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Nebraska Conference on Employment of Persons with Disabilities

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**NEBRASKA CONFERENCE ON EMPLOYMENT
OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Center for Applied Urban Research
College of Public Affairs and Community Service
University of Nebraska at Omaha

January 1987

Conference Coordinator
Floyd T. Waterman



An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Educational Institution



Nebraska Conference on Employment of Persons with Disabilities

The conference was sponsored by the Nebraska State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, Department of Health, and the Center for Applied Urban Research, University of Nebraska at Omaha. The conference convened at the Midtown Holiday Inn, Grand Island, NE, on Thursday, November 13, and concluded at 3:00 p.m. on Friday, November 14, 1986.

This report contains a summary of the evaluations and a paper prepared by the keynote speaker. This report also includes a list of all participants (181), whether they attended part or all of the conference. Approximately 160 participants stayed for the entire conference.

One hundred sixty-one persons were served at the luncheon on Friday, and 112 evaluation forms were submitted at the close of the conference and one was mailed in the next week. Thus, there were a total of 113 evaluations. An estimated 71 percent of the participants submitted evaluations. Sixty-four persons (57 percent) wrote comments in the optional section of the evaluation form. The most common comment was similar to "I would have enjoyed the chance to attend at least one or two more workshops." Twenty-eight respondents (44 percent) indicated an interest in attending more than two workshops. However, there were no rooms available at the hotel for additional workshops to be scheduled on Thursday because of a another conference in the hotel. The dates of the conference had to be changed twice and more adequate hotel space was simply not available.

Eleven forms contained comments about the hotel, food service, cafe, microphones and audio-visual equipment. "Workshop rooms were too small," "Food at the group meals was mediocre," "Beef was tough; chicken half raw," "Waitresses were rude; service slow." "Holiday Inn management should be given feedback on poor quality of facilities."

Both written comments and evaluation ratings expressed general satisfaction with speakers, workshop resource persons, and the conference. Ratings of above average or excellent totaled 89.8 percent for keynote speaker, Dr. Colleen Wieck. One person said, "I could have listened all day to her." Dr. Wieck received 69.9 percent above average or excellent ratings for her closing comments.

Several persons indicated an interest in more conferences like this one and the overall evaluation of the conference with 113 persons rating it was 27.6 percent average, 55.2 percent above average, and 17.2 percent excellent. Many comments stated that good planning was evident and some participants simply expressed appreciation for the conference.

The Conference Coordinator hopes that individuals will network more, and for this reason, a list of the participants and their addresses is supplied. A copy of this report and participant list is being mailed to each individual listed. Appreciation is expressed to the members of the planning group, to DeAnn Hughes, Program Officer, and Eric Evans, Director, Developmental Disabilities.

Conference Closing Remarks: Where do we go from here?

Legal and Policy Issues In the Transition To Productive Employment*

by

Colleen Wieck, Ph.D.

Public policy can be reduced to three questions: (a) what should government do? (b) what government says it does? and (c) what does government actually do?

The purpose of this chapter is to provide answers to these three questions as related to the transition of youth with disabilities to productive employment. Suggestions will also be provided on how to accelerate systems change in moving from adult services that are segregated day programs to employment options. Finally, a list of potential pitfalls will be described to give warning against the inevitable perversion of good ideas.

What should government do?

The first question of what government should do is usually traced back to the Constitution, the values base underlying political theory, and the fundamental beliefs about freedom, privacy, and justice that are commonly understood and accepted in the United States. The judicial branch is the arm of government that usually serves as a conscience in reminding all of us what should be occurring when actions stray from the values base.

*The core ideas of Dr. Wieck's closing address at the Nebraska Conference (November 14, 1986) on Employment of Persons with Disabilities are contained in this chapter which Dr. Wieck has prepared for publication; she has made this available to us and granted permission to distribute it to conference participants.

People with severe disabilities have value. A person's value is independent of the ability to produce in the work place. The preference today is for people with severe disabilities to be fully integrated into our communities, into our lives, and into our employment settings. Not only is integration ethically correct, existing research indicates that people with severe disabilities make the greatest gains in integrated settings (Conroy, 1986).

There is no section in our Constitution that states people with disabilities ought to be employed but the values base of the United States has always favored work, productive contributions, and the belief of inborn Calvinism in the genetic pool of Americans.

