

Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Advancing Employment for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Project Summary

In the 30 years since the introduction of supported employment as a demonstrated model in the Developmental Disabilities Act of 1984 and the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1986, there has been continued development and refinement of best practices in employment support. The field has experienced the demonstration of creative outcomes for individuals with significant support needs, community rehabilitation providers that have shifted their business models to provide integrated employment, and states that have made a substantial investment in Employment First.

Despite this, the number of individuals receiving integrated employment services from state intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) agencies has remained the same since 2000, participation in non-work services has grown rapidly, and individual employment supports are not implemented with fidelity to a consistent model or set of expectations.

Research suggests that bringing individual and local successes in employment to scale requires an integrated approach. This approach must address individual and family expectations and knowledge, employment consultants' ability to provide high-quality individual employment services and supports, community rehabilitation providers' effectiveness in transforming their organizations to focus on integrated employment and to rebalance resources, and states' implementation of policies and practices that establish employment as the first priority across all service systems, including vocational rehabilitation, education, and IDD.

To address the elements needed to bring integrated employment to scale for all adults with IDD, the Center will integrate research, dissemination, and knowledge translation. The Center will:

1. Develop and test a comprehensive information, outreach, and support framework for individuals and families;
2. Assess a cost-effective strategy for improving employment support practices by integrating online training, data-based performance feedback, and facilitated peer supports;
3. Develop and test an evidence-based intervention to support organizational transformation and rebalancing across networks of community rehabilitation providers; and
4. Analyze state employment systems' policies and practices and their relationship to individual outcomes at a multi-agency level, and define policies and practices of high-performing state employment systems.

The Center will join a rich network of research and systems change initiatives, including ICI's contractual and consulting relationships with 45 states and the extensive work of contractual partners including The Arc of the United States, the University of Minnesota, the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services, SABE, and APSE. Participation of a cross-stakeholder network of advisors and eight organizational dissemination partners will extend the effectiveness and use of project findings and resources.

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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.

www.ThinkWork/rrtc.org | www.CommunityInclusion.org