**State of the Science Paper:**

**Organizational capacity (focusing on community employment providers)**

**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 how agencies transform their services so that more people work in the community.

In the United States, people with IDD looking for jobs mostly get help from agencies called community providers (CPs). Most CPs used to just find people jobs at sheltered workshops. But the CPs are changing now, because more people want to live and work in their communities. We have new laws to help them do that.

Some CPs have been able to transform their services, but other CPs have had a hard time or haven’t started yet. Changing a CP is a big deal, because CP staff have to think about why they’re there and whom they want to help. They also have to figure out how to make many changes and pay for the changes. Many CP directors haven’t made these changes before and haven’t helped people get jobs in their communities before, and other CP staff don’t always know how to help either. Sometimes, other staff and families don’t want the change, because they’re worried about what will happen when people leave a sheltered workshop and work out in the community.

 The CPs hire employment consultants to help people with IDD get jobs. Employment consultants get to know the job seekers, and help them find jobs. They also support the job seekers before they start the jobs and once they are on the job. Employment consultants also have to get to know employers and what they need.

 Once people are hired into the jobs they want, the employment consultants have to help them keep those jobs. The CPs have to make sure the employment consultants are trained to do all these things.

 When we were writing this paper, we talked to experts about how to help CPs change. We also interviewed employment consultants and other people about how to help more people find jobs.

**What is needed for CPs to change?**

We asked 36 people to tell us what they thought CPs needed so they could transform their services. The group includedprofessionals, trainers, family members of people with IDD, and self-advocates with IDD.

Here is the list of the top ten things CPs need to pay attention to:

1. Set up clear goals to help people get jobs in the community.
2. Value inclusion of people in the community.
3. Find one job for one person at a time.
4. Talk to people often about expecting to find jobs in the community.
5. Make sure everything they are doing is about finding people jobs in the community.
6. Make sure staff training is up to date.
7. Think of everyone as customers, whether they are job seekers, family members, or employers.
8. Find ways to measure how well CPs are doing at finding people jobs.
9. Help people find jobs that will fit well with their plans, support needs, resources, and other parts of their lives.
10. Work with schools and other community organizations to help people find jobs.

**What do good employment consultants do?**

We interviewed 43 people includingemployment consultants, their supervisors, job seekers with IDD and their family members. They said that there are five things that the best employment consultants do:

1. Let job seekers know that they will work together to find jobs in the community.
2. Get to know the job seekers.
3. Find jobs by networking in the community, talking to the family, etc.
4. Support job seekers before they are hired. This means helping them learn work and social skills, figure out transportation, answer questions about benefits, etc.
5. Support job seekers after hire. This means making sure things are going well at the new job.

We are also looking at how employment consultants decide what they will do to support job seekers, and finding out how they use their time.

**What does this all mean?**

Agencies can only transform their services if they have employment consultants who are good at their job. Employment consultants work best for agencies that believe in inclusion.

**What we recommend:**

Track what employment consultants do with their time at work to see if some activities help more people find jobs.

Study how employment consultants help people in different situations.

Look at the different jobs agency staff have and how that affects how many people with IDD get jobs in the community

Find out what kinds of training are available for employment consultants.

Study which strategies are helpful and also don’t cost too much.

Look at the way people at the agency communicate about employment and how that affects the number of people working in the community.

For more information about this paper, please email allison.hall@umb.edu