State Employment Leadership Network

Pennsylvania
Findings and Observations Report
State Employment Leadership Network (SELN)

Site Visit Dates: March 13-15 & 18-19, 2013

Final Report: October 2013

SELN Member State Agency: Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs (ODP), Department of Public Welfare

Process for Development of Findings and Observations Report
We reviewed:

- ODP's SELN State Strategic Employment Full Assessment

- State policy documents and resource materials

- Participant feedback collected during the five March 2013 SELN Focus Groups conducted during site visits in State College, Wilkes-Barre, King of Prussia, State College, Edinboro, Pittsburgh (total participants: 177)

- Participant feedback collected during the May 2013 ODP Employment Focus Groups collected from Individuals with Disabilities and Families (total participants: 99)

- Data sources from the following surveys:

  - SELN Supplement survey (stakeholder) responses: **312 completed surveys**
  - SELN Individual and Family survey responses: **412 completed surveys**
  - PA AFP 2013 "Supports Coordinators & Employment Survey" *Supports Coordinators Only* : **79 completed surveys**
  - PA AFP 2013 "Supports Coordinators & Employment Survey" *Directors, Managers, and Supervisors Only*: **35 completed surveys**

SELN Project Team

Site Visit and Report:
Rie Kennedy-Lizotte- National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disability Services (NASDDDS)
Suzzanne Freeze- University of Massachusetts, Boston Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI)

Report:
John Kramer- University of Massachusetts, Boston Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI)
Sheila Johnson- University of Massachusetts, Boston Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI)

Introduction

The SELN is a membership-based network of state developmental disability (DD) agencies committed to making changes in their service systems. The SELN is an active and engaged community of practice where members meet to connect, collaborate, and share information and lessons learned across state lines and system boundaries. Participating state agency officials build cross-community support for pressing employment-related issues and policies at state and federal levels. States commit to work together and engage in a series of activities to analyze key elements in their systems to improve the integrated employment outcomes for their citizens with developmental disabilities. Technical assistance to each member state is customized to the unique needs of each state based on the current system of supports and goals for improvement. Member states are guided through a detailed process to both assist the SELN project team with learning about the state system and to begin organizing the state agency's own planning for system improvements.

Upon joining the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN), the Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs, as a new member state agency, completed the SELN State Strategic Employment Assessment in March of 2013. This comprehensive appraisal tool provides a description and analysis of the state's infrastructure and support for achieving integrated employment outcomes among persons with developmental disabilities receiving publicly-financed support.

ODP also invited stakeholders, partners and customers to participate in and complete both in-person discussions and online surveys so that opportunities were offered to gather input regarding their current perceptions and experiences from a wide range of perspectives. The list above and the Appendix reflect the scope of input sought, the

various roles represented and the total number of respondents' for each of the various avenues in gathering input from stakeholders. The number of opportunities for input is greater for this particular review than any other SELN member state, and the large number of responses received, together represents a tremendous

opportunity for ODP, DPW and their respective funding and policy partners to achieve the outcomes sought and needed by individuals and families.

Using ODP's State Strategic Employment Assessment response as a guide, the SELN Project Team conducted an on-site visit in March 2013. Meetings were conducted with key state agency officials as identified by ODP; regional, county, and local leaders; agency directors, self-advocates, families, providers; and other partners in the effort to improve individual integrated employment outcomes. Participants in the stakeholder focus group discussions contributed to the goal of developing a better understanding of the state context for employment in Pennsylvania. All of the surveys noted above as well as feedback from various stakeholder focus groups have all been reviewed for key insights. Information gathered through the entire process from March to May 2013 is summarized in this Findings and Observations report prepared by SELN staff. **This is a point in time report focused on PA employment services that support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.**

Organizing the Report

This report identifies the seven key elements essential to improving and achieving employment success. The graphic below is used throughout SELN marketing materials to depict the High-Performing Framework and elements:
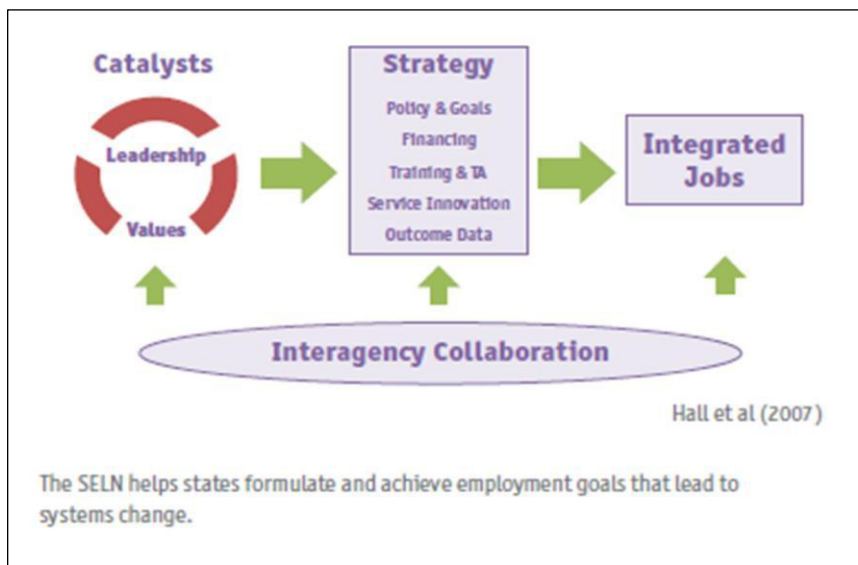
The report summarizes the results of the assessment process to "Key Findings" and suggests opportunities for improvement in "Potential Focus Areas." The state agency and other partners may use the report as the basis for the development of a work plan detailing the outcomes, activities to achieve set goals, and strategies to pursue in the months and years ahead to improve individual, integrated employment outcomes for Pennsylvania citizens with disabilities.

