

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.

Partnerships in Employment: Cross-State Project Activities and Outcomes

October 2011 to March 2015

Project Overview

The eight Partnerships in Employment (PIE) systems change projects included multiple stakeholders, required coordination across programs and agencies, attempted to change different areas of state systems, and focused on systems at different stages of development. Since systems change projects take many years to see the intended impact, state strategies continued to evolve over time in response to the political, economic, and social environment. As a result, the eight states were at different stages in their development. As states continued to engage stakeholders and make progress towards achieving systems level and individual level results, several cross-cutting themes emerged.

This PIE profile highlights cross-state 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 Policies

PIE states engaged state agency leaders and legislators to support Employment First policies and legislation. While all eight states engaged in Employment First related activities, the Governor enacted legislation in three states (Alaska, California, and Mississippi) and signed an Executive Order establishing Employment First Commission or Task Force in two states (New York and Tennessee). Alaska’s Governor signed the Employment First Bill in May 2014 after the consortium educated legislators. Mississippi’s Governor signed the Mississippi Competitive Employment Act in April 2015 after consortium members hosted four Employment First awareness sessions. States also focused on implementation strategies that included providing technical assistance to four Regional Centers implementing Employment First policies (California) and educating three departments on Employment First (Alaska).

PIE State Consortiums

Alaska Integrated Employment Initiative (AIEI)
California Consortium on the Employment of Youth and Young Adults with I/DD (CECY)
Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment (ICIE)
Mississippi Partnerships for Employment (MSPE)
Missouri Show-Me-Careers
New York State Partnerships in Employment (NYS PIE)
TennesseeWorks Partnership
Wisconsin Let’s Get to Work

Changing Policies

Partnerships in Employment states also reported that state agencies adopted or implemented several recommendations submitted by the state consortium or coalition. For example, the Department of Public Instruction implemented recommendations from Wisconsin's consortium on Results Driven Accountability and Vocational Rehabilitation in Tennessee resumed funding services for Priority Categories 1 and 2 based on Tennessee's consortium advocacy efforts. In addition, recommendations from Iowa's coalition members resulted in changes in rate restructuring policies for Medicaid. Despite variations in state-specific policy agendas and accomplishments, all eight states leveraged relationships established through the consortium or coalition.

Removing Systemic Barriers

Building Program Capacity

As states continued to implement new programs or improve existing programs, states focused on removing barriers to employment through stakeholder education. Although the topics and target populations for trainings varied by state, all PIE consortiums conducted training and outreach to improve program capacity. Alaska and New York focused on training benefits counselors and supported employment agency personnel to increase the number of trained professionals in their state. In Alaska, AIEI collaborated with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to provide funding for seven professionals to receive out-of-state benefits counseling training from the Virginia Commonwealth University. The New York State (NYS) PIE, in collaboration with the NYS Association for People Supporting Employment First, compensated the exam cost for supported employment agency staff completing the Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) certification. Missouri and Wisconsin also focused on building capacity across programs. Missouri's consortium, along with several other state agencies, hosted the Missouri Transition Capacity Building Institute to provide training to pilot communities and other state organizations. In Wisconsin, Let's Get to Work pilot sites shared best practices with five Transition Improvement Grant schools at a Community Based Integrated Employment Summit.

Alternative Certificates

Several states focused on developing alternative certificates to support school-based employment readiness and career training. In Alaska, project staff's advocacy efforts helped lead to the state's repeal of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, which was a barrier for students with I/DD earning a high school

diploma. In New York, the consortium collaborated with state agencies to develop a Job Readiness Curriculum that provided teachers with effective tools to teach job readiness skills. New York's consortium also supported the release of two new exiting credentials with one credential replacing the IEP diploma.

Post-Secondary Education

Several PIE consortiums focused on improving opportunities for post-secondary education for youth with I/DD raising awareness of post-secondary education as preparation for integrated, competitive employment. To raise awareness of these programs, PIE states provided trainings, presented at conferences, and expanded post-secondary career programs for youth with I/DD (California and Tennessee). In addition, PIE projects provided research and training opportunities for their university college students seeking special education degrees or other graduate certificates (California, Mississippi, and Wisconsin).