In the broadest review of various strata of society today, the same emphasis on work and productivity is underway in all welfare reform issues. AFDC mothers, people with mental illness, and people with disabilities are all being viewed as potentially productive, independent, and employable members of our society. Federal, state, and local governments have been given responsibility to give clear preference and direction to employment and productive activities rather than reinforce lifestyles that emphasize dependence, inactivity, and segregation.

Supported employment is a natural extension of a federal, state, and local commitment to providing full, productive lives for people with severe disabilities. The facts have been repeated often:

- Unemployment rates for people with developmental disabilities range from an estimated 50% (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1983) to 90% (Kiernan and Brinkman, 1985).

According to a Lou Harris poll.

- Not working is perhaps the truest definition of what it means to be disabled: two-thirds of all disabled Americans between the age of 16 and 64 are not working. Sixty-six percent of working-age disabled persons, who are not working, say that they would like to have a job.

The Lou Harris poll concluded,

- Key comparisons between working and non-working disabled persons, aged 16 to 64, show that work makes a vast qualitative difference in the lives of disabled persons. Those who work are better educated, and have much more money. They are also more satisfied with life, much less likely to consider themselves disabled, and much less likely to say that their disability has prevented them from reaching their full abilities as a person. (International Center for the Disabled, 1986, pp. 4-5).

Supported employment provides an answer to dozens of barriers that prevent people from being employed. There are individual barriers, agency barriers, local barriers, and state barriers that must be overcome in order to provide activities that foster productivity, independence, and integration into community living. Here are some of the barriers.

Individual barriers.

- Persons with severe disabilities may lose or fear loss of eligibility for Supplemental Security Income and Medical Assistance benefits if their earnings exceed a break-even point.
- Individual insurance issues including employer fears of increased rates for workers' compensation and unemployment insurance.
- Individuals and families are reluctant to accept placement outside traditional programs. Families may view segregated programs as more stable.
- Client characteristics such as profound mental retardation, medical conditions or behavior problems may be used as reasons to prevent placement in supported employment.
- Some persons with disabilities are discouraged or unaware of options and stay at home receiving no services. The waiting list issue is a potential time bomb for every state given the numbers of people who have no service.

Agency barriers.

- Mission statements and structural organization of day programs reflect traditional approaches; managers and board members may be unaware of new employment options or how to convert to this option.
- Staff may not have adequate pre-service or inservice training in supported employment or working with adults with severe disabilities.
- Staff may be reluctant to place workers with severe disabilities outside traditional programs.
- There are insufficient funds for start-up costs and ongoing operational costs of supported employment or there may be constraints on how funds can be used.
- People with disabilities cannot receive services because of the readiness model which perpetuates the lack of movement of people and waiting lists.
- There is a conflict between maintaining internal production schedules and placing "good workers" which would reduce production capacity.
- Providers and employers may not understand how to comply with legal requirements such as subminimum wage certificates.
- Interagency service coordination is needed to reduce confusion or conflict caused by multiple individual plans for the same person.
- Public transportation may be unavailable or inaccessible.

Local barriers

- Case management systems tend to have high ratios of clients to case managers, high turnover, and lack of specialized training especially about supported employment.
- Employment outcomes may not be included or even considered in Individual Plans.

- There are few efforts to evaluate the quality of Individual Plans or the actual services delivered.

State barriers.

- State statutes and policies do not reflect system outcomes of independence, integration and productivity for individuals with severe disabilities.
- State agencies and provider organizations face fiscal disincentives and problems in funding ongoing support services. There are multiple funding sources and regulations that differ for day activity centers and sheltered workshops.
- Interagency coordination is difficult because of multiple state agencies involved in the issue of supported employment. There is a need to define leadership roles and give "lead agency" responsibility to one department.
- Outreach efforts are needed to involve employers in order to meet the anticipated demand for supported employment placements.
- There are inadequate computerized systems to track the data needed to evaluate supported employment on the basis of individual client outcomes.

Changes in federal and state laws and regulations can address each type of barrier in order to have government do what it should. Greater detail on strategies will be described later in this chapter.

What government says it does.

The second part of the definition of public policy is what government says it does or the actions taken.

These actions are laws, rules, and funding mechanisms. This branch of government tends to be Congress, State Legislatures, and local government such as counties, cities, school boards.

The actions include federal and state changes in laws supporting employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The 1986 Federal Vocational Rehabilitation Act and state legislation have given new credibility to supported employment. Local government has also begun to change its actions through plans, contracts, and funding supported employment programs.

