## Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

# **Partnerships in Employment Systems Change Project**



# What is Partnerships in Employment?

**5-year project:** In 2011 and 2012, the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities awarded funding to eight states.

Focus on integrated, competitive employment for youth with I/DD: This project promotes cross-systems and cross-agency collaboration to improve integrated, competitive employment outcomes for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Integrated, competitive employment is when "individuals with disabilities earn wages consistent with wages paid workers without disabilities in the community performing the same or similar work."

8 states form consortiums: The eight Partnerships in Employment states—
Alaska, California, Iowa, Mississippi,
Missouri, New York, Tennessee, and
Wisconsin—formed a consortium or coalition of stakeholders that include:

- ► Individual Level: Individuals with I/DD, family members
- ➤ Community Level: Pilot sites, school administrators, businesses employers, providers
- ▶ State Level: Developmental Disabilities Agency, Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, State Education Agency, State Developmental Disabilities Council, other state agencies

AIDD contractors perform project evaluation and provide technical assistance: The Lewin Group is conducting a comprehensive evaluation and the Institute for Community Inclusion is providing training and technical assistance to states.

# **Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment**

October 2011 to March 2015

## **Project Overview**

In 2011, the Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment (ICIE) began to

develop long-term objectives for improving integrated, competitive employment outcomes and increasing opportunities for youth and young adults with I/DD in lowa. ICIE engaged stakeholders across the state and worked to remove barriers to increase employment.

Selected ICIE Members
Iowa Developmental Disabilities
Council

State of Iowa Mental Health and Disability Services Division (MHDS) Iowa Medicaid Enterprise (IME) Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) Iowa Department of Education

## Project Goals and Vision

ICIE identified six primary goals to accomplish.

- 1. Launch and collaborate with a coalition composed of stakeholders from a number of different backgrounds and focus areas.
- 2. Establish a consistent employment outcome measurement system across state organizations and stakeholders.
- 3. Increase services during high school that support a seamless transition to employment.
- 4. Develop a wider array of service providers who align their mission, services and resources to promote integrated, competitive employment for youth with I/DD.
- Create expectation and demand for integrated, competitive employment in youth and young adults with I/DD.
- 6. Change current policies, practices, and funding as necessary to support integrated, competitive employment.

This profile highlights ICIE activities and accomplishments from October 2011 to March 2015 related to the PIE project objectives—developing or changing policies, removing systemic barriers, building cross-system and cross-agency collaboration, and implementing strategies and promising practices to support integrated, competitive employment.

# **Developing or Changing Policies**

#### "Employment First" Related Activities

ICIE's Employment First related work focused on building relationships with other organizations to improve employment outcomes. Initial work involved ICIE staff meeting with the Iowa Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (APSE) President to discuss collaboration on Employment First work. ICIE also collaborated with Iowa's Employment First State Leadership Mentor Program (EFSLMP) to support six model providers, instead of three as originally proposed.

### **Funding Legislation or Policies**

Early in the project, ICIE identified that reimbursement rates were frequently less than the cost of the service itself, which caused many providers to either reduce or remove career placements. As a result, ICIE focused efforts on Medicaid rate restructuring to support employment. ICIE stakeholders agreed that the state needed to focus on rate restructuring and realigning cost reimbursement to support employment. As part of this work, pilot sites provided feedback to the Iowa Medicaid Enterprise and IVRS on rate restructuring. ICIE also collaborated with Iowa's State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) to develop a structure that supported employment. ICIE members and stakeholders provided input on Medicaid rate restructuring during five community forums held across the state. Additional input from Iowa's Department of Health Services (DHS) Employment Services Redesign Workgroup and ICIE's Funding and Policy Workgroup assisted in developing a funding transition model. Other important developments included the Governor signing the Education Budget in 2014, which included a \$765,000 increase for Vocational Rehabilitation services. This allowed IVRS to draw down full federal funding, which was used to ensure that the Iowa Medicaid system was able to assist individuals with the most significant disabilities to transition into integrated, competitive employment. In January 2015, DHS drafted administrative rules that allowed the model to be implemented. In March 2015, DHS fiscal staff approved the new rules.

