



# The Learning Curve

*“Enhancing the Knowledge of DDDS Professionals”*

## Employment for Persons with Developmental Disabilities

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### Did you know that...

- As of 6/15/09 there are 468 individuals within DDDS who are working in Community Employment. In 2009, there are 42 individuals participating in the Early Start to Supported Employment Program and 45 projected for 2010.
- A 2006 survey estimates that 36% of working-age adults with disabilities are employed, compared with 74% of people without a disability.
- In FY 2004, an estimated 20% of individuals receiving day supports participated in integrated employment, down from 24% in FY 2001.
- The federal government spends 4 times more money on segregated adult day programs than on supported employment (\$488 million vs. \$108 million)



- Between 1996 and 2004, Delaware exceeded the National average of persons with DD served in integrated employment per 100K of state population.

**DisabilityInfo.gov**  
Online Resource for People with Disabilities

[www.disabilityinfo.gov](http://www.disabilityinfo.gov)

Department of Labor

<http://www.dol.gov/>

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/welcome.html>



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human  
Services / Administra-  
tion on Developmental  
Disabilities (ADD)

The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, refers to ten areas of importance or “Areas of Emphasis” that have a strong impact on the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities. Employment related Activities is one of these areas. The Developmental Disability Grantees often work to improve access to employment because the unemployment is so high among individuals with disabilities. There is a great need for advocacy, capacity building, and systemic change activities that result in individuals with developmental disabilities acquiring, retaining, or advancing in paid employment, including supported employment or self-employment, in integrated settings in the community.

### Employment Services in Delaware

#### Employment First

The Division of Developmental Disabilities Services affirms that employment and participation in their communities is an important part of the lives of the individuals it serves. Further, the Division believes that employment in the community should be the first service option considered for individuals. In support of this belief, the Division has set a five year goal of increasing community employment for individuals receiving Center Based Day Program services by 5% per year.

To that end, *Day Program service plans should address the advancement of individuals towards meaningful participation and*



#### employment in their communities.

It is the *responsibility of the Day Programs* funded by the Division to work in collaboration with the relevant Residential Programs and families, to develop these support plans and *to incorporate the plan into the individuals’ ELP by July 1, 2009.* For individuals who are in community employment for less than 20 hours per week the goal should be to increase the number of hours of employment or meaningful activity in their communities. Further, for individuals who are not in a community work setting, it is recommended that they participate in a community based work assessment at least every three years.

#### Early Start to Supported Employment Pilot

Over the past few years, interagency collaborative efforts in the transition process have yielded some positive results. However, many students with significant disabilities experience difficult and unsuccessful transitions to adult service options. In response to this, DDDS, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Education have all agreed to pilot a project to align resources which will prevent gaps in services provided to students needing supported employment services upon leaving school and entering the workforce.

“Early Start to Supported Employ-

ment” is intended to demonstrate the feasibility of a more seamless transition for students leaving school and entering the adult workforce. The outcome of paid work with post-school support in place before leaving school is the primary goal of this pilot. There is a commitment from each agency to conduct this pilot study over multiple years in order to learn how to more effectively support successful employment outcomes for students requiring long-term adult services. Early Start began in the spring of 2005.

#### Early Start Success Story

This is the story of a 21 year old young lady graduating this school year from the Delaware Autism Program. She has Autism and has significant impairments in expressive language, but her receptive language is very good, and she has some reading ability. She has some behavioral support needs, but supports have been put into place by her employment specialist from POW&R (Autism Delaware Productive Opportunities for Work and Recreation) and these issues have been significantly decreased. POW&R began working with her and her school staff during the summer of 2008. In the fall of 2008, she obtained a volunteer



opportunity at a doctor's office in New Castle. During her volunteer period, she learned the tasks associated with her duties and the staff developed checklists, schedules and scripts that would help her become more independent in her job. The volunteer opportunity turned into a paid job and now she completes her job with very little support; she is very independent and meticulous with her work. The school staff did not initially believe she was a candidate for this program; however, her family encouraged them to give it a try. It's truly amazing what happens when folks give people a chance to succeed.



**Customized Employment Pilot Project**  
January 2009

The Early Start Project has increased the number of students transitioning from school to work successfully the past few years. In an effort to serve even more students and adults, a customized employment project focusing on the unique characteristics of the individual offers more opportunities for students and adults with disabilities to become successfully employed.