In public policy, we tend to institutionalize good ideas by placing concepts in law, or by enacting mandates, entitlements, or preferences for programs such as supported employment.

Over the last three decades, federal and state legislation has encouraged development of sheltered employment and rehabilitation facilities. The number of programs and clients increased dramatically during this time. Incentives were added to encourage serving people with severe disabilities. A review of three past actions is important to establish the context for the current conversion underway in the field.

During the 1970s, the federal government sponsored several major studies of sheltered workshops (Greenleigh and Associates, 1975; U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), 1977, 1979; U.S. General Accounting Office, 1980). These studies gathered a considerable amount of national data on sheltered workshop services and clients, identified some major problems in the sheltered workshop service system, and made policy recommendations which addressed the identified problem areas.

Among the major findings of the studies were:

- By 1978, the national sheltered workshop population had increased to almost five times its 1968 level. A major portion of the growth occurred in work activity programs, which accounted for almost two-thirds of the sheltered work population in 1978. (DOL, 1977, p. 35; DOL, 1979, p. 29)
- From an almost equal balance between persons with physical and mental handicaps in 1969, the workshop population shifted to being three-fourths people who are mentally retarded or mentally ill by 1977. (DOL, 1977, p. 337; DOL, 1979, p. 29)
- The Department of Labor reported that the average hourly wage for all workshop clients was 81 cents an hour. The study found that

two-thirds of the workshop clients received supplemental income or other support. (DOL, 1979, pp. 18, 59)

- Lack of suitable work in sufficient amounts was a major problem for many workshop programs; many workshops experienced difficulty in marketing products and services. (Greenleigh, 1975, pp. 29-30, 362; DOL, 1979, p. 38)
- Many workshops were substantially underutilized because of funding limitations; the size of the operating budget in many of the workshops was inadequate to support the programs. (DOL, 1977, p. 5)
- Clients moved from workshops into competitive employment at a rate of 12 to 13 percent of the total clients served annually; the placement rate for work activity clients was 7 percent. (DOL, 1977, p. 6; Greenleigh, 1975, p. 341)
- The General Accounting Office (GAO) (1980) reported that several deficiencies in states; reevaluations (required by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) were limiting sheltered workers' opportunities for placement in competitive employment. (GAO, 1980, p. i)

These studies drew considerable attention to several important sheltered work issues. From 1978 through 1980, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (DHEW) conducted a series of policy analysis activities designed to follow up on the recommendations of the Greenleigh and Department of Labor studies. Whitehead (1979a) reported on a number of the major policy questions addressed by DHEW, including several related to the organization of work activity centers, the provision of independent living services in workshops, the dual missions of transitional and extended employment services, the amount and types of work done in workshops, the income maintenance policies of federal programs such as SSI (Supplemental Security Income) and SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance) and coordination of services and financial support in the workshop service system.

Whitehead summarized the actions recommended by the DHEW Task Force:

- We need to switch from the use of the term "work activity center" to think in terms of a work-oriented program of training and

development rather than therapeutic, custodial type services. Legislative or regulatory changes are needed in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

- Greater attention is needed to develop productivity and earnings of persons with severe handicaps, thereby reducing their dependency on supplemental income but maintaining eligibility for the benefits of income support programs for those with special needs.
- The sheltered workshop must be recognized as an employer as well as service provider, and persons with handicaps in long-term employment must be accorded status as employees rather than clients. Fringe benefits must be provided, but subsidy by government may be required. (Whitehead, 1979a, p. 40)

Several authors have used data from the national studies as a starting point for further analysis of specific sheltered work issues, particularly those related to the purpose of workshops and the benefits obtained by clients and workers in sheltered workshop programs. (Bellamy et al., 1981; Leclair, 1976; Lilly, 1979; Whitehead, 1978, 1979b)

Bellamy et al. (1981) were among the first to outline a proposal for redesigning services by differentiating short-term transitional services leading to competitive employment from long-term structured employment opportunities for individuals who require ongoing support. Bellamy et al. advocate an emphasis on work and productivity at all service levels and a focus on work-related benefits for all consumers.

The 1986 Vocational Rehabilitation Amendments clearly demonstrate a new emphasis on supported employment and serving people with the most severe disabilities. These amendments solidify the grants to 27 states through the Office Special Education and Rehabilitative Service (OSERS) to convert from sheltered services to supported employment. At the state level, similar legislative activity is underway to make supported employment a preferred option.