# Removing Systemic Barriers

## **Building Program Capacity**

ICIE conducted significant work to engage state case managers and care coordinators. In 2015, ICIE collaborated with EFSLMP and Vision Quest to provide training to case managers, care coordinators, and Integrated Health Home staff from around the state and to discuss the Employment Service Guidebook. ICIE also created a transition workgroup made up of case managers, care coordinators, educators, and family members. Presentations were conducted at the Iowa State Association of Counties and administrators meetings to raise awareness around integrated employment and current federal and state activities. ICIE project staff also hosted two statewide meetings focusing on the importance of case managers and care coordinators in the implementation of integrated, competitive employment. Statewide meetings were followed by targeted outreach to all 15 MHDS regions to discuss how to support integrated employment.

## Improving Programs

ICIE provided trainings to pilot sites and Coalition members to increase awareness of employment opportunities. ICIE pilot sites used resources that included a coach and a three-day workshop to develop customized employment strategies to help individuals with I/DD attain employment. In 2014, ICIE offered trainings at the state and local levels regarding braided funding policies and practices. These trainings focused on using Discovery and other services in community-based settings. ICIE also worked with IVRS to provide a one-day training to one of IVRS' local offices and its partners regarding customized employment with 20 partners in attendance. In 2015, ICIE project staff, Coalition members, and APSE representatives worked with Washington State's Wraparound with Intensive Services (WISe) program to prepare a three-part leadership training series.

#### **Alternative Certificates**

ICIE developed a state-level technical assistance team that met with ICIE pilot sites on a quarterly basis. This team worked with each site to develop curriculum mapping at the district level as well as build pilot site staff's capacity to offer paid work experiences to students. Another focus area was determining where gaps in the curriculum existed, how these gaps would be remediated, and what community members felt students needed in order to be successful in employment. An assessment to align goal writing from a student's IEP with their job placements was also added to the curriculum. Each ICIE pilot site also incorporated a Positive Personal Profile, a tool designed to promote discussion between education and adult service providers. IVRS adopted the Positive Personal Profile in Discovery form. One ICIE pilot site collaborated with a middle school to incorporate career-based skills into its curriculum in several classes.

#### Pilot Projects

METS: Pilot sites across Iowa increased employment outcomes for individuals with I/DD. In 2012, six pilot schools were selected based on their IVRS and Department of Education performance data. Four pilot sites agreed to participate as Model Employment Transition Sites (METS). In October 2012, each pilot site participated in a three-day workshop that included two days working with a coach on implementing employment strategies. In 2014, each METS site reported that paid work experiences had increased, and working relationships with community partners including community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) had been created. The Department of Education highlighted the METS' work on creating expectations for student work during and after high school at its annual Summer

Institute in 2014. ICIE coordinated visits between METS sites and other interested school districts to share best practices. The METS technical assistance team also developed a report highlighting METS strategies, challenges, and other outcomes. ICIE noted that two additional school districts started to implement some METS strategies into their own activities.

*CRPs:* In addition to METS, seven community rehabilitation service providers (CRPs) participated in the ICIE and EFSLMP pilot projects. CRPs worked with ICIE Core Team members to expand successful strategies to other providers as well as develop other professional skills. CRPs also worked with subject matter experts and the Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP) on transformation efforts. As of March 2015, ICIE held trainings to provide virtual mentoring to CRPs with the number of CRP participants increasing from 14 to 30 and 16 more providers volunteering to collect outcomes and take part in site visits with subject matter experts.

Table 1: METS Pilot Participant Data by Year

Pilot Participant Data	2012	2013	2014
Applicants (students with an open file with VR)	94	206	148
Average hourly wage	\$10.83	\$10.54	\$12.55
Average hours worked	37	33	37

<sup>\*</sup>Reported by ICIE on a semi-annual basis to The Lewin Group

Across the METS pilot sites, the number of applicants showed a net overall increase of approximately 57 percent between 2012 and 2014. Hourly wages increased by \$1.72 on average over the two-year period with average hours worked remaining constant.

# Building Cross-System and Cross-Agency Collaboration

#### Coalition

Since the beginning of the project, ICIE continued to increase Coalition membership. The initial Coalition meeting in 2012 consisted of discussions about the project's goals, similar work underway in the state, and plans for next steps. Fifty attendees participated in the meeting. The Coalition's Core Team met monthly to provide recommendations for the project. In 2012, the group established smaller workgroups to better manage the increasing number of members. A survey of members indicated that "they felt the meetings have helped them learn more about Integrated Employment in Iowa." As of March 2015, there were 151 members in the Coalition. The Coalition also conducted surveys to determine trends in member involvement with integrated employment, the ability to attend meetings regularly, and the shared

project vision, among other outcomes. ICIE continued to work with Public Sector Consultants, Inc. to evaluate its own work including the pilot sites across the state.

