

Creating Conditions for Success:

Blueprint

Progress Report

Employing Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities in Massachusetts

October 2014

Prepared by
Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services
Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers

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Background

In November 2013, *Blueprint for Success: Employing Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities in Massachusetts* was released. The Blueprint served as a mutual plan developed by representatives from the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers (ADDP), The Arc of Massachusetts, and Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to increase integrated employment opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities (ID) served by DDS. The foundation of the plan or employment initiative emphasizes the importance of and benefits received by all when individuals with disabilities work in the community.

To achieve integrated employment, the Blueprint's architects constructed a plan to close sheltered workshops by June 30, 2015. Contingent on additional funding, participants in sheltered workshops would transition to individual or group employment and/or Community-Based Day Services (CBDS) once sheltered workshops closed. An estimated investment of \$26.7 million over a four-year period would be needed to provide supports to individuals leaving sheltered workshops and moving into integrated work and day settings.

The *Blueprint* rollout also included an 18 month capacity building initiative funded by DDS to build a foundation for employment success. The Department of Developmental Services committed to fund the following: (a) regional forums to brief and respond to questions from individuals and families about the *Blueprint*, (b) technical assistance and consultation to providers to redesign services, (c) staff development and training to build a knowledge base in delivering integrated employment supports, and (d) expansion of a cross-disability, interagency employment collaborative model in three regions of the state to more effectively engage employers. Furthermore, DDS remained dedicated to provide individuals the same number of hours of services and supports to maintain stability for families during a time of change.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on efforts made to expand integrated employment in Massachusetts since *Blueprint for Success* was released in November 2013.

Building Resources

In the fiscal year 2015 budget, three million dollars was allotted toward this initiative for adults with intellectual disabilities. The support shown by the Patrick Administration and the Massachusetts Legislature is a positive first step to move in the right direction, though this amount falls short of the level of funding originally requested. The Department is working closely with stakeholders to adjust its original timelines regarding workshop closures. In addition, new legislative language regarding the ability to receive sheltered workshop services based on individual choice may have an impact on the original goal depending on the number of individuals who choose that option. As of yet, very few individuals have opted for initiation or continuation of sheltered work services when offered an informed choice.

The Department believes significant progress can be made with three million dollars in expansion funding in the fiscal year 2015 budget. A preliminary spending plan indicates 31 of 39 provider agencies providing sheltered workshop services at the end of fiscal year 2014 will receive an allocation of funding to facilitate transition of individuals to integrated work and/or Community-Based Day Supports (CBDS) during this fiscal year. Of the 31 providers, 17 are projected to completely phase out the delivery of sheltered workshop services by June 30, 2015. In addition, it is expected that approximately 890 individuals (about one-third of those attending sheltered workshops as of June 30, 2014) will benefit from new funding resources to transition to individual or group supported employment and/or CBDS during fiscal year 2015.

"I like working in the community because I get to work with new people. I have fun working at Tedeschi's learning new things. They make me feel like part of the team."

[Sam* who recently transitioned out of a sheltered workshop]

"Work is important to me because ... I get to help with special projects and greet visitors and escort them to their meeting rooms. Work is also important to me because it makes me happy to earn money."

[Lisa* who has an ID]

**Name changed to conceal identity*

Accomplishments

Over the past ten months, a great deal of activity occurred on the identified capacity building initiatives listed above and significant progress made working toward goals outlined in the Blueprint. The Employment Work Group continues to meet on a monthly basis as a cross-stakeholder implementation team to develop plans, address issues, and identify new ways to support goals listed in the Blueprint. In addition, Regional Employment First Implementation Teams, facilitated by the DDS regional employment liaison, brings together both center-based (or sheltered) work and employment service providers with DDS area office staff on a regular basis to share information, best practices, and resources to promote implementation of Employment First.

Furthermore, an Employment First electronic newsletter and website were developed to provide information, resources, and positive stories that support integrated employment and implementation of the Blueprint. Individuals can sign up to receive newsletters at <http://employmentfirstma.org/signup> and visit the website at <http://employmentfirstma.org/>.

The following sections describe some of the major accomplishments related to the 18 month capacity building initiative DDS began in November 2013 designed to provide access to training, technical assistance, and other resources to support implementation of the Blueprint.

Regional Employment Forums

A contract was established with The Arc of Massachusetts to jointly work with DDS regional and area staff members and local employment providers to host forums for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and families to provide information about the Blueprint and respond to questions and concerns. The Arc also worked in partnership with Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change (MFOFC) and Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong (MASS) to organize forums.