The demand for employment opportunities and a new way of doing business is further accelerated by the transition initiative. Thousands of individuals are graduating from public school as a result of P.L. 94-142. These individuals could be placed in segregated day placements or on waiting lists if government does not act. While P.L. 94-142 embraced concepts such

employment options. Noble and Conley (1986) have reported on growing evidence that compares outcomes of existing day programs with supported employment and they have reached several conclusions:

- Earnings are clearly higher when employment is in integrated, regular job settings. Earnings of persons in enclaves, VCU job coach, and STETS models were three to four times higher than those persons in sheltered workshops and work activity and eight to ten times higher than the STP program.
- A substantial portion of the differences in aggregate client earnings among the program models is the result of differing number of hours worked rather than the differing productivity levels of clients. Clients in integrated employment worked more hours than persons in sheltered employment and work activity centers.
- Although client earnings would be expected to change as a function of the declining level of disability, this is not borne out by the data.

Supported employment differs from the traditional rehabilitation services in terms of time, training, and ongoing support. Vocational rehabilitation has tended to provide short term training and assistance in order to produce competitive employment. There was no ongoing support once people were competitively employed. Because the clientele includes people with the most severe disabilities, supported employment modifies the traditional approach in at least two ways: (1) the initial training and assistance is flexible in length and duration and (2) support is ongoing and does not mean a closure or does not necessarily lead to competitive employment.

How to Accelerate Systems Change

At a state level, there are at least four strategies or mechanisms to produce systems change. These tools include: (a) information related activities, (b) financial measures, (c) regulatory approaches, and (d) service delivery.

Information related activities relevant to supported employment for youth in transition include generating information such as a census of the number of youth with handicaps graduating from public schools, data about demonstrations, evaluation data about adult service outcomes, data from public

as individualization, integration, mandated eligibility, and independence, the adult service system (often funded by Medicaid) is characterized by no mandates, segregation, and dependence.

In the legislative record, the Senate Subcommittee on the Handicapped provided a clear description of the problems:

...the overwhelming paucity of effective programming for these handicapped youth, which eventually accounts for unnecessarily large numbers of handicapped adults who become unemployed and therefore dependent on society. These youth historically have not been adequately prepared for the changes and demands of life after high school. In addition, few, if any, are able to access or appropriately use traditional transitional services. Few services have been designed to assist handicapped young people in their efforts to enter the labor force or attain their goals of becoming self sufficient adults, and contributing members to our society (p. 1367).

What government actually does.

The final part of the definition of public policy is what government actually does or the outcomes and impact of public policy.

The branch of government responsible for action is the Executive branch. At the federal level the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services is responsible; at the state level we have developmental disabilities divisions and vocational rehabilitation division; and at the regional or local level we may have private vendors under contract.

Through government action programs and services are actually delivered and expenditures are made. The impact on the individual and family occurs at this point.

As described earlier, the effects of existing sheltered and day programs resulted in large numbers of people earning small wages, working in segregated sites, experiencing underemployment, and not moving through the "continuum" these problems resulted in the demand for reform. The most often used example of the combination of these problems is Bellamy's anecdote about the average age of a client who is finally "ready for work" but is over retirement age. If new outcomes of independence, productivity, and integration into community life are to become reality, then there is a need to change paradigms and service models from existing approaches to supported

hearings regarding the vocational rehabilitation plan, monitoring data on number of students in segregated settings or the number of people on waiting lists.

In addition to generating data, advocates need to package information in a form to market to policymakers. Marketing includes delivering one or two main concepts in a visual, graphic style. The main concepts can be the changes in productivity and income for people in supported employment compared to traditional day programs. This information can be disseminated in a number of ways including the regular media, reports, conferences, seminars, workshops, legislative hearings, and newsletters.

Financial measures that can promote supported employment for youth in transition include use of taxing authority or special targeted tax credits for employers, use of grants from the federal or state government, development of contracts with providers that give preference to employment rather than other activities, loans to providers to buy businesses, reward to job coaches for successful placements, incentives such as sections 1619(a) and (b) for people with disabilities who can earn wages without losing medical benefits, and setting priorities and allocating funds at the local level to address this emerging population.

Regulatory measures include setting standards at the highest levels that provide clear direction to pursue employment options, certification that supports the new models rather than old approaches, audits of performance of existing service providers by independent reviewers and evaluation approaches that emphasize systematic sampling of consumer and family satisfaction and collection of data related to productivity, independence, and integration into community life.