ODP was originally an SELN member from the spring of 2008 through July 2010. During that time a site visit and Findings and Observations report were completed. Relevant portions from that report are referenced herein.

The SELN staff will conduct follow-up meetings with ODP and related partners to identify key outcomes to address through SELN membership and develop effective implementation strategies on the State's selected areas of focus.

Additionally, it is critical that ODP continues to support an active dialogue with individuals with disabilities, their families, paid staff, as well as private and governmental entities as partners, if it is serious about achieving improved integrated employment outcomes. The review represents an unprecedented solicitation of input and it is crucial for state leadership to respond through action and implementation of a work plan that includes measurable system improvements.

I. Leadership

A. Key Findings.

- Pennsylvania's Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) has been in a state of transition for several years as key leadership staff have changed and as such, an emphasis on improving integrated employment options has been given limited attention. Acknowledging that day and employment options are only one aspect of what state intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) agencies address is a reality, but not focusing the needed resources and ensuring accountability across the state continue to remain a tremendous liability.

- While many states are struggling to ensure continuity, fiscal solvency, and customer satisfaction, it is still possible to experience successes and a higher rate of integrated employment outcomes. By rejoining the SELN, ODP has a vested interest in addressing needed improvements. But it has been apparent in recent months that the realities of resolving political and practical dilemmas continue to take the agency off course from taking a leadership stand on employment issues and moving forward on major changes.

- Publicly noting the agency's goals is a key aspect in the systems improvement/change work. As noted in ODP's SELN 2013 Full Assessment, the agency is seeking to:

  - *Create an Employment First culture in PA supported by practices, funding, policy and programs.*

  - *Demonstrate a continuing increase in the number of people receiving supported employment and being competitively employed in an integrated setting.*

  - *Continuously improve the service delivery system practices and policies to achieve improved employment outcomes for youth and young adults, as well as adults receiving vocational services that are intended to move people into employment by creating cross-community support for the pressing employment related issues we face in the state systems and at the federal level, e.g., education, training, transportation, housing and healthcare.*

- o *Ensure all people who want a job have access to employment supports.*

- o *Improve coordination, collaboration, and partnerships in and outside the service community.*

- In the SELN 2008 Findings and Observations (F&O) report it was noted that ODP wanted to assure that "employment expectations are clearly understood throughout the service delivery system, and processes to support service recipients in career development activities are operationally embedded within all key service delivery system components. While these goals are still relevant, little improvement over the last five years was expressed across myriad surveys and opportunities for feedback, and the data to indicate positive change in this direction is also still not available.

- With the changes over the last five years in the administrative structure in PA, it appears there is a great divide between ODP and the service system itself. Culturally people are feeling distanced from the core values of the office.

  - o Few meaningful references to ODP's publication, "Everyday Lives" were made during the site visit or in related materials shared with the SELN team. While this publication may have represented expectations in the past, it appears it is no longer a relevant resource in describing roles, outcomes or accountabilities.

  - o A reference to revising the employment manual was noted; not clear what the entire manual would cover and who the intended audience/reader would be.

- Central office, Regional offices and Administrative entities identified that a staff person is assigned to address system issues in achieving increased employment for individuals as an outcome of service delivery. However, a consistent finding in the feedback was that stakeholders knew "someone" was supposed to be leading on employment, but rarely could anyone identify who that person might be. A lack of clear accountability in the system causes confusion and concern, and reinforces the disconnect between a central office and those in the field (both paid supports and customers).

  Very spotty. Although there are people at the State level with employment as their responsibility, it is always one of many

responsibilities for the person involved. The same is true at the local level.

There is a staff person identified within the county office but it is NOT their only responsibility. It is part of the multitude of other job duties that they are required to perform. Which is certainly not enough time?

Additionally, they sometimes do not have the power to change the system to make it more employment focused.

While it is true we have the titles and positions, the priority is not there. The positions at the providers or counties that manage the employment services are not well paid or authoritative positions, which often leaves them frustrated with their hands tied, unable to reach their goals. If it was a priority, the positions would be higher paying, have more authority, and be part of our vision and mission. It starts with the state, and we are not on the cutting edge of employment for our individuals.