Pilot Projects and Community Promising Practices

Five of the eight PIE states implemented PIE pilot demonstration programs to improve student work experiences and job-readiness training. The structure of the pilot demonstration programs varied across the states. Despite the differences in program structure, all five states reported an increase in the number of youth participating in the pilot program. In Mississippi, three active pilot sites supported 59 students to find employment at 25 employer locations. States also expanded pilot program activities to other schools (Iowa, New York, Missouri, and Wisconsin).

Table 1: Number of PIE Pilot Sites by Academic Year
Number of Active Sites by Academic Year

	'12-'13	'13-'14	'14-'15
<u>Iowa</u>	11	11	11
<u>Mississippi</u>	4	3	3
<u>Missouri</u>	8	8	8
<u>New York</u>	3	6	9
<u>Wisconsin</u>	5	9	9
Total PIE Pilots	31	37	40

*Reported by PIE states on a semi-annual basis to The Lewin Group

One state identified seven Local Employment Collaborative Teams (LECTs) with existing achievements of employment in the community. Outcome data from the majority of the LECTs in California demonstrated superior rates of employment and earnings in integrated, competitive employment. An example promising practice used and studied by one or more LECT included "multimedia marketing materials focusing on working in the community, finding jobs, supported employment, and addressing employer concerns."

Building Cross-System and Cross-Agency Collaboration

Consortium or Coalition

To help guide and inform future project work, states collected feedback from consortium or coalition members through surveys (Alaska, California, Iowa, Missouri, and New York) and follow-up surveys at other events.

State MOUs to Advance Integrated, Competitive Employment

To increase collaboration and coordination of state services, several states established memorandums of understanding (MOUs) (California, Mississippi, and Missouri), while other states have continued to develop MOUs (Alaska, New York, and Tennessee).

Youth Engagement

All PIE states focused on youth engagement through pilot demonstration projects, self-advocacy events, or legislative visits. For example, Iowa, Missouri, and Wisconsin facilitated Take Your Legislator to Work Day, where state legislators attended the workplace of a youth employee with I/DD. In addition, Wisconsin's consortium meetings featured a Youth Track for pilot school students, both with and without I/DD, to learn about the necessary skills for gaining and keeping a job. In California, youth participated as members of the consortium.

Family Engagement

Several states also focused on parent and family engagement. Alaska, California, and Tennessee developed surveys to understand parents' expectations related to employment and community engagement. For example, TennesseeWorks' statewide Family Expectations Survey received over 2,400 responses statewide. States also engaged parents or family members through Parent/Family Coalitions (Iowa and Tennessee) and focused efforts to increase membership statewide (e.g., Iowa increased parent membership from 10 members to more than 83 members). Parent/Family Coalitions allowed parents to engage with each other, receive training, and meet with agency leadership. Missouri also developed and disseminated a guide to support families as they think about and plan for employment during the Life Course.

Community Conversations

Three states used Community Conversations to engage family members, youth, educators, employers, and other community members on topics related to integrated, competitive employment for youth and young adults with I/DD. Tennessee and Wisconsin were the first two PIE states that used this strategy and California's LECTs later adopted and implemented this best practice.

Employer Engagement

States also engaged employers through Community Conversations (California, Tennessee, and Wisconsin), online videos or commercials (Alaska, Iowa, Tennessee, and Wisconsin), and other community events. Due to differences in employment opportunities at the local level, statewide employer engagement has been limited to job fairs in some states (Alaska and Mississippi). Alaska's consortium co-hosted the Diversity Job Fair, with 430 job seekers and 66 employers attending. In Mississippi, consortium agencies co-sponsored two annual EmployAbility Job Fairs with more than 400 applicants receiving 88 job offers from 46 employers. State consortiums also relied on trainings and handouts to raise business awareness and expectations for employment. In Tennessee, consortium members trained 31 people to conduct five presentations to 130 participants on "why employers should invest in hiring individuals with I/DD." In Missouri, teams in eight communities have received training and technical assistance related to developing employer-driven partnerships.

Implementing Strategies and Promising Practices

Shared Data Systems

States acknowledged early in the PIE project that there was a lack of readily available, meaningful, and uniform data across state systems. To comply with state or federal regulation requirements and to inform legislators or other stakeholders, states focused on improving data sharing between agencies (Alaska, California, Iowa, Missouri, New York, Tennessee, and Wisconsin). While states were in various stages of developing shared data systems or disseminating data dashboards, California reported an increase in page views and average time spent on the Data Dashboard, Iowa developed an employment data snapshot, and Tennessee developed a Data Dashboard. In addition, New York developed a system for those seeking employment and employment supports as well as those interested in outcome data. All states developed and disseminated project materials using project specific websites (Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee, and Wisconsin) or an existing organization or agency website (Alaska, California, Iowa, and New York).

