

Summary of ADT Redesign Stakeholder Forum May 23, 2019

The recording from the Morning Session can be accessed here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7HF-QIIFps>.

The recording from the Afternoon Focus Group can be accessed here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6CcbSji0Hk>.

Feedback from Morning Session – What are the biggest challenges within the system?

The funding structure does not support the “real costs” of delivering services. Providers are often covering a percentage of the cost. There is a general consensus that change is needed within the Adult Day Training (ADT) and Supported Employment (SE) programs, but the rate structure must be addressed in the process.

The VR, APD, and school systems need to be working together to ensure adequate information is shared with individuals and families. For example, there is a lot of misinformation about the impact on Social Security/Medicaid benefits.

Some ADTs are reluctant to support individuals pursuing employment because they lose money if the individual leaves the day program to go to work in the community – while others may see employment as an opportunity to serve other individuals on waiting lists for the day program.

Identifying “employment” as a goal for individuals is a big challenge in the system. APD staff and waiver support coordinators (WSCs) can inform individuals and families about the options that are available, such as SE services through the waiver and waiting list.

Getting employers to be willing to customize positions for the individual is very challenging. This is where work-based learning experiences can help both individuals and employers find the right match for the job.

There are concerns about taking facility-based training out of the continuum of employment could limit choices for some individuals.

The skills training must be able to prepare individuals for the workforce (e.g., culinary field, cosmetology, etc.). We should consider the role of post-secondary programs as a potential partner (i.e., credential training).

It is important to ensure supports are available as a safety net if an individual loses employment and to support other aspects of a meaningful day.

There are challenges with collaboration between the systems during the “touch points” or “hand offs” when individuals are transitioning between systems (e.g., graduating high school, connecting with VR, etc.).

Low expectations within the system (particularly during childhood and adolescence) can have an effect on an individual’s opportunities to pursue employment as a goal in the future, which families can learn to accept those low expectations.

The system should allow for flexibility and creativity in delivering services. One size does not fit all (e.g., transportation options).

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires the VR system to prioritize efforts in serving youth, which leaves limited staff resources to serve the adult population (particularly individuals transitioning out of sheltered workshop settings).

Do not forget the older adult population and how day programs can support their needs.

Stakeholders need to organize and inform legislators about the importance of these services. We tend to operate in silos and not collaborate in getting the message out, which results in little changes in funding and support from state leaders.

Feedback from Afternoon Focus Group Discussion – What can we do to increase employment for individuals with developmental disabilities?

Approach the problem holistically to support people's needs. Understand that employment is the priority, but ADT plays an important role too – we should not reduce one service to support another.

There are a lot of resources available to support an individual in obtaining a job (VR, school system, Project SEARCH, etc.), but not necessarily to support them on a long-term basis to maintain and grow in their job.

The Agency for Health Care Administration is seeking federal approval to raise the income limits for individuals receiving waiver services, which will encourage more to seek employment. We need to inform families and individuals about these changes.

Consider the impact of employment on other services. Are the cost savings to the waiver a result of the employed individuals being healthier and more independent? Or are they the result of these individuals experiencing a reduction in other services (which they need)? This needs to be considered in the person-centered planning process.

Consider how the services should change and adapt with the individual's journey in employment. For example, benefits planning should not just be a one-time service as an individual enters employment but be available throughout the life of a career.

Consider the role of schools and ESE programs – how is the conversation about employment being introduced? VR and APD need to be part of the IEP and other discussions to ensure families are aware of the resources available (e.g., self-advocacy training).

APD and VR should be providing joint training to ensure everyone has the same information and reduce the silos within the system.

Work-based learning experiences are an effective approach to preparing individuals and families for employment. This is becoming more available for students in the school system, but also should be made more available to adults.

Consider mechanisms to engage local partners, such as the Chambers of Commerce, school transition programs, etc.

Consider other resources that are needed in addition to the individual's on-the-job supports, such as transportation options.