- ODP is responding to a larger movement from state leadership in moving toward employment. For example, Governor Corbett has demonstrated a commitment to community employment calling it a top priority,

     I have found time and time again that working gives these citizens a sense of confidence and independence that no government program can provide. Providing real employment opportunities to people with disabilities has been one of my top priorities. – Letter to the PADE Summit
     http://padesummit.org/summit/letter-from-governor-tom-corbett/

- The Governor created an advisory committee for people with disabilities as a new interface between government and business in PA.

     o In 2006, the Governor created a cabinet and advisory committee for people with disabilities as an interface between Government and individuals with disabilities living in Pennsylvania. Following the Pennsylvania Disability Employment Summit (PADES), a new business roundtable consisting of business representatives was formed to reach out to the business community to raise awareness of the

advantages, from a business perspective, of including people with disabilities in the workforce. The round table would also provide a forum for businesses to provide input to Pennsylvania's state government programs with regard to best practices from a business perspective for inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce.

- ODP has coordinated some messaging around employment. It's crucial that leaders produce and disseminate successful examples of how employment for people with disabilities can work in Pennsylvania to people with disabilities, provider staff, and family.

  o The Works for Me website was developed with support from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) Medicaid Infrastructure Grant. Worksforme-PA.org provides literature, brochures, posters and other materials upon request. Video success stories target employers, in addition to videos intended to attract and inform individuals about community employment. Resources are available for educators and transitioning youth. Web-based training is available for human services workers, self-advocates and their families, and educators. (www.worksforme-pa.org)

  o Identify the next phase of communicating and marketing the highlights and successes in integrated employment to inform communities, individuals, families and the business community.

- ODP co-presented the first Pennsylvania Disability Employment Summit (PADES) in October 2012 and is supporting the second annual event in October 2013. The 2012 event was well attended and was noted as being a,

  …Comprehensive, progressive summit on healthcare, employment, education, transportation, and housing for people with disabilities.

  This large, public event takes place during National Disability Employment Awareness month, and represents a prime opportunity to bring together related partners (publicly-funded services such as the state's workforce system, education-related resources, vocational rehabilitation, as well as the business community), reinforce local innovations in the state, and set the tone for future activity throughout the year.

- Leadership that is knowledgeable about how to work with employers leads to strong workplace navigation and support. For example, families and individuals find leadership within direct service providers.

> *When [my son] was first looking for employment, he was taken to several different possible employers to see what he would be best suited for. Once he selected the employer he wanted to work for, the support staff provided on-site instruction and constant monitoring until he was comfortable in the job. After about a year, he was able to maintain himself in the job without constant supervision and even then he was monitored on a monthly basis (or as needed). When he had an issue with a fellow employee, he was taught to go to his supervisor instead of trying to handle it himself. When his supervisor changed, his OVR staff person (from VIA of the Lehigh Valley) was on hand to make sure the transition occurred smoothly.*

B. Potential Focal Areas

- One of the keys to increasing employment for individuals with DD will be strategic planning and development with external allies to create alternatives to current service options and a higher demand for individual integrated community employment. Individuals receiving services and their families must be fully involved in the effort to increase employment as an outcome of service, working in partnership with ODP.

- ODP is encouraged to use SELN membership as a gateway for connecting with other states' successful strategies and focusing specific technical support on aspects of goal and outcomes improvement.

- Review current roles and responsibilities of the employment leads in regions and administrative entities. Develop a strategy to prioritize the workload of these positions to focus on capacity building and ongoing technical support at the local and regional levels. Other states have defined the roles of their employment leads which have led to a clear employment focus. The employments leads promote a statewide consistent employment message which is the foundation for building a culture of employment as an outcome for working-age adults with disabilities receiving public supports and services.

- Review ODP's communications strategies to strengthen policies and practices that build on successful employment strategies and expectations across the service system for achieving integrated employment outcomes.

  o Utilize available communications channels to the field which have received positive feedback (such as the bi-monthly electronic Employment Updates).

  o Regularly share updates on employment-related activities including stories about creative funding strategies and individual successes.

  o Partner with stakeholder groups around the state who can join in the effort to communicate the importance of integrated community employment and the opportunities that are available. This includes engaging these groups in collecting both to share with others. Identify success stories, lessons learned, and the most valuable leadership characteristics needed for success by contract provider entities and reinforce them across the Commonwealth. Highlight these strategies so other providers can learn and grow.

  o Highlight employment updates using new strategies and data to increase momentum and provide accolades for innovative providers.

  o Build on the recent and major investment of Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) funds to market the benefits of employing a diverse workforce across the Commonwealth. Determine what new activities are needed to continue that work including those communication channels that get the most traffic such as the "Works for Me" website.

II.   Strategic Goals and Operating Policies.

  A. Key Findings.

- Current draft employment first policy language includes both references to guiding principles in the commonwealth and expectations for implementation. The policy reflects language specific to services funded by vocational rehabilitation as well as Home and Community-

Based Waiver services (HCBS) funded services.

