**RRTC on Advancing Employment for People with IDD**

**State of the Science Paper:**

**Policies of states that are good at helping people with IDD find jobs**

**Accessible version**

**Introduction: What this paper is about**

Since 1984, there has been a lot of work done to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, or IDD, get jobs in the community. Some people have been matched with employers and have jobs that are a good fit, and others have started their own businesses. Agencies that operated sheltered workshops are helping more people find work in their communities. Many states have “Employment First” policies, which say that working in the community should be available to everyone.

But even with all of these good things happening around employment, for the past 15 years, the number of people in jobs in the community has not really grown.

Our research center is tackling this problem. This center is part of ThinkWork! at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

**This project looks at:**

1. How individuals and families get information

2. How employment consultants do their jobs

3. How agencies transform their services so that more people work in the community

4. Policies at the state and national level that affect employment

This paper is about policies and practices that states use to help people get jobs.

People who have jobs are happier and healthier, and feel like useful members of their families and communities. All over the United States, people with IDD are getting help from their states and communities to find work. The Department of Labor and other government agencies want people to know about “Employment First,” a policy that means that people with disabilities should have the chance to work. Employment First is in almost every state, and it has helped people with disabilities become more independent and part of the community.

However, many people with IDD who want jobs still do not have them. As a person from Self-Advocates Become Empowered (SABE) says: “just calling your state an ‘Employment First’ state is not enough; it’s when everyone who wants a job actually has a job.”

Besides Employment First, there are other new rules to help people with IDD live where they want to and work in their communities. Because state and federal money pays for services, states have to follow the rules or they won’t get the money to provide services. The states that help more people with IDD live and work in their communities do a good job following these rules. They are called “high-performing” states.

When we wrote this paper, we looked at what state agencies were doing to make sure that helping people get jobs was a priority. Then, we looked at information from the states about what happened for people with IDD. So, we looked at what states were doing, and what outcomes (job or no job) that resulted for the people receiving services.

**What we found out from our research:**

*What type of people are more likely to be working?*

We looked at data from the National Core Indicators project. This data is collected in many states on people who are supported by their state IDD agency. We found that the people who were in the day programs and not working were usually younger people, women, and people with legal guardians. This means that we need to make sure that women get as much help finding jobs as men, and that guardians get information about helping people with IDD get jobs.

*How do states compare to one another?*

We’ve been keeping a “scorecard” by state that shows how well different systems like the school system, vocational rehabilitation, or the IDD system did helping people with IDD get jobs. The states with the highest overall scores for their systems are the high-performing states. These states (in order, starting with the highest) were: Maryland, New Hampshire, Vermont, Oregon, Washington state, Iowa, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Colorado, and Delaware. However, no state scored high in every area (education, Vocational Rehabilitation and IDD). Next, we plan to look closer at what these states are doing to get these high scores.

*What is happening in Maryland, the state with the highest score?*

When we do case studies, we take a closer look at one thing. When we were studying the states, we took a closer look at Maryland because it got the highest scores in employment. We learned that in Maryland, the different agencies that help people with IDD have worked together for a long time. People at these agencies talk to each other easily. They share information about how to get people jobs, so that all the agencies across Maryland know how to do it.

*What else are we looking at?*

Some of the other questions we are interested in are:

* How are states helping people before they get jobs?
* How do we make sure case managers always think about employment for the people they serve?
* How can agencies support people to get jobs, and also support them with the rest of their lives?

**What does this all mean?**

It seems that some type of people (men, people who don’t have guardians) are more likely to be working in the community as compared to others. Also, some

states are better than others when it comes to their different agencies working together to help people with IDD find jobs.

**Recommendations:**

We have to keep studying what states are doing about Employment First and how their practices affect employment for people with IDD. That will let us be clear about what helps people get the jobs they want. We especially need to keep doing case studies of what’s happening in the high-performing states.

We also have to make sure that the practices work fairly for men, women, people with guardians, people without guardians, people in day programs, and everyone else who wants a job. It is important that professionals that work with people with IDD, like case managers, understand that employment is a priority for everyone.

For questions about this paper, please email [allison.hall@umb.edu](mailto:allison.hall@umb.edu)