Guide for Provider Transformation to an Employment First Service Model

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What Is an Employment First Service Model?

Employment First is a model for services that strives toward the full inclusion of people with disabilities through prioritizing community-based employment in an integrated setting as the first choice of services for people with all ranges of disabilities (ODEP - Office of Disability Employment Policy). In this definition, "integrated employment" is used to convey jobs held by people with disabilities in a work setting where (1) the majority of employees are not diagnosed as having a disability, (2) the person has the opportunity to interact frequently with employees without disabilities, (3) the person receives a direct payment from the employer, and (4) the person is paid comparably to their peers without disabilities, either at or above minimum wage. ("Employment First," 2012; "Tennessee Memorandum Of Understanding," 2015)

Why Change to an Employment First Service Model?

Driven by evolving policies and initiatives that embrace integrated employment, Employment First is the national movement for best practices in agencies that provide services to youth and adults with disabilities. These initiatives are reflected across an array of recent policy developments, including Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act, which states that, beginning in 2016, a chain of action steps will be required before an individual age 24 or younger can be placed in a sub-minimum wage job, such as a sheltered workshop (Hoff, 2014). Also, in recent years, the U. S. Department of Justice has applied a Supreme Court decision (Olmstead vs L.C.) that prohibits segregation of people with disabilities to work environments like sheltered workshops, particularly those that use 14c certificates to justify paying less than minimum wage to their employees with disabilities ("Olmstead: Community Integration for Everyone," n.d.)

Employment First and integrated employment have monetary advantages for providers and individuals with disabilities. Employment First can financially benefit providers through:

1. increasing funding rates for integrated employment services compared with facility- or day habilitation,
2. avoiding the uncertainty of whether billing for facility-based services will be available under new Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) regulations, and
3. lowering staff costs through reduction in the amount of supervision required.

Due to the changing expectations laid out by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services HCBS, it is clear that CMS funding will be less available to fund employment services delivered in non-community based settings, so the financial

Employment First Service Rates

- Service rates for Level 1-6 facility-based services (i.e., day programs or sheltered workshops) are $31.23 to $128.11
- Community-based services are $60.57; with level 4 community-based services at $84.11, and Level 6 at $130.69
- While group employment services are at $45.34, individual employment is at $78.85
- Special needs employment is at $109.84
- Employment supports level 6 is at $130.69

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incentive is trending toward community integration if one is using CMS funds. Blending and braiding Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) and Ticket to Work funds to support job training, placement, and stabilization services allows provider agencies that are transitioning to an employment-based service model to maximize funding opportunities, and to branch out into serving a broader client base.

More significant than funding incentives and adherence to recent policy is the value of Employment First to the people who receive services from provider agencies and their families. While some individuals enjoy working in a sheltered environment, the greater opportunities and broader community they encounter once they have been successfully transitioned into community-based employment offers even greater satisfaction to many. In fact, Lee Brown of Impact Centers in TN found that, when placed into a family-oriented work environment in the community, the individual will become so well integrated that after a time, they will no longer require a job coach or any form of assistance (Brown, 2015). The opportunities brought by higher wages and expanded friendship networks lead to greater independence, bigger dreams, and wonderful success stories when Employment First is done well. Miglire (2007) found that nationally 63% of people with disabilities would prefer to work outside a facility, yet not all people in facility-based settings know that they would prefer something different; in fact, many fear the unknown.

> **"If work can benefit a person and they want to work, they can work."**
>
> – Donna Palmer,
> SRVS Program Developer

Families are now expecting employment for their family member with a disability. A survey by TennesseeWorks (www.tennesseeworks.org/survey/, 2014) of more than 1,000 Tennessee parents revealed that 83% of parents surveyed thought that employment in the community was an important outcome after high school for their child. Moreover, in 2014 The Arc TN, DIDD, and TennesseeWorks conducted a series of conversations in eight communities in Tennessee in order to solicit views on shifting toward an Employment First model. The attendees at these events were family members of individuals who were either (1) on a waiting list for services or (2) currently receiving DIDD services in sheltered workshops or segregated day settings. From these conversations, the families' prevailing concerns in regard to an Employment First service model were their child's safety and acceptance outside the sheltered workshop, the loss of friendships, and the absence of familiar staff who readily knew how to support their son or daughter. Addressing these concerns will be pivotal in the success of any transformation ("Community Conversations," www.tennesseeworks.org/communityconversations/).