The format for these sessions included a presentation by a DDS and Arc representative, an individual successfully employed in the community to share his/her experiences, and a family member with a son or daughter working in the community to share their experiences and perspectives. Each forum ended with a question and answer period that included several local provider representatives along with the main presenters. It was reported that individual and family presentations were tremendously beneficial and positive for peers to hear.

Below are details on the regional forums:

- A total of **19 family forums were held** from December 2013 through June 2014 at different locations across the state with a total of **1,250 participants**. Although family members were the primary target audience, there were many individuals or self-advocates who also attended sessions.
- **Five separate forums were held for self-advocates** in different regions of the state reaching **100 individuals**. Self-advocates played an instrumental role in the sessions assisting with the presentation, helping address questions and concerns, and sharing their own employment experiences.

As with any change process, there were a range of reactions and concerns expressed at the forums. Some individuals and family members were very excited about new directions and possibilities and opportunities for integrated employment and meaningful community experiences. However, some family members expressed apprehension and concern about proposed changes and how it would impact their son or daughter. Some of the main themes and concerns raised included the following:

- pace and timeline of proposed changes,
- loss of a paycheck received and friendships formed at a sheltered workshop,
- impact on Social Security benefits,
- availability of job opportunities,
- quality of employment services and CBDS,
- capability of their son or daughter to be successfully employed in the community, and
- transportation to jobs.

Though many of these concerns were expected, it will be important to continue to work in a thoughtful and responsive manner with each individual and family throughout planning and change in service options to address specific reservations.

Technical Assistance and Consultation

In partnership with the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston, DDS announced availability of technical assistance in late fall 2013 to 45 center-based (sheltered work) providers. Technical assistance was designed to support efforts to increase integrated employment outcomes and to assist in the transformation process. Technical assistance was provided by both ICI staff and external, qualified, subject matter consultants. It is important to note that provider agencies were in different places during start of transformation, specifically in terms of size of the sheltered workshop program, number of people supported, capacity to provide integrated employment services, progress made in job placements, and specialization in providing services to individuals with more intense support needs.

Out of the 45 providers who were solicited, **19 agencies requested and have been receiving technical assistance** services individually tailored to each agency. Common areas of technical assistance include the following:

- training in person-centered planning approaches,
- creating job development strategies,

- re-defining staff roles and responsibilities to focus on increased development of integrated job opportunities,
- designing programs for Community-Based Day Supports, and
- managing the change process.

Provider agencies found assistance instrumental in their service transformation efforts to expand capacity to deliver high-quality, integrated employment and community services.

“Collaborating with our consultant allowed us to plan and implement our transition out of sheltered workshop services in an objective, thoughtful, person-centered and efficient manner. She [consultant] helped with design principles, shared a wealth of resources, challenged our thinking and kept us focused on our goal to secure jobs with competitive wages for individuals. Our work continues and we are grateful for her continued assistance and support.”

[Gail Brown, New England Village Executive Director]

Staff Development and Training

A comprehensive approach to staff development and training was initiated for provider staff members to build knowledge base, skillsets, and expertise required to deliver quality, individualized employment services and to effectively engage the business community. There was a specific focus on designing training for staff currently working in sheltered workshop programs to develop different skills needed to support individuals in integrated jobs and other inclusive community experiences. An extensive amount of training was offered in a short amount of time that has **reached more than 300 provider staff members**.

Training highlights included:

- The Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers, in collaboration with DDS, hosted a statewide employment conference with over 300 attendees to unveil goals in Blueprint for Success and to bring together key stakeholders, including but not limited to disability providers, advocates, and state agency personnel, to start dialogue needed to build consensus on redesigning Massachusetts’ employment model to reflect integrated employment opportunities for individuals with I/DD.
- A six-day (36 hours total) comprehensive employment supports series was offered twice throughout the last ten months for job developers and employment specialists working in provider agencies. The curriculum was aligned with credentialing requirements through the Association for Certified Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE), which enables training participants, upon the completion of specific field work assignments, to become certified employment support professionals. A total of 48 staff participated in the combined classroom and experiential training program.
- An additional 91 provider staff attended a one or two-day training program focused on job development and business engagement, job coaching and support strategies, and person-centered approach to career planning.