- The following references to PA legislation or policy are shared in the SELN Employment First Resource List (www.seln.org) and communicate a basis for improved employment expectations:

  - PA Employment Legislation: State legislation, passed in 1991, mandates access to community employment - www.pacode.com/secure/data/055/chapter6000/subchapKtoc.html
  - PA Employment Policy - General: 2005 policy document from Pennsylvania Office of Mental Retardation on community employment as a priority - www.temple.edu/thetrainingpartnership/resources/mrBulletins/misc/00-05-07.pdf
  - PA Employment Policy – ICFs/MR: 2005 policy document from Pennsylvania Department of Public welfare on supporting community employment for individuals living in Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Mental Retardation, indicating community employment as a priority without regard to level of disability - www.temple.edu/thetrainingpartnership/resources/mrBulletins/icf/00-06-08.pdf
  - PA Employment Policy – 1990: 1990 policy document from Pennsylvania Office of Mental Retardation directing that community employment be considered as a service option before less integrated, more restricted options - www.temple.edu/thetrainingpartnership/resources/mrBulletins/misc/6000-90-06.pdf

- Despite noted references above to integrated employment or alternatives to more restrictive or less integrated environments, there was a common tone across the state during the site visit that both paid supports stakeholders (state level, provider level, etc.) and customers (individuals, family members, etc.) were often confused about who a viable employee is, current expectations around employment, and interest in policy to include who is accountable to ensure employment opportunities are discussed and explored.
  - ODP's employment manual is currently under revision.
  - Participants in the onsite SELN visit expressed differing views on how employment is defined.
  - Individuals and families, for the most part, seem to understand

that ODP is working to make employment a top priority. Collaboration between ODP and OVR about who is employable and who is not is critical.

- In PA, there continues to be a disconnection between policy, regulation, collaboration and training. This disconnect can impact the trust of individuals with disabilities and their family members in the system. People tend to choose a safer approach to services, rather than the one with the best balance between risk and growth. What families perceive as "safe" appears to be related to the consistency and clarity of the information they receive.
  - For example, some the parents in our focus groups had these things to say:

> *"It is not clearly presented to me by any one person responsible for the transition or knowledge. Even if I chose a direction, I still had to pursue all the leads, timelines, planning, and follow-ups to make something happen".*

> *"My sister beginning to work 3 days a week- must remain at day program for the other two days so that family has a place for her to go during the day".*

> *Bringing my parents around so that she can get a job to ok years! They are concerned for her safety and afraid of failure. She has a right to fail just like all of us".*

> *"Mom is employed in system: My fear for my son who lives in group home & sheltered work shop–> safety< is the biggest risk for him".*

> *"The cost of providing supervision outside a licensed day setting (prevocational or adult day) often exceeds the cap for PFDS waiver, so people choose the safety net of a day program rather than the risk of Supported Employment."*

> *"The Employment Initiative is based on the idea that everyone is employable and all people who want to work should, but families continue to struggle with concerns related to an individual's safety in the community and the need for supervision when not*

working".

> *"Families are worried about safety in the community".*

- o While OVR and ODP may think of themselves as separate entities, to a person with a disability or their family, they are seen as part of the same array of services. Collaboration amongst these two offices cannot be inconsistent, because it creates a sense of uncertainty for the future for a person with a disability. A parent spoke about how, after getting denied support from OVR, he opted for a day program, even though his son apparently qualified for employment supports from ODP.
- o The employment Supplement, while required, is viewed as a separate component to the individual planning process. This serves to reinforce employment as separate and optional rather than a key aspect of a meaningful life.

- There are numerous organizations, agencies and entities working on or addressing some aspect of employment-related activity in PA. Despite this large cohort of partners, employment outcomes in PA have not improved in recent years.

- PA's Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities (MAWD) program (Medicaid Buy-In) is available to individuals with IDD but is underutilized and often not well-understood.

- While the changing responsibilities of the administrative entity has led to some challenges on a state level, certain geographic areas have experienced successes in supporting person centered practices that lead to community integrated employment outcomes.

- The sanctioned Futures Planning process related to employment has been coordinated with ODP's other efforts such as participation in the SELN. This must continue to promote efficient use of time on the part of staff and stakeholders, and more importantly, to tie the efforts together to improve employment outcomes with knowledge gained from participating in the SELN and from the assistance of Truven Analytics facilitating the futures planning process.

B. <u>Potential Focal Areas</u>

- Articulate a clear definition of employment in all communications.

This definition would ideally reflect a priority on integrated, individual employment, but would also reflect an understanding of funded services so providers are clear on expectations.

- The draft employment first policy could benefit from a more active role between partners. The policy, as it is currently written, suggests that while partners are "encouraged" to work together, it is not required and may allow for exceptions to ODP's intent of building capacity to support more individuals in integrated community employment services. If people need other supports during non-work time, the policy should also address how the state views this option in relationship to the employment first language.

- State IDD agencies are in a key position to set the expectations for performance and outcomes across their system. Many people including individuals with disabilities, family members, and paid supports at all levels count on and want to have a clearer understanding from ODP regarding employment and the employment services that are to be provided. ODP has an opportunity to set forth a clear employment first agenda. This can be achieved by revisiting critical policies, manuals and communications to the field. Revisit PA's current and approved IDD HCBS waivers and consider amendments to highlight employment from other day or community-based supports, to clarify and prioritize expectations before utilizing other segregated service options.

  - Utilize the available SELN technical assistance resources to support ODP's work on service definitions for waiver renewals. In particular focusing on how employment is supported in these waivers and coordinating with VR.

