



2019 Employment First Conference Shareback

Held May 15, 2019 at Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI

Thank you for attending the Employment First Conference hosted by the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities! The day was filled with thoughtful discussions, the sharing of creative strategies, and opportunities to meet new people.

Below is a summary of the ideas shared at the closing session during which attendees discussed:

- What are specific and achievable steps we can take to drive WI forward towards more community-based services, including competitive integrated employment?

Several recurrent themes emerged during the conversations, including the need to simplify processes/information and to support schools in their efforts to connect youth to paid employment opportunities early.

Each of us has a part in supporting people with disabilities in our community to find work. What can you do? Check out the summary of ideas that were discussed. Find one that is especially meaningful to you and then act on it!

Simplify and Clarify Processes and Information

- Simplify agency websites -- they are too hard to navigate which renders them useless for some
- Streamline the intake processes by decreasing the number of signatures needed and taking care of releases more efficiently -- the process takes too much time.
- Streamline the DVR process for students in transition by completing all forms at once and making things more simple
- Add DVR positions to increase capacity
- Increase awareness/decrease myths about DVR by having open communication between all partners and stakeholders throughout the State of Wisconsin
- Increase access to more accurate information about how increased work affects benefits
- Create better interagency personal relationships

Start Employment Conversations Early and Support Families and Schools

- Share the following statistics with all high school special education programs:
 - Students who have 1 paid job while in high school = 2x as likely to have a paid job after high school

- Students who have 2 paid jobs while in high school = 5x as likely to have a paid job after high school
- Support high school special educators to provide more employment opportunities to students
- Find ways to help schools start conversations about employment with students and families earlier
- Engage parents with knowledge and resources as their child grows, including during middle school where there is sometimes a gap
- Increase communication between the community and family partners

Connect with Businesses

- Write an online positive review of a company in your community that employs people with disabilities; share on LinkedIn
- Hold community conversations with current employers of people with disabilities and invite other employers who don't yet do this
- Invite an employer new to hiring people with disabilities to lunch
- Connect with counties' Economic Development Corporations to provide education and build awareness to employers. Follow up at a later date with same group of employers to see how many have moved forward or have additional questions.

Support for Service Providers

- Expand Pay 4 Performance to IRIS to add value-based payments
- Explore options to incentivize service providers to move competitive integrated employment forward
- Provide training opportunities to our service providers to help them expand competitive integrated employment effectiveness
- Increase pay for direct care workers and for direct personal care workers
- Increase opportunities for training of caregivers – basic training is needed!

Other Ideas

- Open eyes to different possibilities; try lots of different jobs
- Keep in mind the whole person when seeking opportunities to fulfill the person's life goals
- Host a "transition" fair for adults with community opportunities, available jobs, support services, etc.
- Uber/Lyft – find ways for them to be a vendor for IRIS
- Consider informal volunteer transportation systems – are retirees interested in providing rides?

Individual Advocacy

- Host a story about this topic on the new self-determination YouTube channel
- Talk to legislators to support issues that are important to the disability movement
- Spread the word—including people we are close to who might not understand as much as we think they do
- Be aware of resources and make connections
- Continue attending trainings, conferences like this
- Continue the Work!