



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

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Focus on Employment: Key State Initiatives

Maryland is engaged in a number of initiatives to improve employment outcomes for people with developmental disabilities. Below is a brief description of some of those initiatives.

Public Policy Fellow Joins DDA

Karen Lee has joined the DDA as a Public Policy Fellow and will serve as a consultant in the area of employment for one year. In collaboration with stakeholders, Ms. Lee is responsible for developing a vision, policy and strategic plan for employment and community services funded by the Administration.

Development of a Maryland Employment First Work Plan (DDA and MD Dept. of Disabilities) A kick-off event was held in July to refocus Maryland on employment outcomes for people with developmental disabilities. At the end of the event, participants, including Council staff, formed work groups to focus on specific components of a highly performing *Employment First*ⁱ state. Groups are expected to complete their work by October. If you would like to be a part of shaping policy, defining best practice, creating a framework for technical assistance and training, creating strategic goals, or communicating to various audiences about Employment First, contact Karen Lee at karen.lee@maryland.gov For more information about the high performing states framework, visit <http://www.nasddds.org/resource-library/employment/state-employment-leadership-network/high-performing-states-framework/>

Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP))

Through this initiative, Maryland receives intensive onsite and virtual technical assistance and training support as well as policy consultation to improve employment outcomes for people with developmental disabilities. In the past year, six service providersⁱⁱ throughout the state have engaged in planning process to build capacity and change their organizational structure to improve employment supports and services. At the same time, two experts have consulted with the DDA, MDOD, Dept. of Labor, Licensing and Regulations, and Division of Rehabilitation Services to make recommendations for policy changes, particularly as they relate to CMS's community settings rule and DDA's home and community based waiver. The Council assisted in drafting of the ODEP proposal. To learn more about the federal initiative, go to <http://www.dol.gov/odep/media/newsroom/employmentfirststates.htm>

Supported Employment Leadership Network (SELN)

The SELN helps states develop, implement, and support integrated employment initiatives that are designed to improve employment outcomes for people with developmental disabilities. As a member of the SELN, DDA can access online events, audio teleconferences, monthly member meetings, individual state calls, access to technical documents and online resources, state site visits, and direct discussion with content experts. Since 2008, the SELN

has assisted the State to develop a customized work plan and provided technical assistance and guidance to develop more effective employment systems and partnerships. Visit <http://www.selnmembers.org/about>

Maryland Employment First Monthly Call

Interested in learning more about what's happening in the state? You can join a call scheduled on the third Friday of the month at 10 a.m. For more information, contact Danielle Lyons at danielle.lyons@maryland.gov.

ⁱ Employment First - is a philosophy and policy stating that: ***Employment is the first priority and preferred outcome of people with disabilities.*** Employment First includes these essential elements:

- Being the first and preferred outcome for working-age youth and adults with disabilities, including those with complex and significant disabilities, for whom working in the past has been limited, or has not traditionally occurred,
- Using typical or customized employment techniques to secure membership in the workforce, where employees with disabilities are included on the payroll of a competitive business or industry or are self-employed business owners,
- Where the assigned work tasks offer at least minimum or prevailing wages and benefits,
- And where typical opportunities exist for integration and interactions with co-workers without disabilities, with customers, and/or the general public. (Source: <http://www.employmentfirst.net/>)

ⁱⁱ Compass, Inc., The Arc Baltimore, Way Station, Inc., St. Peter's Adult Learning Center, Benedictine, Spring Dell Center