- Thirty-eight provider staff completed a two-day training on managing for success, which was designed to support capacity development for program managers of integrated community employment services.
- Seventy-six people attended a one-day training on program design for inclusive community-based day supports. The training, “A New Day: Creating Pathways to Employment and Meaningful Days,” was presented by Sara Murphy of TransCen, and it was complemented by an additional full-day working session with small teams of providers.
- Several specialized training sessions were offered to respond to specific needs and expand the repertoire of skills provider staff have in their “tool box” in supporting individuals to successfully obtain and retain employment. The following specific trainings reached 51 individuals:
 - A two-day training on systematic instruction techniques with 28 participants
 - Strategies for successful job placement of individuals with the most significant disabilities was a one-day training attended by 23 participants
- Specifically designed for provider staff members who have been working in sheltered workshop programs for many years, a one-day training session was offered on transition to community-based work for direct support professionals, which was attended by 25 individuals.

“The training was very comprehensive and interactive. I got great tips to help me better learn about a job seeker’s likes and dislikes, and their gifts and talents.”

“This training took me out of my comfort zone! Going out into the community to practice some of the job development strategies we learned was one of the things I liked best about this training. The trainer was very supportive!”

[Employment specialist training participants]

- Through a contract with BenePLAN of the University of Massachusetts Medical School, the following trainings were provided related to Social Security benefits working-age beneficiaries receive, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Death Index (SSDI), and how benefits are affected when a beneficiary starts or returns to work.
 - Five regional Social Security “Nuts and Bolts” trainings were provided for both providers’ employment specialists and DDS area office staff. The 12-hour comprehensive training, which included a robust set of training materials and resource information, was attended by a total of 111 individuals.
 - Four, two-hour overview sessions were offered to parents across different regions of the state. Ninety-seven participants joined these sessions.

“Information was fantastic and helpful. [It] really fostered the importance of reporting and using work incentives.”

“I was so impressed. I have learned an immense amount in 1.5 days. ... [I] was able to follow and activities were a great reinforcement. I plan to recommend this training/BenePlan services to others at my agency. Thank you!!”

[Social Security training participants]

- Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong (MASS), through funding from DDS, provided 56 “Explore, Prepare, Act” trainings that reached more than **600 individuals/self-advocates and 200 support staff**. A three-hour training is delivered by regional teams of self-advocates – with a mentor for support – to promote the benefits of employment and ways individuals can become more actively engaged in exploring their interests, looking for a job, and preparing for an interview. A video about this training can be found at www.exploreprepareact.org.

Employment Collaborative Expansion

The Regional Employment Collaborative (REC), modeled on successful experiences of the Central Massachusetts Employment Collaborative hosted by Riverside Community Care, is a partnership of cross-disability provider organizations, state agencies, workforce development entities, and employers whose mission is to improve competitive employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Through staff members who serve as employer liaisons, the Collaborative engages in employer outreach to identify new job opportunities, streamline access to openings among partners, and helps create and facilitates a Job Developers Network (JDN) to share job leads.

The Central Massachusetts Employment Collaborative (CMEC) presently serves cities and towns in southern central Massachusetts and is jointly funded by DDS and the Department of Mental Health (DMH). In fiscal year 2014, **93 job offers were made** to individuals served by DDS funded employment programs as a result of CMEC employer engagement and job lead sharing efforts.

Through funding from DDS, **five additional Collaboratives have been developed** in different regions of the state. Riverside Community Care is the lead agency for the following Collaboratives:

- Greater Merrimack Valley Employment Collaborative (GMVEC) serves the areas of Lowell, Lawrence, and Haverhill
- Northeast Employment Collaborative (NEEC) serves the cities and towns served by DDS’ North Shore, Metro North and Central Middlesex Area Offices (from Cape Ann to Concord)
- Greater Boston Employment Collaborative (GBEC) serves Metro Boston (within the Route 128 belt loop area)

- Western Massachusetts Employment Collaborative (WMEC), which will serve Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden counties, is jointly funded by DDS and DMH. It is planned to start in October 2014.

The South Shore Employment Collaborative covering South Coastal, Brockton, and Plymouth areas hired an employer liaison in partnership with the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI)/ University of Massachusetts Boston, and they have an active Job Developer Network.

Furthermore, a cohesive statewide coalition of the Regional Employment Collaboratives will be established through support from Riverside Community Care to maximize employer relationships and potential job opportunities.

Next Steps

The Employment Implementation Team is poised to build upon its efforts. A combined effort of representatives of the state, providers, and advocates will greatly assist in a mutual goal: increase the number of individuals with disabilities in competitive employment and integrated day opportunities.

