

Session Descriptions and Presenter Information

Plenary Session

Control your own Destiny or Someone else Will: Keeping Employment Supports Person-Centered

“It’s Personal”: Nicole LeBlanc from the National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems will identify policies and beliefs that can both help and hinder person-centered employment supports for people with disabilities. She will also describe how self-advocacy supports employment first goals. Building from Nicole’s presentation, Alixe Bonardi will share perspectives and resources to help self-advocates, families, and providers of supports use person-centered thinking, planning, and practices to improve employment outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Nicole LeBlanc is a Self-Advocate Advisor with TASH on the AOD Disability Employment TA Center where she researches material on employment and self-advocacy, recruits focus group members, and provides TA to AODI grantees. She is also the coordinator of the Person-Centered Advisory and Leadership Group (PAL-Group) at HSRI for the National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems (NCAPPS). Since 2011, Nicole has consulted for Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered and the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network developing self-advocacy tools and curriculums, presenting webinars and video blogs on the topics of healthcare, what is Autism, presuming competence, self-managed services, voter access and employment of people with disabilities. She worked for 8+ years at Green Mountain Self-Advocates (GMSA) in Montpelier, VT as Advocacy Director supporting her peers with disabilities to feel comfortable talking to their elected officials about what they need.



Alix Bonardi is an occupational therapist with over 25 years of experience working to improve supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She is a co-director of the National Center on Advancing Person Centered Practices and Systems (NCAPPS) and leads the National Core

Indicator’s work to bring participant voice and experience to monitor and improve state systems of HCBS for people with IDD. Ms. Bonardi supports state and provider systems to monitor and improve individualized quality of community-based supports, keeping the person’s interests, goals, and values at the center.

Morning Breakout Sessions

Important Note: The presenters for the morning sessions have prepared their presentations *specifically for each stakeholder group. Please attend the session that matches your role.*

Virtual Room 1: Self-Advocate Session

Employment 101: Informed Choice in employment, what does that really mean?

Presenter Nicole LeBlanc

It's time for careers not just jobs. This session will describe how the history of disability employment advocacy opportunities make employment for people with disabilities more person centered. In addition to covering Dignity of Risk and employment, this session will explore what informed choice means and how job development must continue to move beyond 4 F's that are common in disability employment.

In this session, **Self-Advocates** will learn:

1. How to describe the importance of Real Jobs for Real Pay for all-Competitive Integrated Employment.
2. The role of Self Advocacy, Peer Support in supporting employment for people with I/DD.
3. Disability Employment Policy 101 and Informed Choice and Employment.



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Virtual Room 2: Parents and Family Members Session

Balancing Dreams with Supports while ensuring the Dignity of Risk, Stacy Ramirez

This presentation gives participants the opportunity to first - examine existing ideas around a "good paid life" vs a community life, then also reflect on the roles of the decision maker or consultant in the life of the person with a disability. These self-explorations provide the foundation for a deeper discussion on authentic person-centered planning.

In this session, **Parents and Family Members** will learn:

1. How to identify possible biases for good paid life.
2. The difference between person-centered supports vs choices.
3. The components of a successful person-centered plan.



Stacey Ramirez, Partners – Crimminz & Associates, holds a steadfast belief that we all have gifts and the capacity to far exceed the often-arbitrary expectations that society imposes. Stacey works to improve statewide supports and services that enhance opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, and allies to be productive, engaged members of their communities.

Outside of her career, Stacey is the proud mom of three amazing young men and a brilliant daughter-in-law. Her middle son has autism and has been the muse for her career. His strong advocacy for inclusion keeps Stacey on her toes by implementing supported decision making, customized employment, and utilizing circles of support in a state that favors restrictive, segregated supports.

Virtual Room 3: Employment Specialists

Everyone Can Work: Person Centered Actions, Doug Crandell and Patty Cassidy

This session sets a clear understanding of how “Everyone Can Work” can become a reality, not a tag line. Person centeredness doesn’t end with a good vocational planning document but is inherent in all aspects of individualized implementation. We will clarify how vocational staff can better support all job seekers, regardless of disability labels with actions that directly impact individualized, meaningful employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Results of quality individualized employment services has shown there are unlimited ways to make a living and that the best jobs often are created, not found.

In this session, **Employment Specialists** will learn:

1. The characteristics of Person-Centered Thinking, Planning and Actions.
2. The tools necessary for individualized employment outcomes.
3. That person centered implementation practices are for anyone, regardless of severity of disability.



