 26 & 27 in Bartow.

Jennifer Monje, Area 14's SE Liaison has completed both trainings and has completed and passed the Leslie Wilson's Train-the-Trainer curriculum for Supported Employment. She will be taking the Social Security Train-the Trainer training in October of 2009. After completion, she will be able to train new providers who are interested in providing SE services or providers who are wishing to expand the services that they are currently providing to Individuals receiving services in our Area.

Action Steps Previous reported goals and updates as of June 2009	Person Accountable	When	Status
Present 5 Year Initiative to Area 14 WSC's & HSC III's	Eric Olsen	6/1/2004	Completed: 6/3/2004
Actively participate in the Polk County BLN Kick-Off 2004	Eric Olsen	6/1/2004	Completed: 6/1/2004
Develop Business Leadership Network (BLN) for Polk County with the assistance of Wilson Resources, Inc. **** See Polk County BLN attachment****	Jennifer Monje & Eric Olsen	6/1/2004	<p>Completed: on 11/14/05 by Eric Olsen</p> <p>7/28/09 - Ongoing: Jennifer Monje continues to attend quarterly BLN meetings. The last meeting was held on February 6, 2009. It was held at the Polk Museum in Lakeland. The BLN is a peer-to-peer membership group of local employees seeking resources to recruit, hire and market to persons with disabilities. Jennifer Monje spoke about the success of Polk County's first DMD Kick-off and once again thanked all who participated. A slideshow of the event was shown as well. Next BLN meeting is scheduled for August 14th 2009.</p> <p>We continue to have meetings with "Potential" BLN Members. The BLN packets continue to be a big part of our strategy tool in marketing Employment. Documentation remains the same: Information on what a Business Leadership Network (BLN) is? The BLN's Mission Statement, information on Polk Counties Business Leadership Network, Business Leadership Network Contact information Forms, Employer Incentives such as information on The Business Leadership Network 2007 Internship Program and it's application to join the BLN, The Work Opportunity Tax Credit and a survey packet from the "Able Trust's Florida Business Leadership Network..(FBLN)</p>
Meet with ADT Providers to discuss 5-Year plan	Jennifer Monje	6/9/2004	<p>Ongoing: Jennifer Monje continues to assist individuals in ADT's wanting to seek employment opportunities. Several Employment workshops have been conducted at these ADT's (AFI, Goodwill, Visions and Florida Baptist Children Homes.)</p> <p>Information has been presented to ADT providers at Provider meetings as well.</p>
Meet with local and regional VR staff to discuss capacity issues and planning objectives	Jennifer Monje	06/1/2004	<p>07/28/2009 - Ongoing: Jennifer Monje continues to meet with local and regional VR staff to discuss capacity issues and planning objectives either through meetings, conferences or emails. An Outreach event with VR was conducted on February 26, 2009 and was hosted by Polk Works One Stop Center here at Area 14 Headquarters.</p>
Include 5-Year plan as an on-going agenda topic for monthly WSC meetings	Jennifer Monje		<p>07/28/2009 - Ongoing: Continue to update providers on Area 14's 5- Year Plan at monthly WSC Meetings. Last WSC meeting was on July 2, 2009. Next meeting is scheduled for August 6, 2009 where Jennifer Monje will provide statistics on Area 14's Final 5 Year Employment Initiative Plan.</p>

Action Steps Previous reported goals and updates as of June 2009	Person Accountable	When	Status
Utilize available trainings and community forums to continue to involve APD staff in employment-related events	Jennifer Monje & Sara Howerton	06/01/2004	Ongoing: See Special Projects
II. Major Task: Appropriately develop and manage systems to collect and track data on employment indicators to ensure on-going progress consistent with DDP performance indicators			
Train and require WSC's and HSC III's to consistently collect data to identify persons desiring employment including identifying the number of people by county, providing data to VR and other partners for planning, using data for APD to assist WSC's in planning targets and using data to set district specific targets	Jennifer Monje	06/01/2004	Ongoing: See special projects for all trainings. Area 14 continues to collect SE data from ADT and SE Providers. Data Collection Update forms continue to be sent out to WSC's either electronically or at monthly WSC Meetings. They are being asked to submit these forms on a monthly basis. Once this data is collected, it is inputted into the Supported Employment Tracking System (SETS)
Participate in Multi-Agency Work Group on Discovery Process for student's transitioning from High School.	Jennifer Monje Partners in Transition Project, APD, VR, SE providers, USF, WSC's, HSC III's, Abilities, FDLRS, CIL	11/9/2006	Ongoing: Trainings in Area 14 continue. Area 14 has a good working relationship with the Polk County School Board (PCSB) Transition Facilitator Cathy Lerner. Jennifer Monje continues to attend the Interagency Council for Adult Transition Services (ICATS) meetings. (See special Project for more information on ICATS) many transition students in Polk County participated in Polk County's 2008 first DMD-Kick-Off (See Special Project for more information on this event).
Identify root causes that are largest barriers to people achieving employment outcomes	Jennifer Monje		Ongoing: Monthly contact w/ VR and other agencies continue. Monthly WSC meetings are held to discuss these issues. Biggest barrier continue to be transportation. Other areas of concern such as with benefits, work incentives and lack of trained SE providers are being addressed through the several projects mentioned earlier in this report. (Please see Special Projects)
Identify strategies to remove or mitigate barriers to employment outcomes, including developing work opportunities, ensuring adequate numbers of SE coaches and WSC's following through with VR.	Jennifer Monje, Eric Olsen, Carla Bettis, VR	06/1/2004	Ongoing: As mentioned previously, monthly meetings for any solutions to barriers that might arise continue. Area 14 continues to broaden APD's network by educating staff on different transition programs that might be offered to us. All providers are regularly encouraged to consider providing/expanding supported employment services. Area 14 is working on increasing the availability of Supported Employment coaches by enrolling experienced providers. (Please see Special Projects section of this report)