Next steps include the following areas:

- Obtain additional investment in fiscal year 2016 budget to assist more individuals (about 1,600) in sheltered work programs to move to valued jobs in the community and/or CBDS. There is a need to continue to create conditions for success that comes from an investment in improvements to the basic infrastructure. High quality providers, with well trained staff and informed consumers, will help make this vision a reality.
- Provide an additional array of robust trainings, for example program design to develop meaningful inclusive community experiences through Community-Based Day Support programs, employment services for individuals with autism spectrum disorder, and Social Security benefits for individuals, families, and provider and state agency staff.
- Offer ongoing technical assistance support as needed for providers of sheltered work programs.
- Remain actively involved with representatives of the Massachusetts Department of Labor's Office for Federal Contract Compliance Program. The goal is to engage in outreach to federal contractors to increase individuals with disabilities as employees of the federal contract workforce, as required in Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act regulations.
- Participate in an Employment Incentive Pilot Program with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and Commonwealth Corporation.
- Distribute guidance from DDS to providers on the development of social enterprise. The Department will release guidelines that will be used in conjunction with a provider's business plan to help determine DDS' support for an individual working in a provider's business or social enterprise.
- Meet regularly with the Employment Work Group comprised of representatives of DDS, The Arc of Massachusetts, and ADDP to support goals in the Blueprint. Original

members and new persons who joined the group during implementation are listed in Appendix A.

- Further develop transition from school to employment to promote positive expectations for employment and to facilitate access to meaningful career exploration and vocational experiences for individuals while in school. Establish stronger partnerships with school systems and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission to facilitate streamlined movement from school to employment.

Conclusion

Although an allocation of \$3 million in the final fiscal year 2015 budget falls short of the \$5.5 million requested in the House Two budget by Governor Patrick, the Employment Work Group remains optimistic about the future of employment services in the Commonwealth. Significant strides are being made with the aforementioned allocation. For example, the ability to invest in expertise has helped individuals, families, advocates, providers, and state agency personnel to come together to advance in a new direction. In addition, provider organizations are actively engaged in making fundamental changes to their programs and are showing innovation in their approaches to developing quality employment opportunities and meaningful, inclusive community experiences.

Given providers and individuals are in different stages of transformation, funding over the next several years is critical to create systemic change. Additional resources are instrumental for more individuals to move into jobs in the community and/or integrated day programs. The Employment Work Group looks forward to continued support from legislators and state administrators. Without their support, change will be very difficult.

"[Michael] has made some remarkable changes ... particularly helped by this new CBDS program. ... This new-found confidence has manifested ... to outside activities as well. Within the program, he has groomed a horse at a local farm and visited an animal shelter. ... He's gotten to see a live news broadcast and to meet his favorite meteorologist. ... Outside of the program, he is now trying new things like water yoga and tai chi. When asked a question, his answer is now usually ... 'I can do it' instead of a shrug of the shoulders, or no reply at all."*

[Mother of adult son with ID]

**Name changed to conceal identity*

Appendix A: List of Employment Work Group Members

Core members

- Gary Blumenthal, ADDP President and Chief Executive Officer
- Colleen Brosnan, Sunshine Village Director of Day Services
- Gail T. Brown, New England Village Executive Director
- Daniel Burke, Lifeworks Inc. and The Arc of South Norfolk President and CEO
- Mary Lee Daniels, Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services Berkshire Area Office Director
- Colt Duckworth, Kennedy Donovan Center Transitional Jobs Coach Program Coordinator
- Char Gentes, Riverside Industries, Inc. President/Chief Executive Officer
- Bob Harris, CLASS Inc./Arc of Greater Lawrence President
- Don Hughes, Riverside Community Care Associate Division Director for Clubhouse and Employment Services
- David Kent, Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services, Worcester Area Office Area Director
- Joe Krajewski, Community Connections Vice President of Programs
- Kelly Lawless, Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services North Shore Area Office Director
- Barbara L'Italien, The Arc of Massachusetts Director of Government Affairs
- Mandy Nichols, ADDP Director of Programs and Analysis
- Phil Philbin, Seven Hills Assistant Vice President
- Leo Sarkissian, The Arc of Massachusetts Executive Director
- Ken Singer, Berkshire County Arc Executive Director
- Sharon Smith, Work Inc. Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer
- Cindy Thomas, Institute for Community Inclusion/UMass Boston Coordinator of Employment Services, Training, and Technical Assistance
- Larry Tummino, Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services Deputy Commissioner and Employment Work Group Chair
- Margaret Van Gelder, Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services Statewide Director of Family and Employment Support

Guest contributors and providers

- Bruce Bird, Vinfen President and Chief Executive Officer
- Gina Golash, Sunshine Village, Executive Director
- Jean Goldsberry, Minute Man Arc Executive Director
- Donna Sabecky, Community Connections President and Chief Executive Officer
- Tara Hopper Zeltner, ADDP Director of Governmental Affairs