Finally, delivery of service can be handled using existing vendors, developing new vendors, and breaking ground in developing partnerships with business and the private sector. Let me describe in greater detail activities in each of these categories.

Information Related Activities

At the highest level of state government the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and executive staff must become informed about supported employment and the transition issue. All Governors have made jobs and

economic development one of their top priorities. The supported employment initiative is highly compatible with an existing economic development agenda.

The Governor's Office can make public statements through their press officers, release executive orders, create commissions, make site visits, and give awards to outstanding employers. The Governor needs to be personally touched by the possibilities of this supported employment effort.

The Administration on Developmental Disabilities funded a two year grant with the Council of State Planning Agencies to involve ten states in a policy academy aimed to increase the self sufficiency of people with disabilities. Each state team included representatives from the Governor's office, Legislature, executive agencies, and advocacy groups. During two academies, each team created a state plan to further supported employment including attention to the transition population. This academy approach may be one of the best mechanisms to involve Governors in the concept of supported employment.

In addition to Governor's staff, state agency heads need to be committed to this shift in paradigms and be supportive in similar ways to the Governor. State agency heads can also issue press releases, appoint task forces, and hold public hearings to hear testimonials.

Informational materials for providers, advocacy groups, and consumers need to be specifically tailored for raising awareness and providing necessary technical information. Position statements must promote the values base underlying supported employment. At least one agency must be bold in public pronouncements about the efficacy of the approach. Mass distribution is needed to articulate the vision of what government should do. For example, Callahan of Marc Gold Associates has a one page statement that declares:

All persons with disabilities should have:

1. Interactions with non-disabled persons, in integrated settings.
2. Daily routines which approximate those of non-disabled persons.
3. Access to age appropriate activities.
4. Instruction and opportunity for meaningful and functional activities.
5. Direct involvement in all decisions which affect their lives.

Another type of publication that a state agency should publish in summary data from the school census, from surveys conducted of existing

providers, and other types of evaluation data. Most policymakers ask two questions about programs: (a) How many people are involved? and (b) How much money is spent? Policymakers can become interested in a topic if you have some compelling evidence and anecdotes particularly about their constituents. Data about clients, expenditures, staffing, and outcomes published on a regular basis can be very helpful for budget reviews, preparation of fiscal notes for proposed legislation, testimony, legal briefs for court cases, and monitoring progress toward the vision.

Another marketing tool can be a policy briefing book featuring photographs, charts and graphs, and large type that provides a digest of data for people too busy to read.

Information can be converted into training packages and manuals to raise expectations for parents and consumers. Another tool is to develop a checklist for parents and consumers to judge the quality of IEPs and school to work activities to decide if the tasks are age-appropriate, functional, and community referenced. Parents can win the "war of inches" by refusing to sign IEPs that include inappropriate and childish activities.

Other types of information must be directed at training and technical assistance to providers to develop attitudes and skill changes in board members, administrators, and staff. The training must include information about values, introductory concepts of supported employment, Department of Labor standards, and actual "how to's".

A critical target group that needs information about employment opportunities is case managers. Typically, the case management system has used a "place and pray model" of referring and placing individuals into service programs and then going on to the next person. Supported employment for youth in transition requires a completely opposite approach as outlined below.

	<u>Traditional Programs</u>	<u>Supported Employment</u>
Assessment	Uses medical, psychological, social history, and adaptive behavior approaches.	Community referenced approach--what does the person need to know to function in the adult environment.

Planning	Use a list of existing services and complete application forms for placement.	Use generic services to plan package of supports.
Implementation	Placement with annual plans and quarterly reviews.	Be a community organizer to assemble and build informal relationships.
Evaluation	Closure, quality of care.	Ongoing follow along and quality of life measures.

If possible, every state should capitalize on media campaigns without falling prey to "pathetic hire the handicapped" slogans. In response to the Administration on Developmental Disabilities Advertising Federation Initiative, the Minnesota Ad Fed Club worked directly with a consortium to develop the Hireability Campaign. A highly innovative ad agency generated a series of visual messages such as:

"Hire the handicapped, your parents did"
featuring President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

"Would you hire a veteran with a bad back?"
featuring President John F. Kennedy.

"What kind of job can you give someone with a disability?"
featuring President Ronald Reagan.