Coordinating SE Services for individuals who are currently on the waitlist by utilizing available GR funds to connect individuals to community based employment.	Jennifer Monje, HSCIII'S, Ridge Area Arc, D.A.B. Support Services	06/01/2004	Ongoing: Area 14's SE Liaison continues to utilize funds and resources to assist with transition through the 2008-2009 Supported Employment (SE) General Revenue (GR) Project. (Please see Special Projects for this project as well as for the Direct Order for SE services that is now being implemented in Area 14)
III. Major Task: Collaborate effectively and efficiently with partner agencies, people receiving services and families to ensure continuous employment initiative is priority			
Revise and implement Interagency Agreements between APD, Vocational Rehabilitation, DOE/School Systems, etc.	E. Olsen	1/1/2005	Completed
Establish on-going and stable communications with state, district, providers, Delmarva, BLN to address issues and barriers to employment	Jennifer Monje and Eric Olsen	11/29/2005	Ongoing: Quarterly BLN meetings continue. (Please see BLN section of this report)
Ensure a APD representative actively participates in local employment-related programs: Able Trust, Partners in Transition/ICATS, BLN, Center for Independent Living, Discovery Project.	Jennifer Monje	06/1/2004	Ongoing: (Please see Special Projects section of this report)
Develop plan for increased involvement of natural supports for finding, developing and maintaining employment	Jennifer Monje	06/1/2004	Ongoing: Monthly meetings between APD, WSC's HSC III's and VR continue. APD continues to maintain a good relationship w/VR Staff. GR support staff continues to educate families about accessing and building natural supports to sustain employment.
IV. Major Task: Provide on-going training, technical assistance, encouragement and support to continue a strong, forward movement to achieve 5-year plan			
Conduct district meetings or VTC/Conference calls to include support coordinators, VR counselors, providers, school personnel, DD/VR staff, etc.	Jennifer Monje, VR, PCSB	06/1/2004	Ongoing: (Please see Special Projects section of this report)