- Re-examine how transportation is offered as a service for all day and employment services. Keep transportation a separate services, rather than imbedded into rate assumptions of some service day and employment services and not others. Facility based services currently are the services most likely to have transportation imbedded into the rate for the facility services.

  - During forums with stakeholders, transportation was a consistent topic of concern. ODP recognizes that transportation is an integral component of day and employment services. However, in service definitions transportation is imbedded within most segregated facility based day/employment services and included as a covered component

in the payment rate for the delivery of the facility based services. Transportation is a service option for those engaged in supported employment, yet is not offered as a "guaranteed" component for those receiving employment services as it is for most facility based services. This bundling of transportation within some service types and rates is causing a disincentive to integrated community employment. Other transportation opportunities with public transit authorities to use vouchers for non-medical transportation particularly for the smaller communities and rural areas of the state should be explored.

- o Transportation was identified as a critical factor to be considered in the development of an implementation strategy for improving employment outcomes especially for the rural areas in PA where limited public transportation is available.

- o Transportation should be assessed as part of one's employment plan. A job should not be viewed as sustainable if a person cannot get to it consistently.

- Identify where in the system of ODP supports there is the greatest potential for improvement (e.g., youth transitioning from high school) and address the key systems changes needed to generate the desired outcomes. This will likely include a partnership with VR, education, and other systems in building a seamless interface where all people with disabilities get the same information about employment, including the communicated expectation that it is the norm for working-age adults with developmental disabilities. Feedback from the forums, there was a central theme regarding the length of time people were in process with OVR. ODP and OVR through its collaboration efforts should address the lag time for employment services and discuss potential areas of improvement.

> *"Lack of collaboration with other agencies that can provide assistance for MAWD, work incentives, and benefits counseling".*

> *"This area poses the greatest lack of collaboration (a house divided against itself cannot stand-an old adage that should not have any part for people involved w/IDD)".*

> *"If these collaborations exist at the State level, they are*

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*not apparent. We have done much of our own outreach
to schools, voc. rehab and workforce development.
There is a regional provider network that works
towards provider collaborations with some other
outreach endeavors. Technically, all of the above
collaborations and resources exist. In reality it is not
translating to outcomes for students. We need to do
more to get the message of Employment First out to
individuals and their families. Collaborations and
partnerships between home, school and the adult
serving systems need to be strengthened. Locally, we
have outreached to transition coordinators and
teachers of transition aged youth. We have been invited
to meet with some individuals/ families, teachers and
social workers to discuss how we can partner for better
outcomes for all students."*
*"There may be collaboration that I am not aware of;
there just seems to be such a hodge-podge set of
systems and it is difficult to ferret out what works as
opposed to what is nice to know."*

- Assure policies and practices needed to support individuals and
families served by the Bureau of Autism Services are addressed in
these same efforts.

- Multiple stakeholders suggested that it be explicitly mentioned in the
employment service definitions.

III.   Financing and Contracting Methods.

A. Key Findings
- Currently the funding system offers limited incentives for providers to
support increasing integrated employment outcomes for individuals
who state a preference for work in the community. This includes how
long-term supports are determined and funded by providers who are
both VR vendors and DD employment provider agencies.

- The original Transition Services Pilot initiated many years ago was
funded to use state resources to develop sustainable and seamless
transition services. The focus was on youth and young adults exiting
school and going to work, and would support the state to develop a

coordinated system of practices among schools, local vocational rehabilitation services and IDD services. Additionally, students would be diverted away from the waiting list or segregated services.

- ODP offers both Medicaid waiver services and base-funded services. Like other states, ODP's community service system relies more heavily on facility-based service models, particularly facility-based work. A shift in the current service models will take place with training, collaboration and partnering with providers to come up with more integrated community employment options.

- There are three waivers currently available to individuals with IDD supported by the ODP system, with differing definitions of employment.

  o ODP should review all three waivers and change service definitions to come in line with agreed upon employment service definitions and outcomes between the Bureau's that operate the waivers that will be consistently applied.

  o There are also different rates for employment services across the different waivers which causes confusion across the system. Rate methodologies for employment services across the three waivers should be aligned.

  o While there was a recent increase in supported employment rates, outcomes and performance expectations should be aligned and data monitored on a consistent basis to determine if the rate increase has shown a steady increase in employment outcomes as well.

- Transportation is included in the units of services, which may be inadvertently making choice of service for individuals and their families based on convenience rather than choice of services to support a full life in the community.

B. Potential Focal Areas
  - Consider separating transportation services out of all service type rates; when the cost of transportation is included in the rate of facility-based services it can unintentionally lead individuals and families to "settle on choosing" (as one family member commented during the site visit) facility-based services over employment and other integrated services.

- Review how employment pilot resources are being used across the states and consider reissuing with new parameters that will strengthen implementation of original intent. Consider using the resources for bridge funding to assist providers of segregated services to retool their business practices to build capacity to deliver individual employment services that will lead to employment outcomes. Another option to consider is using employment pilot resources to enhance student, after school, weekend and summer employment. Research shows us that for students with or without disabilities, who have had work experience while in school, are more likely to succeed in employment as adults.

