

Since 2015, Headwaters has been partnering with the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (WI BPDD) to transform from facility-based services to a model of community-based support that creates pathways to greater independence, meaningful connections, and competitive integrated employment. Having made great strides in their service transformation journey, Headwaters leadership and staff provide guidance and mentor opportunities to other organizations as part of the WI BPDD's Building Full Lives initiative.

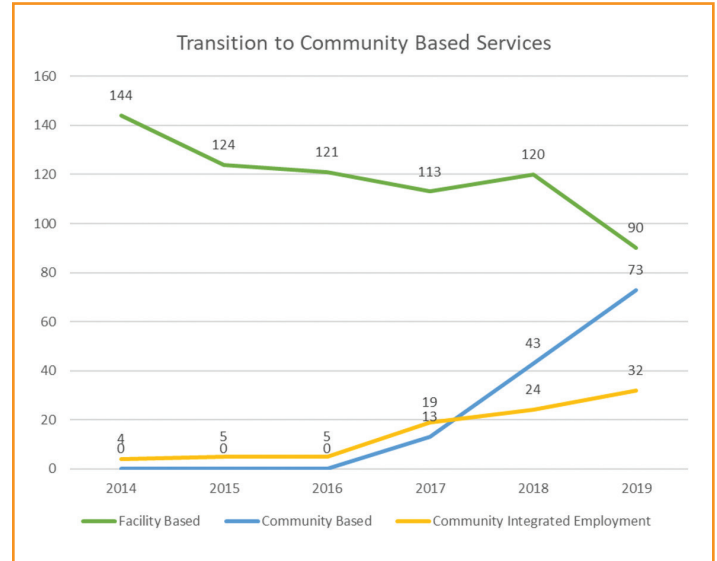
Headwaters' Decision to Change:

Believing 'all people deserve the right to achieve their fullest potential' has been central to Headwaters mission for many years. The concept of what full potential means has grown as attitudes and expectations change and more people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) achieve success in ways some people may not have thought possible a generation before. Recognizing a need to realign services with the changing times and reaffirm their commitment to their mission and the people they serve, Headwaters leadership embarked on a plan to:

- Identify and implement evidence-based and best practice service strategies for person-centered planning, skill building, inclusion and employment
- Develop an organizational culture of learning in order to foster change and innovation

With leadership creating an intentional focus on these priorities, a noticeable shift in mindset began to occur, opening up greater potential for people, their family members, and staff to see the community in new and exciting ways.

Looking at the numbers:



Transformation Strategies Headwaters Used:

- 1. They started with a pilot:** They identified people and families who were interested in trying something new. Starting with a few small pilot groups helped them learn how to deliver community-based day services in a meaningful, individualized way. They sought out external technical assistance, continually assessed progress, and promptly implemented changes based on lessons learned.
- 2. They demonstrated outcomes first:** By conducting their pilots under current funding authorizations, they could confidently say the new services were working for people when they approached their funders about negotiating new contracts for community-based services.
- 3. They talked with families one-to-one:** Rather than sending letters, emails and newsletter announcements to families, they had individualized conversations with families to tailor their message and ameliorate concerns.
- 4. They cultivated a message of inclusivity:** Through an intentional, multi-faceted undertaking of presentations, individualized conversations, volunteering, contribution, and inclusion art displays, staff and participants educated community members and positively impacted attitudes about people with disabilities.
- 5. They stopped taking referrals for facility-based prevocational services:** By providing people a choice of a variety of other services, including community-based prevocational

services, Headwaters continues to support people to reach personally meaningful outcomes and their fullest potential in community settings.

- 6. They de-siloed their community employment services:** Prior to their service transformation efforts, their employment services were a completely separate service division that had very little interaction with the staff or people in facility-based day or prevocational services. This division of programs created roadblocks along the pathway to community inclusion and employment. Changes to management, staffing and processes were made to address this, including having community-based prevocational services led by job developers.

- 7. They focused on staff training and engagement:** They began using Open Future Learning, mentoring, and group conversations at every staff meeting to change the culture of their organization and increase staff competencies for delivering high quality, individualized services. This was critical in helping staff feel confident as they changed the way they supported people.

- 8. They embraced the journey:** They were okay with some ambiguity about the future and they knew they would make mistakes. One by one, they close off the classrooms and areas of their building that are starting to go unused because people are spending more time in the community. Rather than transporting people to and from the building, they are establishing meet-up sites in the community.

Headwaters' Advice for Other Organizations:

- Don't just shoot for compliance. Always work toward best practice, understanding that the way you're doing things at the moment isn't necessarily the way you expect to do things long-term.
- Take calculated risks in service development. Even if something doesn't work out, it's still a learning experience.
- Focus on staff and team development. Find their strengths, support their learning of best practices and engage them to develop new services. Foster strong staff teams that move together yet individually toward agency goals. You will have some staff turnover...and it's okay.
- Be creative and make your own opportunities. You don't need a lot of money or a lot of "places to go" to make things happen.
- Quality supersedes funding. If your agency is having a lot of conversations about money, this may be a sign that your values need to shift.
- Learn your craft. Invest the time to study who is doing it well. Make learning and implementing a habit to drive change.
- Don't be quick to give up. "Try another way."



Paul knew for sure what he didn't want to do – clean bathrooms – but he wasn't sure what he did want to do. After a series of unsuccessful work experiences, he finally found a place he liked and work he liked doing in the kitchen at a restaurant. **He's been there for almost 2 years now, and he couldn't be happier.**