Action Steps Previous reported goals and updates as of June 2009	Person Accountable	When	Status
Distribute regular E-Bulletins and other means of updates specific to employment issues, including policy clarifications, funding structures,	Jennifer Monje, Kelly McDavid, Carla Bettis & Sara Howerton	06/1/2004	Ongoing: Updates specific to employment issues, including policy clarifications and funding structures continue to be disseminated in Area 14.
Distribute regular E-Bulletins and other means of updates specific to employment issues, including policy clarifications, funding structures,	Jennifer Monje (APD), Melanie Etters (APD), Jeff Saulich (APD), Providers, PCSB, VR	06/1/2004	Ongoing: Success stories continue to be submitted to Tallahassee. Several Area 14 success stories have been featured in the "Champion Newsletter".
Community Outreach Program Awareness. Provided information to different agencies and to families of persons receiving services on Supported Employment and its benefits.			Ongoing: APD continues to disseminate info regarding upcoming SE Trainings & Forums to interested parties. (Please see Special Projects section of this report)
V. Major Task: Ensure effective on-going communication to obtain feedback and provide up-to-date information			
Provide regular information to stakeholders on SSA Work Incentives and concerns over loss of benefits, including SSA Redbooks and DDP publications	F-BIRN	07/1/2008	Ongoing: See Special Projects Section of this report
Provide information on Ticket to Work opportunities and limits		06/1/2004	Ongoing: Webinars ...Wise Across America.... Ticket to Work and the Work incentive Planning and Assistance Projects (WIPAs), working with local Protection & Advocacy Organizations and Employment Networks, are hosting 65 Work Incentive Seminars, or WISE Events, in 27 states across the country between July and December. Wise are community events held by local organizations for beneficiaries to learn more about available work incentives and connect through local service providers, including Employment Networks, through accessible, informal learning opportunities. (Please also see Special Projects section of this report)
VI. Major Task: Identify initial and on-going barriers to 5-YEHP and design protocol to circumvent or overcome barriers			
Use implementation plan to justify a funding request to the FDDC for an OPS position to help establish and support the first steps of the five year initiative	Eric Olsen	06/1/2004	No OPS funding at this time.
Determine if appropriate numbers of SE providers are available in all counties and develop a plan to address the issue	Eric Olsen, Carla Bettis & Jennifer Monje	06/1/2004	Ongoing: Area 14 continues to recruit. (Please see Special Project Section of this report)
Increase the number of training opportunities to enable the development of competent employment services staff	Jennifer Monje, Eric Olsen, Carla Bettis, Art Ciesla	06/1/2004	Ongoing: Please see Special Projects Section of this report).
Include Transportation Disadvantaged Commission representative in addressing transportation related barriers	Carla Bettis, Eric Olsen, Jennifer Monje,	06/1/2004	Ongoing: Area 14 will continue to disseminate information to stake holders on opportunities to participate in local transportation forums.

POLK COUNTY BUSINESS LEADERSHIP NETWORK (BLN)

Persons Accountable:

The BLN is composed of volunteers from area businesses, APD, DVR, PCSB, Able Trust, Abilities, Polk Works One Stop, SSA, Division of Blind Services, etc.

Status/Outcomes:

The Polk County BLN offers leadership by example and a supportive employer-to-employer network aimed at promoting the employment of qualified people who just happen to have disabilities. The BLN helps business's learn more about hiring people with disabilities through training and technical assistance, and make it easier for you to recruit, hire, train, and retain employees with disabilities. There are 43 Business Leadership Networks in 32 states. The Polk County BLN will be one of 12 successful BLNs currently operating in the state of Florida. Funding for the BLNs is provided by the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities. The BLNs are affiliated with The Able Trust, the United States BLN and organized by Wilson Resources, Inc.

Mission Statement

The Polk County Business Leadership Network missions is to educate and encourage employers to recruit, hire, train and retain employees with disabilities as part of promoting good business practices.

The Bottom Line...

A diverse workforce is vital to business success. Approximately one in five Americans has a disability. By employing people with disabilities, employers can effectively position themselves to develop products and services that are more likely to sell to a diverse customer base, resulting in a significant increase in long term profits.

Polk County Business Leadership Network

Mission Statement

The Polk County Business Leadership Network mission is to:

- *Increase awareness of the skills and abilities of people with disabilities;*
- *Promote awareness of local support agencies that are available to assist in locating qualified employees who just happen to have a disability;*
- *Promote the employment of persons with disabilities;*
- *Expand workplace diversity; and*
- *Improve the lives of people with disabilities*

Polk County Business Leadership Network

Goals and Objectives

The Polk County BLN members outlined how they wish to accomplish their mission:

- Get one person with a disability hired for every company hiring over 50 people;
- Educate the community in an effort to reduce the stigma and stereotypes associated with people with disabilities;
- Every BLN member's company or organization will hire an employee with a disability. The BLN members plan to lead by example;
- Work with the Lakeland Chamber of Commerce Diversity Council in an effort to incorporate the Polk County BLN Mission Statement into the Mission for the City of Lakeland and Polk County;
- Provide employer seminars to educate businesses on current issues and where they can locate dependable workers. The BLN will attempt to work in conjunction with Workforce 2020; and
- Recruit BLN members who have a disability.

President

Karen Mitchell
Lakeland Regional
Medical Center

Vice President

Greta Dupuy
Publix
Supermarkets, Inc.

Secretary/Treasurer

David Sorg
The Mosaic Company

Jennifer Monje continues to be an active member of the Polk County BLN. She has provided several presentations in the past to BLN members about the Agency and has presented DMD material in an effort to promote Disability Mentoring Day in Area 14. Members of the Polk County BLN have been exposed to DMD and are aware that this event is part of a national, broad-based effort to promote career development for students and job seekers with disabilities through hands-on career exploration, job shadowing and internship or employment opportunities. Mentor Applications were handed out along with DMD "Save the Date Brochures". Area 14 has a total of 10 local businesses signed up to participate in DMD activities this year!