Continuing to Support Integrated, Competitive Employment

Other Initiatives

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

What did Partnerships in Employment states accomplish?

Alaska

Employment First bill signed in 2014: AIEI educated legislators and had a strong legislative champion for the bill.

State partnerships: AIEI collaborated with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education on several activities to support integrated, competitive employment (ICE).

California

Employment First bill signed in 2013: CECY educated and informed legislators on issues such as funding and supported community implementation by Regional Developmental Disabilities Offices.

Data dashboard: CECY "Data Nerds" Workgroup developed a platform that synthesizes and displays employment data from various state and national sources.

Iowa

Rate restructuring: PIE pilot sites provided feedback to the Iowa Medicaid Enterprise and Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Engagement with case managers and care coordinators: ICIE project staff hosted two statewide meetings focusing on the importance of case managers and care coordinators in the implementation of ICE.

Mississippi

Mississippi Competitive Employment Act signed in 2015: Legislative awareness efforts from MSPE members, including awareness sessions, led to an Executive Order and legislation.

Job fairs: Mississippi consortium member agencies co-hosted two annual EmployAbility Job Fairs with over 400 applicants receiving 88 job offers from 46 employers.

Missouri

Capacity Building: Show-Me-Careers and several state agencies co-hosted Missouri Transition Capacity Building Institute for pilot sites and other state organizations.

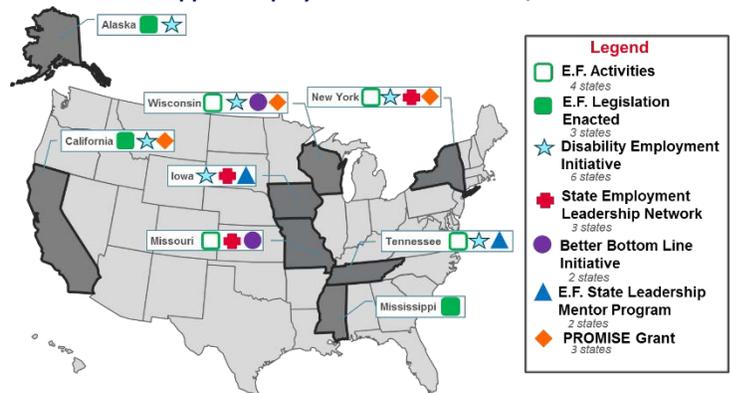
Guiding Principles: Engaged pilot communities in monthly webinar series focused on community-to-community conversations to improve local policies and practices related to the Guiding Principles.

New York

CESP certification: NYS PIE collaborated with NYS APSE to compensate the exam cost for supported employment agency personnel completing the Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) certification.

Exiting credentials: NYS PIE supported the release of two new exiting credentials that emphasized employment readiness and career training.

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



Sustainability Beyond PIE

Between October 2011 and March 2015, PIE states developed strong partnerships among state agencies and other entities. In addition, PIE pilot projects increased employment opportunities for youth and young adults with I/DD at the local level. PIE consortiums or coalitions held preliminary discussions around sustainability and continuation of PIE activities beyond the project. Early plans included identifying strategies to engage consortium members, monitoring the effectiveness of best practice models, and assessing the availability of agency funding to sustain project activities. Through consortium and coalition meetings, states developed strong partnerships with state agencies and other entities. All states acknowledged the PIE grant has resulted in strong cross-agency relationships that did not exist before the project. States plan to continue discussions about sustainability with consortium or coalition members in the final years of the grant.

Tennessee

Modified post-secondary education policy: TennesseeWorks supported reducing the course load standard to 12 hours as set by institutions for individuals without disabilities.

Parent Survey: TennesseeWorks established three family coalitions. It also engaged over 2,400 parents from nearly every county in the state in a survey about parental expectations.

Wisconsin

Youth Tracks: Let's Get to Work consortium meetings have engaged individuals in Youth Tracks, which teach skills necessary for employment.

PROMISE and TIG: Best practices from the LGTW project adopted by other Wisconsin projects including the Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE) grant and the Statewide Transition Improvement Grant (TIG).

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