- Several SELN member states are in the process of revising rate methodologies and resource allocation methodologies. The states immersed in this work can be a resource to ODP during efforts to revisit and develop assumptions and performance expectations for a revised rate setting methodology. Increasing or decreasing rates in and of itself without taking into consideration assumptions and performance expectations, has not shown to be an effective incentive for employment outcomes.

IV. Training and Technical Assistance.

A. Key Findings
- ODP supports and tracks an array of formal training and learning opportunities with other partners, however, specific employment training is not required and thus competency development is inconsistent. Our review also found that while there are requirements for supports coordinators as new hires, as well as a specific amount of required training each year, only minimal training involves employment. Employment training of supports coordinators should include ongoing professional development to maintain and update skills regarding employment. ODP should also consider a competency based training for providers offering employment services.

- ODP currently leads a partnership focused on training for people with disabilities and families. ODP related websites listing,

  > *The Pennsylvania Training Partnership for People with Disabilities and Families was formed to provide coordinated, consistent training and technical assistance across the state to people with disabilities and their families. The state centers*

offer training each month.

- ODP's Bureau of Autism sponsors an annual Pennsylvania Autism Training Conference (PATC) with the target audience including: educators, vocational counselors, employment providers, clinicians, families, individuals.

- Stakeholders are interested in training reflecting whole person outcomes that focus on determining the maximum benefit for individuals. For example, from the AFP directors/manager survey,

  > *Training should be 'real life' focused and person centered. Many employment trainings through the years focus on that 'everyone can work', but this is not always the case. Training should be more on what standards to hold CIE providers to, actual criteria for a job fading plan, and what to do when fading supports cannot be done. Also examples of places of employment or types of jobs that individuals with significant disabilities have would be informative. We have had training provided by OVR but they are by in large unresponsive or difficult to contact when an SC is trying to get in contact with them.*

- In the AFP survey, managers identified training needs for support coordinators. They expressed a need for service coordinators to gain a much better understanding of the OVR process and general information on supported vs. customized employment, self-employment, as well as discussing employment options with families. ODP conducted a training regarding the OVR process in the past, and should re-visit this training and offer it as standard training to new supports coordinators.

B. <u>Potential Focal Areas</u>

- Develop a consistent, statewide mechanism to sustainably build and maintain a competent workforce to deliver quality employment services. These options could include a statewide employment curriculum focused on core competencies required for employment providers, a percentage of employment provider staff achieving national certification of employment specialist, etc. This would ideally include continuing education around state of the art employment practices, perhaps consistent with training the Workforce Development System staff receives. This should also include strategies for current

providers to change business practices to expand integrated community-based services and promote competitive employment.

- Align qualifications for employment service providers with the skills required to support employment outcomes. Building competencies with increased training and qualifications for providers can only improve the skills and competency of the individual providing support and the delivery of the service. Investments should be made in looking at a core competency based qualification criteria for employment providers.

- Ensure training and technical assistance will support leadership development and align with the organizational shifts that will be needed as service delivery approaches and expected outcomes change.

- It has been a few years since ODP has reviewed state support coordinator and management training curriculums to add tools to assist support coordinators to have employment discussions with individuals, their families and circles of support. This should be something that is revisited in built into the training requirements for supports coordinators. One example for ODP to consider is Oregon's Keys for Case Managers: http://www.dhs.state.or.us/dd/supp_emp/casemanagers.html The SELN would be happy to coordinate a call between Oregon and PA to discuss this most important work.

V.   Interagency Collaboration.

A. Key Findings

- While ODP, VR and the Department of Education participate in the State transition leadership team, the offices can strengthen communication about activities to date on system improvements to increase employment outcomes for transition-age youth. This is evidenced by stakeholder responses that employment is not consistently discussed during IEP meetings. A notable example of what can happen is that employment is identified in the IEP but, as a student gets closer to graduation and no employment prospects materialize, special educators may suggest sheltered work or day programs are an acceptable alternative. This underscores an underlying inconsistency in what success and coordination in employment is across the two systems.

- ODP and OVR have participated in partnerships with private industry and the advocacy sectors to strengthen a relationship with corporate America. A relationship with such public-private partnerships is related to both the emerging workforce needs and employment opportunities desired by individuals with disabilities.

  o There are pockets of employer initiative success from around the state that are worth noting. For example, Lowe's Distribution Center in Pittston, PA has a program that hires individuals on all three shifts, providing them with a variety of opportunities for growth and advancement, with competitive pay and a complete benefits package.

  o Sears Holding Corporation and Martin Guitar both have employment initiatives. They employ individuals at their Chambersburg Distribution Center with great success.

- Multiple stakeholders expressed confusion over when to refer an individual for vocational rehabilitation services. One stakeholder commented *"if person needs long-term supported employment services they cannot receive services from the Division of Rehabilitation"*.

- As National Core Indicators Data shows, in recent years, OVR has seen the percent of successful closures drop from 55% in 2007 to 45% in 2011. This compares with the US national average rehabilitation rate of 58 to 49% from 2007-2010. While the trend is parallel to the national trend, PA remains below the average.

