

# - Innovations In Employment Supports -

*The concept for this series was created collaboratively with the Institute for Community Inclusion, UMass Boston.*

## It's All About Opportunity: Making Employment a Reality in Maine

In 2000 Maine's Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services (BDS) unveiled a new vocational policy that places a strong emphasis on real work in competitive employment. More importantly, the policy assumes employability for everyone when it lists the following as one of its guiding principles: persons who express a desire to work will be presumed able to work and planning will be individualized to the person's desired quality of life. In a recent statement describing this policy, Brenda Harvey, Acting Deputy Commissioner stated, "BDS adopted a vocational policy that sets the direction for the development of new vocational services and encourages the conversion of segregated employment settings to integrated, competitive settings." In addition, Harvey acknowledged that when possible, BDS is "positioning its resources" to fully support this policy.

Since the policy was implemented, some significant changes have occurred in Maine. A number of sheltered workshops and other segregated day services have closed and these agency-sponsored programs have converted to integrated, community-based supports.

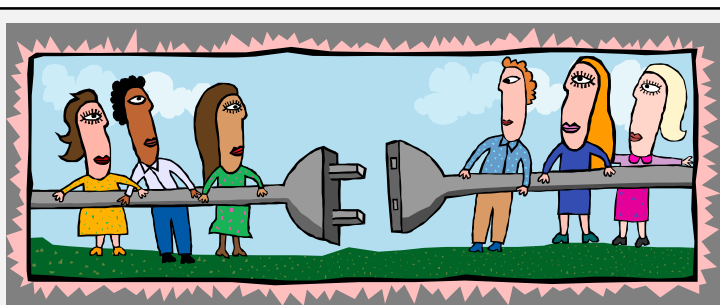
In order to build the capacity of the workforce to support these changes, BDS has collaborated with The University of Maine Center for Community Inclusion (CCI, Maine's UCEDD) to develop and support the implementation of the Maine Employment Curriculum. Using a leadership model of education (train-the-trainer) CCI has supported representatives from fifteen community rehabilitation agencies to deliver the comprehensive best practices curriculum across the state.

During FY 03 (the first year of the project) 327 individuals from fifty agencies completed at least one module: 100 were certified as job coaches (signifying completion of eight

modules totaling twenty-five hours of training) and seventy-five individuals were certified as employment specialists (completion of all fourteen modules and more than forty-five hours of training). A second leadership institute is being conducted in October to prepare an additional ten instructors to deliver the curriculum across the state.

A number of other complementary activities are supporting the work of BDS in order to realize the promise of the new policy. An organizational change series was conducted for provider agencies in support of conversion activities and

inclusive practices. Other agencies, such as the Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitative Services and the Department of Human Services' Bureau of Elder and Adult Services and Bureau of Medical Services (Maine's Medicaid agency) are also collaborating in Maine's effort to ensure that everyone receives the combination of



*As a body of empirical evidence on the positive outcomes associated with integrated employment develops, and a more definitive picture of what works to build strong employment supports takes shape, this occasional series presents some of the latest findings from research and tools for practice.*

supports they need to be successful in competitive employment, including assuring that Maine citizens with disabilities can work without jeopardizing their health care benefits through MaineCare (Maine's Medicaid program).

**FMI:** To learn more about Maine's efforts related to the Maine Employment Curriculum project please contact: Debbie Gilmer, Center for Community Inclusion, University of Maine, (207) 581 1263, [debbie.gilmer@umit.maine.edu](mailto:debbie.gilmer@umit.maine.edu). For more on the work of Maine's Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services please contact: Linda Jariz (207) 287 4200; [linda.jariz@maine.gov](mailto:linda.jariz@maine.gov) or Jane Gallivan (207) 287 4200; [jane.gallivan@maine.gov](mailto:jane.gallivan@maine.gov). To access the project's Web site, which includes a regularly updated statewide calendar of training, point your browser to <http://www.ume.maine.edu/cci/employme>.

For additional details on the Institute for Community Inclusion's national data collection project on day and employment services, contact: John Butterworth, Ph.D., Institute for Community Inclusion, UMass Boston, (617) 287-4357, [john.butterworth@umb.edu](mailto:john.butterworth@umb.edu).