Doug Crandell has worked for decades in the field of community-based employment practices. He assists providers, stakeholders, and employers to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Mr. Crandell is a public service faculty member at the UCEDD housed at the University of Georgia. He provides training and technical assistance to Georgia's supported employment providers, both through webinars and on-site mentoring, and directs Georgia's Technical Assistance Center for Best-Practices in Employment Supports. In addition, he serves as a Senior Consultant with Griffin-Hammis Associates. Crandell has been the Project Director for several demonstration

grants funded through the U.S. Department of Labor, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and the Social Security Administration (SSA). He is retained to provide Subject Matter Expertise through grant projects. Doug regularly publishes essays on labor, health, and poverty and has authored seven books.



Patty Cassidy is a Senior Consultant with Griffin-Hammis Associates. She provides training and technical assistance on Customized Employment to agency personnel, state leadership, and individuals with disabilities and families. Her collaborative work ensures highly skilled professionals, systems and funding cohesion, community and business collaboration, and quality Customized Employment outcomes for people with significant disabilities. Areas of expertise include: Discovery, CE Job Development, and transition from school to work for youth with significant disabilities. Patty brings a wealth of experience through her work in direct service, administrative, and executive positions for publicly funded agencies, and non-profits providing employment services.

Virtual Room 4: School Staff, Teachers, Transition Coordinators

It's My Choice: Embedding Dignity of Risk into the Transition Planning Process, Jennifer Bumble and Christopher Worth

This session explores the concept of 'Dignity of Risk' within the context of person-centered transition planning. Presenters discuss how to respect student choice through informed risk-taking and why this is important in preparing young people for independence and self-determination. Presenters will highlight practical strategies for success and first-person stories rooted in the lived experience of disability.

In this session, **School Staff, Teachers and Transition Coordinators** will learn:

1. The concept of dignity of risk and its importance in the transition process
2. The steps to facilitating discussions about dignity of risk with students, families, and other professionals
3. Practical strategies for embedding dignity of risk into the transition process



Jennifer Bumble, Ph.D. is an assistant professor of special education at the University of Missouri St. Louis. She received her doctorate in special education from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. Her research and teaching focus on the transition from adolescence to adulthood, building social capital during the transition process, and empowering communities to become more aware of and responsive to the pressing needs of transition-age youth with disabilities. Prior to receiving her doctorate, Dr. Bumble worked as a special educator in Texas and an EL educator in South Korea. She also worked as an educational consultant with the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center developing trainings, tools, and resources for transition educators across Tennessee.



Christopher Worth is a community organizer and community educator with more than twenty years of experience. Mr. Worth was born with cerebral palsy, and much later, would be diagnosed with a generalized learning disability. Even before that though, Christopher was misdiagnosed with an intellectual disability and was not given access to the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic until the age of eleven. Today, Chris uses his winding and bumpy experience in early education to inform his work.

Virtual Room 5: Day Service or Prevocational Service Staff

Supporting the Trajectory towards Good Lives, Sheli Reynolds

Person centered thinking is designed to support the rights of people with disabilities to live, love, work and play in their community. This session will introduce the Charting the LifeCourse framework and tools for problem-solving and planning that will enhance expectations, opportunities, and outcomes for those you support. Concrete examples will be shared on how this person-centered strategy is being used to transform employment, education and disability policy and practices across the country.

In this session, **Day Service or Prevocational Service Staff** will learn:

1. About Charting the LifeCourse framework and tools for supporting person centered supports
2. How the tools can help with problem-solving and planning for new possibilities
3. Concrete examples of how CtLC is being used across the country for transformational change at all levels



Sheli Reynolds, PhD serves as the Associate Director at UMKC Institute for Human Development, where she has worked for over 20 years. She is the key developer of the Charting the LifeCourse framework and tools and provides overall direction to the LifeCourse Nexus. Her passion, knowledge, and experience comes from growing up as a sibling of a brother with developmental disabilities. She is committed to research, demonstrations and implementation of evidence-based practices that enhance person- and family-centered organizational, policy and systems change. Throughout her career she has had the privilege of advocating

alongside, and for, people with disabilities and their families. She served on the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities and as the co-director of the National Community of Practice for Supporting Families of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. She has her Masters in Occupational Therapy from Rockhurst University and earned her doctorate in Public Administration and Sociology from the University of Missouri, Kansas City with a focus on family support research and policy for families of individuals with disabilities across the lifespan.