## Youth Engagement

Iowans with Disabilities in Action (ID Action) sponsored "Take Your Legislator to Work Day" in 2014, which allowed legislators, including the President of the Iowa Senate, to visit the workplaces of individuals with I/DD. Legislators that participated in the event learn about the youth employee with I/DD and their job.

### Family Engagement

By October 2012, pilot sites had noted that involvement from parents was an area for further work. By March 2013, ICIE members began working with an Employment First Subject Matter Expert from Washington State to start a Parent/Family Coalition. The Parent/Family Coalition began with 10 members and, by March 2015, increased to 83 members. Parents and families also took part in a webinar on using HCBS Waiver funding. ICIE Coalition members also attended a Family Support Think Tank to learn about how to support families. ICIE provided a survey for families in December 2013 to better understand what types of information parents needed as well as how and when they wanted to receive it. The results allowed ICIE to develop fact sheets for parents on different topics such as Discovery and Medicaid. In 2014, ICIE launched the Iowa Parent/Family page on Facebook, which had 22 members as of March 2015. In March 2015, ICIE co-hosted a Managed Care Night with 19 Parent/Family Coalition members in attendance. The event provided parents opportunities to network with each other as well as learn about ways to advocate with government officials and Managed Care Organizations.

#### Memorandum of Agreement

IVRS implemented a MOA with the Department of Human Services (DHS), effective as of November 2014. The agreement identified DHS as the payer of first resort for job candidates under the age of 24 who are eligible for both a DHS waiver and IVRS as well as require Supported Employment Services.

# Implementing Strategies and Promising Practices

### Shared Data Systems

ICIE collaborated with state partners to improve data infrastructure. Efforts focused on the development of a tool used for collecting and displaying individual employment outcome data. By September 2013, DHS created an online system that collected information including wages and hours by work setting. Iowa's

Operations Team reported that possible issues related to data collection and reporting included lack of consistent information about benefits planning for individuals attempting to find work across agencies and lack of a unified way to track employment outcomes. After crossagency discussions between ICIE, the Governance Group, and the Operations Team, the three groups decided to display certain information as a "snapshot" and to determine what types of data could be added later. The Governance Group created and distributed the Iowa Employment and Disability Snapshot Report in 2014, which provided high-level information about employment data in Iowa. ICIE planned to pilot a provider input document with employment service providers in 2015. ICIE and DHS also collaborated to pilot a data collection tool for individual employment outcomes data. The data system would facilitate an evaluation of the impact of Iowa's systems change work.

#### **Dissemination Activities**

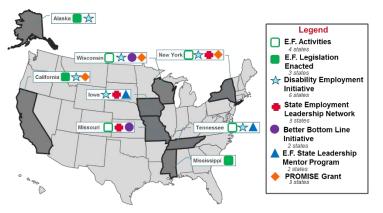
ICIE produced and disseminated five videos for National Disability Employment Awareness Month in 2014. Through the ID Action project, the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council engaged in media relations work to increase awareness related to the individuals with disabilities working in their communities across the state. Five videos highlighting this work were sent to nearly 1,500 individuals and posted on several websites, gathering over 1,300 views and nearly 1,400 views on YouTube. In addition, 395 radio stations, 34 print media outlets, and one television outlet disseminated five stories that had over 1.5 million media impressions with a public relations value of \$101,377.

# Continuing to Support Integrated, Competitive Employment

#### Other Initiatives

In addition to the Partnerships in Employment project, several other initiatives are underway in lowa that support improving employment outcomes for youth and young adults with I/DD.

Figure 1: Partnerships in Employment States Participating in Other Initiatives to Support Employment for Youth with I/DD



## Sustainability Beyond PIE

ICIE project staff used the Collective Impact Framework as a model for working with the Coalition. The five conditions that when combined lead to meaningful results from Collective Impact include common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication and backbone support.

The Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council provides administrative support to the ICIE project.

The Lewin Group, under Contract HHSP23320095639WC Task Order HHSP23337017T, developed the lowa PIE profile. **Email:** <u>PIE-EVAL@Lewin.com</u>