Percent of Successful VR Closures 2011-2012 (working adults with IDD ages 16-64) *			
	2007	2010	2011
United States	58%	49%	*
PA	55%	47%	45%

Data Source: Rehabilitation Services Administration 911 database. RSA-911

NO, it is not apparent the goal is to start right after high school. OVR stresses waiting lists and possibility of months of waiting even though I opened my case last year.

Think it is important to explain, I have a son, 15, so we haven't even applied with ODP for OVR services. I will be doing that this summer, when he turns 16. However, I'm starting to get my hands around the situation and am quite aware of the cuts in

job coaching, the lack of jobs for him (intellectual disability and autism) and the waiting list. Just reading the 172 page ODP manual is overwhelming.

B. Potential Focal Areas

- Promote a relationship between (VR, Education and ODP) that supports activities for youth with disabilities to have opportunities for internships and jobs during school transition years leading to continued employment or entrance into higher education for greater career opportunities as adults.

  - In FY 2013-2014, OVR will undertake a public awareness campaign to ensure youth with disabilities and their parents are exposed to OVR early on and actively engage with Local Workforce Investment Boards and Transition Coordination Councils to maintain points of contact with Youth. Development Centers and Youth Forestry Camps in their regions.

  - Also, OVR will update its transition policy to ensure that youth with disabilities have appropriate individualized Plans for Employment as they leave the K-12 system and enter postsecondary education or the workforce.

- Consider revisions to the Memorandum of Understanding between ODP and VR. Focusing on consistent and coordinated employment definitions would be beneficial. To bring this issue to a higher level, coordination with education would also be beneficial to improving employment outcomes.

  - While OVR and ODP have been working more collaboratively together, increased emphasis should be put on developing processes that support the individuals with significant disabilities to acquire integrated employment outcomes as that would benefit both systems; addressing gaps together in shared processes would greatly assist individuals and community stakeholders in sorting through the confusion that now exists.

  - ODP and OVR should work with the education system, including Intermediate Units (IU's) focusing on transition-age youth, to clearly identify processes that do not route people

back to sheltered work or day programs. Employment is often a long-term process that may or may not align perfectly with the timing of graduation from secondary education. ODP and OVR should clearly articulate that they plan to support individuals looking for work after high school graduation if they do not have employment lined up. Looking for employment, in essence, becomes a person's full time job.

VI. Services and Service Innovations.

A. Key Findings
- Providers are guided by the basic planning tools:
  - In addition to the individual service plan (ISP), ODP issued an employment supplement (ODP Individualized Supplement to Employment). This two-page form directs supports coordinators to determine the best service match for an individual.
    - If vocational rehabilitation is an appropriate service match, a referral is made to OVR.
    - If the ISP team determines the individual is not in a position to benefit from OVR's service model but is interested in employment, the ISP employment supplement is used to outline services to be funded by a waiver.

  - Approved waiver service definitions follow closely with the generic Medicaid Waiver core definitions. ODP has not made any major revisions to employment service definitions in keeping with the September 2011 CMCS Informational Bulletin.

- As reported by ODP, 15% of those receiving day and employment services are receiving integrated employment; this is well below the national average of 22%. Nationally, states vary between 4% to a high of 88% receiving integrated employment services.

- There are pockets of excellence in Pennsylvania with great success stories across individuals with a range of abilities. There is interest and a need across the state in hearing more about those examples through written stories, small group gatherings and larger events such as conferences.

- ODP needs to strengthen the capacity of the paid service network to implement best practices for improving integrated employment outcomes. This can be done by thoroughly looking at organizational structures, service delivery models, and the competency level of staff. If these components reflect ODP's employment first agenda, ODP will have a far greater outcome of increasing the percentage of individuals currently receiving employment services.

- Effective and responsive transportation systems are not available in many parts of the State and need improvement. This is particularly true for rural parts of the state.

- There are definite geographic and regional differences as reflected during the site visit dialogues, and the many written opportunities for feedback. While this didn't result in consistent recommendations it is obvious the differences need to be addressed through consistent messaging and communication strategies.

- Comments shared during the site visit and in responses to the SELN Individual and Family survey indicate waivers are often seen as the sole or main option for individuals seeking support. While ODP has been educating individuals and families about how to use available waivers, and the Partnership trains individuals and their families about other options, ODP should put more emphasis on how and when to use other options so individuals and their families do not become confused.

- Human services block grants (or non-waiver funds) should be explained to individuals and their families as those who may benefit from this change do not understand it well.

- People sometimes pursue a career in a different way by striking out on their own. Sometimes people with disabilities are self-employed, others go further out on their own and become entrepreneurs. Though this is not the majority of individuals it does provide a viable option for those seeking a non-traditional arrangement and have an adequate support network to sustain it, or who have not had success with other employment services.

  On the other hand we have a wonderful video the SCs hand out showing local individuals who are successfully employed, including one person who is self-employed. This was part of the MIG we received last year. When it works for an individual it is so

exciting.

Entrepreneurs need a way to market their craft. We need to help people start their own business.

We have helped people start their own thing instead of relying on the community to show us the jobs. Difference in counties is more of the philosophy. Venango SC is in-house. Clarion SC is separate and the relationship results in more difficulty with the commitment

B. Potential Focal Areas

- Revise the individual service plan process to assure employment is a core priority in discussion of support services, and eliminating the employment supplement as a separate component to the individual service plan.