Virtual Room 6: Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors

Customized Employment: What it Is and Why We Need It, Beth Keeton

This interactive session provides an overview of Customized Employment (CE), including the core concepts of Discovery, blended/braided funding, and economic self-sufficiency. Learn how CE can open the door to a wider variety of employment outcomes, including business ownership, for a greater number of individuals with disabilities and how it can be particularly beneficial for VR customers who remain chronically unemployed or underemployed with more traditional services. Join us for lively discussion while we learn from the success of individuals who have used CE as the foundation for securing employment that not only matches for their skills and interests but also pays the bills and leads to successful case closures.

In this session, **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors** will learn:

1. Describe the Customized Employment Process
2. Identify the key differences between Discovery and traditional assessments
3. Determine the characteristics of good candidates for Customized Employment



Beth Keeton is Executive Director with Griffin-Hammis Associates. As one of the nation's leading experts on integrated community employment for people with disabilities, Beth's work has transformed systems and supported countless people to launch rewarding careers and build lives with greater autonomy and economic freedom.

Since 1996, Beth has provided employment training and technical assistance at the state, national, and international level. She developed the first national certification training curriculum for customized self-employment, collaborated with the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) and other national colleagues to develop the Core Features of Quality Supported Employment Services and the Essential Elements of Customized Employment, supported the Association of Community

Rehabilitation Educators to develop the core competencies of Customized Employment, and served as a national Subject Matter Expert for the WIOA-mandated Congressional Advisory Committee. A self-professed "data geek", Beth has led the charge to bring evidenced-based practices to the provision of Customized Employment services, championing the creation and use of the Discovery and Job Development Fidelity Scales. Beth earned her M.A. from the University of Oregon and is a Certified Benefits Planner.



Ashlea Lantz is a Senior Consultant with Griffin-Hammis Associates. She provides training and technical assistance around Customized Employment, Supported Employment, Self-Employment, Benefits Planning, and Agency Capacity Building. Before joining Griffin-Hammis Associates, Ashlea was the Director of Employment of a community-based rehabilitation agency. She has extensive experience in working with families both personally and professionally. Ashlea is a certified benefits planner and has a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Drake University.

Virtual Room 7: Long Term Care Staff (Family Care and IRIS)

DISCOVER Purpose and Meaning in Employment, Laura Buckner

Work: /wɜːk/: activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to **achieve** a **purpose** or result. When considering work options with someone you support, how much thought is given to what's important to this person, balanced with what's important for the person...AND helps provide purpose and meaning? Good discovery is key.

In this session **Long Term Care Staff with Family Care and IRIS** will learn:

1. Recognize and differentiate between the concepts of Important TO and Important FOR, specifically as it pertains to employment
2. Consider how discovery positively impacts employment possibilities and what methods of discovery work well
3. Define success/redefine failure



Laura G. Buckner, a Licensed Professional Counselor and former special educator, Laura is a frequent keynote presenter and trainer speaking on the state and national levels to a wide variety of audiences, including service professionals, educators, state agency staff, advocacy groups, and families of children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Laura's areas of expertise include person centered practices, leadership and advocacy, trauma informed care, and supporting families and individuals with IDD to live lives they find meaningful with access to necessary supports and services. Prior to her employment with the TCDS, Laura served 8 years as the Program Coordinator of the Texas Partners in Policymaking program. At the TCDS, Laura is a Founding Partner of The Institute for Person Centered Practices (www.person-centered-practices.org) and a Mentor Trainer with The Learning Community for Person Centered Practices (TLCPCP) (www.learningcommunity.us). Laura serves on the TLCPCP Board of Directors. In her spare time, Laura is an avid distance cyclist, lover of dogs, and devoted wife to Ron and Mom to sons Michael and David.