The media campaign included posters, magazine ads, newspaper ads, bus shelter ads, tv commercials, and billboards. Each display carried a toll free number that has now been converted to the statewide number for supported employment. The campaign was given several national awards and generated hundreds of phone calls.

Financial Measures

Each state needs to review its own tax code to determine if there are incentives that can be added for businesses to hire people with disabilities. At the federal level, the Targeted Jobs Tax Credit program has been reinstated and should be used whenever possible.

Fiscal measures such as grants have allowed the opportunity for innovative activities such as supported employment to be tested. Discretionary federal funding can come from OSERs or the Administration on Developmental Disabilities while at the state level, the Developmental Disabilities Council, mental retardation/developmental disabilities funding, vocational rehabilitation and vocational education can be sources of funding. In Minnesota, we were also fortunate to have private sector financing from the McKnight Foundation. In setting up terms of supported employment grants, several requirements can be added such as (a) requiring local participation (cash or time) not just letters of support, (b) requiring interagency applications that specify the local agencies to be involved, (c) require cooperation with vocational rehabilitation, (d) require people with the most severe disabilities be included in the target population, (e) require evidence of changeover, and (f) require coordinated relationships with the private sector. Some grants can be used to purchase businesses while other grants are restricted to purchase of consultants of training.

At the local level, contracts between government and local providers can be amended to specify the type of service to be delivered. Purchase of service arrangements can be modified to be performance based contracts that are oriented to supported employment. Contracts can specify that the first option of service will be supported employment.

A long range financing issue will be how to redirect funding streams to create a long term, stable source of funding for supported employment. There are several current funding approaches including Title XIX, the Home and Community Based Waiver, Title XX, state funding, local tax funds, vocational rehabilitation, vocational education and school aids that could be used for supported employment for youth in transition. There may be more "folklore" that governs what is possible than actual limitations that exist in statute or rules. Pilot projects may be one way to allow a state to experiment with mixing and matching funding streams. Another approach is seek new funds from the Legislature specifically for the purpose of supported employment.

Regulatory Approaches

Supported employment now exists in the federal Vocational Rehabilitation Act and states will probably follow this lead with their own state statutes. In states with both rehabilitation facilities and day activity programs, a question will be raised regarding the gradual blurring of missions and the eventual merger of these local agencies.

Changes in state statutes should clearly delineate the outcomes expected from supported employment. The Legislature can adopt definitions of productivity, independence, and integration and require quarterly reporting on these outcomes. Washington state has developed a reporting system that allows comparisons of performance over time as well as among agencies. Relevant variables that should be included are hours of work, integration, wages, cumulative earnings, length of employment, and cost data. In some cases individual level data may be necessary to monitor changes in outcomes. Cost data remain illusive until a standard accounting procedure can be developed to identify costs associated with supported employment.

Finally, we need to move beyond slides to pre- and post-videotapes in order to have the necessary documentation that supported employment works. The pre-videotapes should include an accurate portrayal of the setting and activities of all individuals at segregated programs. The post-videotapes should include a return to the original setting for comparison purposes and a sample of the work settings for the individuals who are competitively employed. The difference in settings will clearly demonstrate the effects of "retarding environments."

Service Delivery

The success of supported employment will be the degree to which consumers, parents, and employers are empowered rather than the degree of "technocrat" control.

Demands must be placed on government agencies to serve people with the most severe disabilities, to not create mini-continuum approaches, to not doom good ideas to bureaucratic rules, and to talk to one another without fear of takeover. What counts isn't spending years of time and thousands of person hours writing a perfect interagency agreement that results in no

action. What counts is bold actions that lead to outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

The availability of work is not the most critical barrier in supported employment. The private sector is feeling the effects of demographic trends and is searching for youth, older workers, and people with disabilities to fill the need for service workers. Local providers should capitalize on these opportunities.

Business partnerships can be formed at the state or local level. Several states such as Connecticut and Massachusetts have formalized these groups in an effort to have the private sector influence the private sector.

Local providers are also reaching new levels of sophistication in their dealings with businesses. Some agencies maintain contact with the Secretary of State's Office to monitor new nonprofit agencies that have been formed and the Department of Economic Development to monitor new business activities. Local agencies join the Chamber of Commerce and create their own business networks. These same agencies are beginning to evaluate employment opportunities in terms of criteria such as: Does this job provide for opportunities to interact with individuals who are not disabled? Does this job lead to opportunities for friendship? Does this job lead to a career ladder?