- As noted early in the report, the system would benefit from a review of waiver and base- funded service definitions to prioritize the valued outcomes. Waiver and base employment definitions should be aligned to define outcomes of services in non-segregated environments. Also, non-employment services should be reviewed as well to assure support for youth and young adults exiting high school.

- Acknowledge and address the issues with a growing waiting list through options that utilize innovations for building a full life without unnecessary dependency on just one (unpredictable) funding stream. New services and supports should be creative and flexible promoting integrated community employment options.

- Entrepreneurs are not currently supported in services or service definitions. Despite this, entrepreneurial approaches (e.g., writing a business plan) are still used by a couple of noteworthy providers. Self-employment and entrepreneurship would make helpful additions to the employment service definitions.

VII. Employment performance measurement, quality assurance, and program oversight

A. Key Findings

- ODP is currently collecting service utilization data but is not collecting employment outcome data. When states are not able to determine the outcome of investing in certain services it is difficult

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to make the business case for systems change.

- o ODP has one procedure code for supported employment which includes both job finding and job support. This should be separated into two procedure codes to adequately track who is receiving job finding or job support and if they are making progress in their employment outcomes.

- o ODP does not publicly display or share the service utilization data.

- o Data is collected monthly for all procedure codes for employment services and can be broken down by service/county/individual.

- o Data on provider payments is collected monthly.

- o Data which corresponds to the individual service plan fields can also be collected (e.g., employed, employer, FT/PT, etc.).

- o ODP is currently analyzing the difference between authorization data and utilization data.

- o NCI Data suggests a service gap between desire for a job and having a job in the community.

National Core Indicators 2011 *		
	National %	Pennsylvania %
Has integrated employment as a goal in service plan	21	21
Wants a job in the community	40	47
Has job in the community	14	12
Is individually-supported	33	39
Is group supported	27	16
Is competitive employment	40	46

* Data source: http://www.hsri.org/project/national-core-indicators/overview/

- • As noted in the Full Assessment, employment is not addressed in the state's quality assurance or quality management efforts. Though ODP oversees employment services through oversight of the Administrative Entities, provider monitoring and service coordinator monitoring, it

was evident during the site visit that this approach while complicated, is not ensuring that the employment outcomes are achieved as desired by individuals. Data is used to manage quality assurance requirements but not for overall quality management of services and outcomes.

- o The monitoring tools developed a couple of years ago do not include specific questions regarding employment data.   These tools should be revised to include consistent employment questions that can be looked at and tracked across each process.

- o ODP should use the robust data collection provided through the IM4Q process (and National Core Indicators project) to make policy and operations decisions with regards to increasing integrated employment outcomes.

- The service data that is collected is not made available to individuals who could use the resulting information or reports or in a user-accessible ways. For example, one stakeholder illustrated this idea:

    While those who seek employment supports should not need to be "led by the hand", access to information is generally a tricky subject, where one needs to know "where to look" and "how to interpret" data. Generally to access service one needs to 1. Determine if they qualify [and] obtain required qualifications if possible 2. Enroll 3. Have access to participant sponsors 4. Take part in competitive opportunity to participate 5. Have reasonable feedback on their participation 6. Identify a long term objective 7. Have a reasonable time frame to achieve long term goal 8. Have a viable option should the employment opportunity dissolve 9. Have all stakeholders be aware of process

    - o It is apparent that a great deal of data is collected in HCSIS but with the limited capacity to extract useful reports the field does not benefit from those efforts. Collection of this data should not be an offline process which makes the reporting capacity so limited.

    - o ODP engaged The Institute on Disabilities at Temple University (IOD) to assist in the collection and organization of data, and the development and implementation of an evaluation process for the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant. (As noted in the February 2010 report: *The Pennsylvania Vision for*

Employment: Comprehensive Strategy for the Competitive Employment of People with Disabilities.) . This comprehensive report is a useful document to review and discuss again when strategizing and planning for employment.

B. Potential Focal Areas
- Develop a comprehensive approach to data management and display that collects individual data rather than summary data as well as a clear strategy for using the resulting information to improve your system's investments. Allow the end user to "pull" the data in multiple ways to better meet the needs of individuals and different levels of the system.

- Break supported employment components of job finding and job support into two procedure codes so data can be tracked separately.

- Utilize the SELN to identify and access information from other states on their strategies for employment data systems.

- ODP should benchmark and track individual progress toward integrated community employment outcomes against other variables such as rate methodology changes and increased provider qualifications.

- Identify the performance benchmarks to gauge progress in expansion of integrated employment system-wide and who will use them.

- Review how the quality and responsiveness of employment services is currently integrated into the ODP's overall quality management efforts, and determine how this can be improved. Discussions with other states can inform this work and may include references to the enhanced data management strategy work.

- Train staff on utilization of data as part of their provider and individual service plan monitoring, to measure not only provider performance, but to also inform and monitor individual service planning, and employment outcomes verses outcomes in individual service plans.

- Integrate the data management goals in to the Futures Planning and be comprehensive about how information is reported to the field.