

Background on Partnerships in Employment Systems Change Projects

In October 2011, the Administration on Developmental Disabilities awarded grants to lead agencies in six states: California, Iowa, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, and Wisconsin. Two additional states, Alaska and Tennessee, received grants in October 2012. These states proposed activities to spur improved employment and post-secondary outcomes for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The Institute for Community Inclusion and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services are providing training and technical assistance (TA) to the eight state projects through the Partnerships in Employment (PIE) Training and TA Center.

Partnerships project work is framed by the High Performing States Transition Model which contains 8 key elements: collaboration, leadership, state goals and policy, funding and contracting, staff training, service innovation, performance management and quality assurance, and youth leadership development and family engagement. This document is one in a series of PIE Project Fact Sheets that have been developed to chronicle how PIE grantee states are making change under the elements of the High Performing States Transition model.

Local and state-level administrators within state agencies and stakeholder organizations are champions for employment.

CALIFORNIA

The California Employment Consortium for the Employment of Youth and Young Adults (CECY) has built a strong coalition of over 35 stakeholders, including high-level representatives from 21 state agencies. Consortium members work together to address barriers to integrated competitive employment for youth with IDD, and to determine needed changes within their spheres of influence.

The process of coalition building began with the development of a shared mission statement and definition of integrated employment that was used to shape the project's goals and objectives. CECY developed a governance structure made up of five work groups. These groups were designed to make use of the unique expertise of each member, and to enable group members to foster one another's insight and knowledge to advance CECY's objectives. Work groups address policy development, local best practices, state data and performance indicators,

outreach and communications, and resource development.

Since the formation of CECY, California's governor has signed into law two policies, one addressing Employment First and one addressing self-determination. Collectively, the legislation will promote employment of individuals with intellectual disabilities, ensure that individual employment choices are honored, and shift state resources towards post-secondary options and competitive employment.

Lessons learned:

- » Effective coalitions require a clear and compelling mission, particularly when confronting significant systemic challenges.
- » A neutral entity, such as CECY, can facilitate difficult discussions and decisions that are respectful for all those involved.
- » Meaningful participation and shared leadership work best when the unique expertise and influence of each member is used in the coalition's processes.
- » Effective coalitions take time to build as individuals develop relationships and build trust.
- » Developing measurable goals and evaluating CECY meetings and processes allows coalition members to track their collective successes.

MISSISSIPPI

A priority of the Mississippi Partnerships in Employment project (MSPE) is for the state to legislate an Employment First policy. During the first project year, the Mississippi chapter of the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE), in collaboration with MSPE, worked with legislators to introduce an Employment First bill. While it did not pass during the 2013 legislative session, MSPE consortium members and other advocates analyzed steps to lead to a more successful outcome the following year. They researched Employment First policies across the country and began developing language pertinent to the culture and politics of the state.

Building from this process, project staff developed a new work plan to create community awareness and support. Staff met individually with state agency leadership to inform them about how the proposed legislation would impact each of their departmental operations. Afterwards, disability advocates recruited legislative sponsors, and Mississippi APSE took the lead again in advocating for the bill's introduction.

Additionally, MSPE and Mississippi APSE worked together in sponsoring a Mississippi Employment First Day at the state capitol in early 2014. The event included a press conference and informational displays about transition from school to work and community employment for individuals with disabilities. All of these actions led to an Employment First executive order signed by Governor Bryant on January 14, 2014, which re-establishes a disability resource commission to oversee future results and guide efforts to sustain the work of MSPE.

The MSPE managing partners have made recommendations to the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house for individuals to serve on the commission. The recommendations include leadership of the MSPE consortium, parents of young adults with disabilities, and self-advocates. The appointed individuals will collect employment and other disability-related data, make recommendations to address barriers, comment on proposed legislation affecting employment, request state agencies to report goals and objectives relevant to the order, and submit an annual report to the governor and legislature.

Data and recommendations will focus on improving outcomes for youth with disabilities starting at age 14 to ensure that transition services are addressed and supports for community employment are sustained regardless of age of entry to the workforce.

We thank the Partnerships in Employment grantees for their contributions to and reviews of the emerging practices in their state.

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