

BRINGING EMPLOYMENT FIRST TO SCALE

CRP Organizational Change

Introduction

Federal and state policy shifts have opened the doors to meaningful community employment for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD). Progress is apparent across the country: creative outcomes for individuals with significant support needs through customized jobs and self-employment, innovative practices at the provider level, and state investment in an Employment First philosophy.

Despite these achievements, the number of individuals supported in integrated employment by state agencies that serve individuals with IDD has remained the same since 2000.¹ While some community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) across the country have transformed their services to focus on integrated employment, including closing facility-based programs,² most have not yet reallocated resources to promote gainful community employment as a top priority.

What is the level of prioritization on community employment across CRPs?

CRPs and their staff are the primary source of day and employment supports for people with IDD. To understand the extent to which CRPs prioritize employment, we consider two types of data: the percentage or number of direct support staff working in CRPs who provide employment supports, and the number or percentage of people with IDD who receive employment supports from CRPs.

A 2009 ICI survey found that only approximately 9% of CRP staff are dedicated to integrated employment.³ ICI's 2010–2011 National CRP Survey found that 19% of individuals with IDD participated in individual employment services, only a slight increase from the 18% reported in 2002–2003. The majority of individuals participated in facility-based or non-work services (25% and 43%, respectively), and the largest growth area was in non-work services, from 33% to 43%.

Research suggests continued variation of services and employment philosophies within the provider community. Inge et al. (2009) found that almost 89% of respondents to a national survey of CRP administrators believe that facility-based programs are essential for individuals with

This brief:

- » Describes the national landscape regarding employment supports provided by community rehabilitation providers.
- » Introduces a new line of research that documents and facilitates transformation efforts that will lead to greater community employment options for individuals with IDD.

disabilities who are having difficulty getting or maintaining real work in the labor force, and less than half of these administrators had a formal plan to expand integrated employment. Providers perceive inadequate funding and community resources to provide individual employment.⁴

Within the organizations themselves, front-line staff experience confusion about job development responsibilities, do not feel prepared to engage the mainstream business community, and have little training in providing appropriate supports to individuals with IDD in community settings.⁵

What do we know about CRPs' organizational transformation?

While research citing the barriers experienced by CRPs is plentiful, findings on the essential elements for providing high-quality CRP programs and services are more limited. The Training and Technical Assistance for Providers (T-TAP) project identified six characteristics of CRPs that successfully expanded employment opportunities:⁶

- 1) Clear and uncompromising goals
- 2) Communication of expectations through policy and outreach activities
- 3) Reallocation and restructuring of resources
- 4) Rapid job placement one person at a time
- 5) Development of community partnerships
- 6) Planning for the whole person with wrap-around life supports

How will this project support CRPs to evolve their service delivery framework?

Through the work of the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Advancing Employment for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, we propose a holistic evaluation and expansion of the framework for CRP performance to facilitate and measure

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large-scale organizational change. This research will support CRPs to reallocate organizational resources toward individual integrated employment.

Building from existing ICI research and technical assistance, this line of research will:

- 1) create and assess a model framework for building the capacity of CRPs,
- 2) develop a toolkit to guide organizational transformation to provide high-quality integrated employment services, and
- 3) demonstrate an efficient scalable strategy (a facilitated, peer-to-peer learning community) for supporting organizational transformation across networks of CRPs.

Project activities will be implemented in collaboration with CRPs affiliated with The Arc, a national leader in disability rights and advocacy.

What's next?

We will use a Delphi process (a research strategy to obtain a reliable group opinion from a pool of experts) to initially identify, define, and refine the six observable standards for evaluating CRP performance. The goal of the Delphi process is to validate previous T-TAP findings with an expert population in order to increase the fidelity of the framework. Members of the Delphi panel will include self-advocates, family members, researchers, state administrators, and providers.

Once this process is completed in the spring of 2015, project staff will conduct case study research of CRPs that have successfully transformed services to prioritize individual integrated employment. Findings from this research will be used to validate and refine the existing framework.

What's the goal?

- » Develop a strategy for supporting community rehabilitation providers to rebalance resources to emphasize individual integrated employment.

How will we get there?

- » Develop a framework and toolkit to enable CRPs to provide greater access to integrated employment supports.
- » Test a scalable facilitated peer learning community as a strategy for supporting CRP self-assessment and organizational change.

Our research questions:

- » What are the characteristics of CRPs that have transformed services to emphasize high-quality integrated employment?
- » What organizational, state, and community factors influence organizational transformation?
- » What is the impact of a facilitated peer network of providers on rebalancing of resources and employment outcomes?

Sources

- ¹ Butterworth et al., 2014.
- ² Brooke-Lane, Hutcheson, & Revell, 2005; Brown, Shiraga, & Kessler, 2006; Butterworth, Fesko, & Ma, 2000.
- ³ Inge et al., 2009.
- ⁴ ODEP, unpublished; West & Patton, 2010; Rosenthal et al., 2012.
- ⁵ Butterworth & Fesko, 2001; West & Patton, 2010; Migliore et al., 2011; Rosenthal et al., 2012.
- ⁶ Butterworth et al., 2007.

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Advancing employment and opportunity for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities



Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Advancing Employment for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities is a project of ThinkWork! at the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston. ThinkWork! is a resource portal offering

data, personal stories, and tools related to improving employment outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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