Virtual Room 8: Leadership from Service Provider Agencies, MCOs ICAs or State Agencies

Radical Leadership: Prioritizing Person-Centeredness as a Catalyst for Systems-Change Efforts in Policy, Practice, Payment & Performance, Serena Lowe

Radical Leadership (RL) is about being intentional with your life and choosing where and in what you want to put your precious energy and learning how to let go of anything that gets in the way of that! What if we applied radical leadership in the person-centered planning process, giving individuals with disabilities true agency to be in the driver's seat of defining the vision of the life they see for themselves? And how does a reconceptualizing of person-centered planning impact systems change in terms of changes in policy, practice, payment, and performance? In this session, participants will receive information about innovative strategies for approaching PCP through an RL lens, and how to align the revolutionary changes occurring at the individual level through this process with ongoing

systems change efforts. Presentation is appropriate for state government leaders, managed care LTSS executives, and senior leaders within community-based organizations providing services to individuals with disabilities.

In this session **Leadership from Service Provider Agencies, MCOs ICAs or State Agencies** will learn:

1. The underpinnings of radical leadership (RL) and how it can (and should) be used to dismantle cultural barriers to organizational change.
2. How to apply radical leadership to the person-centered planning process in developing clear, comprehensive goals and strategies to support individuals with disabilities achieve progress in realizing the life they envision and desire for themselves.
3. How RL and person-centeredness values can help align policies, practice, payment, and performance strategies to effectuate optimal individual outcomes and systems-change efforts.



Dr. Serena Lowe has spent the past 25 years furthering public policies that promote the socioeconomic advancement of low-income working families, individuals with disabilities, seniors, children, immigrants, refugees, women of color and other at-risk populations. Currently, Serena is the Founder & Principal of AnereS Strategies LLC, Serena has served in a variety of leadership roles in the field of federal government relations, working for a Fortune 100 global biopharmaceutical company, a top 20 national lobbying firm, two foreign governments, two national nonprofit organizations, Congress, and the federal executive branch.

A recipient of the prestigious [Harry Truman National Scholarship in Public Service](#), Serena has spent a large portion of her career in public service, first as a senior legislative aide to two Members of Congress, and later as a Senior Policy Adviser for both the [U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy \(ODEP\)](#) and the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' [Administration for Community Living](#). Serena has led numerous national systems-change efforts, including the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program and the AoD Disability Employment TA Center. In this work, Serena has collaborated with state workforce investment, vocational rehabilitation, Medicaid, and special education systems in the majority of states across the country on strategies to improve collaboration and coordination of resources in an effort to improve the social determinants of health and quality of life outcomes of at-risk communities. Additionally, Serena has led two national not-for-profit organizations, serving as the first Executive Director of the [Collaboration to Promote Self-Determination \(CPSD\)](#), and later as the interim Executive Director of [TASH](#) (an international disability rights organization focused on inclusive and equitable communities for all people).

Serena completed a B.A. in International & Public Affairs at [Westminster College](#); a one-year overseas academic program as a Cranshaw Scholar at Cambridge University and the London School of Economics; two graduate degrees (M.P.H. in International Health Policy and M.A. in International Development Policy) from [George Washington University](#); and a PhD in Public Administration from [American University](#). Serena has also taught previously part-time on the faculty of [Rutgers University's School of Public Affairs and Administration](#)

Afternoon Sessions

Connecting a Person's Gifts of the Head, Hands and Heart to the Assets of a Community for Meaningful Contribution and Employment

Description coming soon!



Deb Wisniewski is a committed connector who believes that our communities need us all, that we all have gifts and talents to share. She loves to discover the hidden treasures in each community and to explore how we can each make a difference. Through her consulting practice, she has worked with a wide variety of groups and organizations – from both nonprofits and businesses to governmental and tribal agencies – to explore how we can build on the skills of local residents, the power of local associations and the supportive functions of local institutions. Over the last 3+ years, Deb has been working extensively with museums and libraries through the United States, providing coaching and learning opportunities as they seek to change from community anchors to community catalysts. (For more information on this initiative). Deb is a co-founder and the lead manager of ABCD in Action, an online community with more than 2600 members from over 75 countries. ABCD in Action is the designated online Community of Practice (COP) for the ABCD Institute and partners with other ABCD-related organizations and groups around the world. In addition, she also services as a faculty member and steward for the ABCD Institute and is active in several Institute workgroups, including the Rural Communities and ABCD workgroup.

Regional Community Conversations: Putting Person-Centered Thinking in Action

Attendees will be directed to virtual breakout rooms by region. Each region will brainstorm ways to put what they've learned about person-centered thinking and asset-based strategies into action after the conference. Each group will have a facilitator. After the discussion groups, everyone will be directed back into the main session room for the Harvest of Ideas. Group facilitators will provide a short summary of the ideas that were generated in each region of the state.