

Florida Initiative Sets Employment Targets

Last fall, the Florida Developmental Disabilities Program (since reorganized into the Agency for Persons with Disabilities) announced a five-year initiative to reaffirm and vastly expand its emphasis on employment as a priority service outcome. In order to affect a major shift in traditional service structures, the new agency is establishing a strategy to divert 25 percent of people receiving Adult Day Training services into competitive employment opportunities across the next five years. This objective is part of a larger strategy to greatly expand community-based employment options and the development of self-employment opportunities.

The initiative began immediately with the expectations that each district redirect a minimum of five percent of the people from Adult Day Training services to employment in the competitive work force each year over the course of the next five years. Districts are developing specific performance targets and resource strategies for the achievement of this objective. Current performance measures and reporting on employment outcomes were modified July 1, 2004 to reflect the expectation to accomplish redirection of people from Adult Day Training services to employment outcomes and tracking associated funding shifts.

Stakeholders in the redesign of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities have clearly stated the need and expectation for people with developmental disabilities to receive the supports and services necessary to achieve and maintain employment in the competitive

workforce. A study conducted by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council last year surveyed self-advocates with developmental disabilities and found that a full 75 percent of people who were not employed wanted a job working in their community. In announcing the initiative, Shelly Brantley, who is now the interim director for the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, affirmed that it has been sufficiently demonstrated that employment outcomes are immediately attainable without the need for developing skills traditionally believed to be a prerequisite for competitive employment. She noted "employment opportunities shall be pursued ignoring conventional expectations for "prevocational training" or similar programs...in favor of learning through on-the-job training and experience specific to the workplace."

FMI: To learn more about the supported employment program in Florida, go to http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/apd/support_emp/index.shtml. You can also contact J.B. Black, Training and Research Director, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, at (850) 488-1552 or Steve Dunaway, Quality Management Specialist, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, at (850) 488-3677. For more information on the Institute for Community Inclusion's national data collection project on day and employment services, contact John Butterworth, Ph.D., Research Coordinator, Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston, at (617) 287-4357 or john.butterworth@umb.edu. ♣

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Next Steps. The permanent rates, which state officials hope to promulgate before the end of the year, will be based primarily on the findings of a private contractor who will develop an independent model drawing on Bureau of Labor statistics and market basket data. The independent model then will be benchmarked against rates paid for similar services in other states surrounding Ohio, from service costs in the non-Medicaid arena in Ohio, and from cost data that already exists in the system from providers, Hoffine explained. Once they "establish rates that are reasonable," she said, "the new rates should settle this particular lawsuit."

FMI: Additional information is available at <http://www.lucasmrdd.com/jcarrupdate.html> and for The Press Center at <http://www.mrddawareness.com>. ♣