Avoiding Six Pitfalls of Supported Employment

Despite our best efforts, pitfalls and perversions are inevitable. First, terms such as supported employment, supportive employment, supported competitive employment and even transition have become confusing, oversimplified buzzwords.

There are as many definitions as number of people describing the topics. Ed Martin (1986) has described the reification of "mainstreaming" and "transition" when "one word is used to describe a variety of different possibilities as though they were all identical."

In other words, there are certain characteristics such as paid employment, integrated setting, minimum hours of work, and ongoing public support and follow along that define employment patterns. Labels are assigned depending upon variations and amounts. The label becomes real and soon all types of other activities are recategorized to fit labels (and funding

possibilities). The pitfall is confusion particularly for policymakers who do not take time to understand the nuance between supported employment and supported work or between seven non-handicapped workers or ten non-handicapped workers.

Second, we should all pray for a massive epidemic of common sense to carry us through this new initiative particularly as we pursue integration. The terms mild, moderate, severe, and profound not only classify levels of mental retardation but also categorize levels of loneliness. In pursuing integration we must guard against the pursuit of loneliness. There must be sensitivity to relationships, friendships, and development of acceptance by peers in selection of employment opportunities.

Third, the experiences of deinstitutionalization provide some excellent parallel examples of pitfalls and perversions. Some individuals have argued that supported employment is cheaper than traditional day programs. This argument has haunted the field of deinstitutionalization since total costs have never dropped particularly when double systems of traditional and new programs run simultaneously. The cost comparisons of people with less handicaps with those with more severe needs have never been fair to people who needed more resources.

To date, our experiences with supported employment have typically included individuals with mild handicaps. This practice is meant to ensure success for the employer, individual, and service provider. Unfortunately this is the same trap of deinstitutionalization in that individuals with severe handicaps will be the last to leave traditional programs. A future potential argument will be made that those who are the most severely handicapped will always require special buildings and segregated programs. The individuals will then be incorrectly labeled as a "residual population."

Another common practice in deinstitutionalization and supported employment is to place first and worry about quality assurance when problems arise. If we can learn from deinstitutionalization, we will design state of the art quality assurance and monitoring approaches. Dispersed scattered placements will require a much more flexible monitoring approach than accreditation models.

In deinstitutionalization there was confounding between the value of people with the value of buildings. The greatest achievement in the United States would be to call a halt to all specially constructed facilities to serve

people with disabilities. We need accessible space in regular work sties or in regular houses, not special buildings or special houses.

Fourth, another common pitfall is to place all the emphasis on the process of the transition and not on outcomes. There must be clearly stated outcomes related to employment and community living. Parents and students must raise their expectations about what is possible rather than accept waiting lists of traditional day programs. Integration is demanded in adult employment but we are willing to forgive and overlook segregation in public schools. Public schools must transform education into functional curricula, age appropriate activities, and teaching in natural environments.

Fifth, national and state management information systems may be perpetuating myths and the out of date continuum model. Because individuals who are mildly handicapped are placed first in employment settings, any longitudinal data will equate success with characteristics (young, white male with mild mental retardation). For researchers and practitioners there will be a temptation to convert this information into an assessment tool to predict success on a widespread basis. This assessment approach will perpetuate the "creaming principle" of taking the individuals with the least handicaps first. Another potential problem is the collection of data to describe movement from one program to another. Movement implies individuals transferring from one program to another. With supported employment as an outcome there may be not any additional movement necessary only a change in the intensity of support services. Finally, there is the "Bob McNamara principle" learned in the Vietnam War and that is to count early and often. The pursuit of numbers leads to duplicated counts and pronouncements of success although the data may be faulty.

Finally, the last pitfall is to maintain a human services mentality and approach to the topic. Authority and responsibility for employment should be retained by the private sector. In the interim, we should learn several lessons from business. First, the business sector is much wiser about planning and demographic trends, particularly labor shortages for certain service jobs. The business sector is recruiting labor from all available sectors--elderly, youth, and people with disabilities. Second, business people understand our concepts but use fewer words to explain them. We talk about normalization and social role valorization while business people say, "Get a job." We talk about "socially and culturally appropriate patterns of behavior." Business people do not hesitate to say, "Comb your hair, get a shave, and take a shower."

By recognizing the potential pitfalls early, we can assure that government will not only do what is right, but also do things right.

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