APD and VR need to improve their data-sharing and referral processes. This is particularly needed to support individuals in sheltered workshops receiving Career Counseling and Information/Referral (CCIR) services through the Section 511 program.

Consider business development and entrepreneurial programs as part of Supported Employment or as another service option for individuals who want to be self-employed.

Come up with a common message to promote culture change - raising the expectations that people with disabilities can pursue employment. Stakeholders can work together to deliver this message to doctors, families, teachers, etc.

How Are Other States Approaching these Challenges?

Wisconsin's IDD Agency operates under a managed care system and uses a performance-based payment structure in funding a portion of employment services. The managed care organizations negotiate a percentage of payment that will be withheld to incentivize providers to reach a certain employment goal. The system accounts for varying degrees of support needs to ensure providers are not incentivized to only serve individuals with least severe disabilities.

The group shared concerns about the prospects of implementing a managed care model within Florida's IDD system – majority of services funded by the waiver support individuals' long-term care needs, which go beyond the acute "medical" model applied by managed care organizations.

The average age of individuals in ADT programs is around 42. APD staff conducted an analysis of variables that are contributing to successful employment outcomes, and found age to be a significant predictor of an individual's probability of success: An individual is more likely to be competitively employed as they get older, until peaking at 44 years old, then becoming less likely each subsequent year.

"Adult Day Training" is too broad and needs to distinguish between the work-based programs (included sheltered workshop settings) and traditional day habilitation programs, which usually support meaningful day activities that do not have a work requirement.

New York is under a plan of correction with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) since 2011, to redesign how its waiver funds day programs. This transformation process includes redefining sheltered workshops from a "service provider" model to a "social enterprise" business.

Barriers to consider when promoting competitive integrated employment include:

- Choice – Does the individual want to work? How do we introduce the topic to them while allowing for that choice?
- Resistance from the family – How can we address concerns about the individual's safety and impact on health benefits in competitive integrated employment?
- Environmental barriers – How we can we help build the skills an individual will need to adapt to the changing work environment (from facility-based work to competitive integrated employment)?

One person suggested small group employment may be an option for some individuals to consider for families who are resistant to competitive integrated employment – this would not be the ultimate outcome, but it could help transition some toward employment as a long-term goal.

Regarding choice, a self-advocate stated there are parents with adult children (without disabilities) who do not want to work, but does that mean they should not go to work? She said the expectation of individuals with disabilities is different than any other group of people, and that needs to change.

It is important that employment services be an individualized process – each individual has a different set of needs, skills, and interests.

Pennsylvania recently redesigned its day services to require a percentage of meaningful day activities must occur out in the community (outside of the facility). The state has a complex staffing ratio rate structure in place to account for the variety of individuals being served in these programs. The state also limits new entrants in facility-based programs until they have explored competitive integrated employment as an option.

Minnesota redesigned its waiver to create three different levels of employment services. The state also limits new enrollees under 55 years old from entering into day programs for a three-year period.

Consider “prevocational” services that can help an individual explore employment-related activities prior to being referred to VR. Some organizations are doing this in Florida with Discovery and career exploration funded through the VR system. Career exploration is also effective for individuals who want to change their employment goal.

How can we support community-based activities beyond employment?

Concerns about “community outings,” like field trips to the mall and restaurants, are not meaningful enough. These activities should promote ways for the individual to be engaged and contribute something back to the community.

Several organizations are partnering with food banks and community centers to support individuals who want to volunteer in their community. Some of these activities can lead to employment.

Community inclusion also creates more awareness among prospective employers and others to interact with persons with disabilities. An example of this is Jobapalooza, where provider organizations partner with businesses and other organizations to support mock interviews and other job-related activities.

Some provider organizations are supporting community inclusion through the arts.

Self-advocacy organizations, such as FL SAND, can provide another venue for individuals to volunteer and engage in their community.