The project initially proposed to serve between 5 to 15 students or adults with Developmental Disabilities transitioning from school or day services to supported employment. Currently, there are 8 enrolled in this program. Each individual has a team for support to ensure success. Teams consist of one school or day service provider, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Counselor, DDDS Case Manager, one vocational provider and family members involved in the project. Vocational activities start during the exit year from school or may begin one year earlier. Adults who are already receiving DDDS day services can start receiving services immediately.

Each team receives administrative support from the Department of Education (DOE), the DVR, and the provider agency. Each team also receives training and technical support in providing services by George Tilson, from Transcend, Inc. and from the State Employment Leadership Network to implement the Customized Employment Project. "Train the Trainer" sessions are provided to support teams and team leaders.

Each team provides activities that provide critical information for a successful customized job match for their student or adult. A strong em-

phasis to gain information from Essentials of Life Style Planning (ELP) that reinforces the basic components are: knowing the student or adult (skills inventory, support needs and aspirations), finding opportunities/employer partners, negotiating job matches/placements and workplace supports. This is the critical phase in the project, one which ultimately results in a customized job match.

#### Criteria for selection

- Individual has support needs and/or challenging placement needs that demand a unique work environment that meets individual needs, interests and abilities.
- Individual has not been employed or unsuccessfully employed, but has the potential with a good job match and necessary supports.
- Individual expresses interest/desire to work.
- Parents, family and friends are supportive of the individual's desire to work.
- Traditional supported employment services are not sufficient for success due to the need for a customized work environment and/or support needs required.

#### Customized Employment Success Stories ...

A friendly, outgoing young man expressed an interest in working in the school system before he graduated high school and entered the Customized Employment program to help him reach that goal. His determination assisted the Employment Specialist from Easter Seals of Sussex County in her endeavors to obtain a volunteer job with the Indian River School District, only a few months after being referred. He was given the opportunity to volunteer at 3 different schools during the week as natural supports were established.

Under this new program, the Employment Specialist was able to help him complete 6 weeks of intensive one-on-one training while he was volunteering, and while he pursued a paid position with the district. This gave her time to teach him the skills he needed while continuing to develop a position. This young man performed a variety of duties that included custodial tasks, assisting in the cafeteria, and assisting the school nurse by making ice packs. He also performed tasks at other schools that included assisting teachers with activities, and document shredding.

After two months of volunteering, he was offered a position and accepted. The natural supports were in place and he was very comfortable at each location. The Employment Specialist coordinated a schedule and a time sheet was developed. Since this was a new Pilot program, several different forms of documentation were developed. These included a Profile, a Portfolio, and Employment plan. Overall, the placement and participation with Customized Employment was a great success and supports continue to

ensure job retention. The last Customized Employment Pilot success story is about a 24 year old young lady with cerebral palsy, a visual impairment and epilepsy. Her employment specialist is from Community Integrated Services. She has limited use of one arm and uses a powered wheel chair for mobility. She has limited speech, but has a very strong will and extremely expressive facial expressions. She requires assistance for personal care needs and has an employment specialist who assists her with her employment related needs. This young lady has three part-time jobs. One job is at C-Line Stables, a horse farm in Townsend DE. Her job is to polish all the saddles - this is not only work for her, but also is therapy as it helps her to improve the use of her arm/hand. Her second job is at Willey Farms, a country food market and nursery also in Townsend, DE. Her job is to scoop dirt and put it into various sized pots. Her third job is at Mechanical Design Solutions, Inc in Smyrna, DE. Her job is to shred sensitive documents. The remainder of her week is made up of various volunteer opportunities as well as some recreational activities. Prior to becoming involved in the Customized Employment Pilot, she was participating in social/recreational activities at a Facility-Based Day Program. Although some of the activities there were enjoyable, her dream was to work just like everyone else does. Today, she is very happy with her life.



#### Resources

<http://allianceforfullparticipation.org/>

<http://www.ajb.org/> - America's Job Bank - or call 1-877-US-2JOBS.

<http://www.careeronestop.org> - Career One Stop offers info for jobseekers and employers.

<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/> - Job Accommodation Network is a free consulting service.

<http://www.onestoptoolkit.org/>

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/welcome.html> - National Center on Workforce & Disability.

#### Resources for Youth

<http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>

<http://www.ncset.org/>

#### Ticket to Work

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/work/aboutticket.html> - SSA

<http://www.yourtickettowork.com/endir> - Employment Network Directory