> **83%** of TN parents believe that employment in the community is an important outcome after high school for their child.

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Some people with disabilities receiving services from providers are not given the option to explore opportunities beyond facility-based services. Proposed regulations under the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) will increase people with disabilities' opportunities for discovery in sheltered workshop settings (Hoff, 2014). Under WIOA, anyone working in a sheltered setting must have Discovery experiences, exposure to non-shelter-based work, and opportunities to make a different choice every 6 months. Based on the aforementioned definitions from the Department of Labor, the Employment First service model does not include job placements where a person with a disability works in a sheltered workshop or is paid through the provider agency to work in an enclave. This illustrates the need to answer the question "How can provider agencies transition successfully to this new service model of Employment First?"

Approaches to an Employment First Service Model

Just as each person with a disability is different, so is every service provider. As a result, an array of opportunities to pursue Employment First is presented below.

☆ Competitive Placement

When hiring in a competitive placement, an employer hires an individual with a disability for a preexisting job through traditional recruitment and hiring methods. Additional supports from an agency are not needed for competitive placement. Instead, supports at the worksite are the only systems needed to assist individuals with disabilities at their jobs ("Tennessee Memorandum Of Understanding," 2015).

☆ Customized Employment

According to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, customized employment refers to job placements for individuals with significant disabilities where the breadth of responsibilities uniquely fits the abilities of the person as well of the needs of the employment site (Hoff, 2014). This can be a constructive method for individuals who need more intensive levels of support in order to be employed. In customized employment, the individual does not fill a pre-existing job position, but rather the employer and the individual negotiate a relationship that is mutually beneficial where the individual focuses on unmet or specific needs of the workplace. The hiring process is highly individualized, encompassing a unique method of seeking jobs, creating profile documents such as resumés, and assessing employers' needs (*Tennessee Memorandum Of Understanding*, 2015).

> **"To see them feel appreciated—because wherever they go they are just showered with a lot of attention and appreciation. And it's a sense of fulfillment because we have been in the shop for so long. I think the growth was, I don't want to say minimal [in the sheltered workshop], but being independent in the workforce as much as they possibly can, I think that's a huge achievement, opportunity, and experience."**
>
> – Kennon Oglesby, SVRS Operations Lead

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In these instances, responsibilities are "tailored" to the needs of the job and the worker to match one another like a custom-made garment. Variations of customized employment include, but are not limited to, (1) job carving, where one job is developed from smaller tasks of existing job(s), and (2) job sharing, where multiple peoples' strengths are used to share the responsibilities of one job ("What Is Customized Employment?," n.d.).

☆ Supported Employment

Supported employment services include two routes for a person with a disability: (a) receiving support while working in integrated competitive employment, or (b) integrated employment in a short-term placement rather than a traditional unlimited term of employment (Hoff, 2014). Service providers can provide employment supports by connecting and collaborating with employers to establish meaningful job placements for people with disabilities. Optimally, employment supports should fade, allowing natural supports to take their place with check-ins at an established frequency to prevent any day-to-day irritations or misunderstandings from becoming problems. Individual supported employment encompasses a person with a disability working alongside coworkers without a disability, often in a community business, receiving the same competitive wages and benefits as their peers. In contrast to their coworkers, the employee with a disability receives ongoing paid support from a service provider (Winsor, 2014). To practice Individual Supported Employment in your agency, it is important to make connections with local employers and to support the person with a disability in procuring employment.

Co-worker dual employment is a model of services in which an employee with a disability and an employee without a disability work together in two equivalent full-time jobs. The companion employee models working skills for the worker with a disability. Instead of the disability agency providing support, the employer provides the support.

Regardless of the variety, supported employment services are determined based on both the needs and eligibility of the individual, and are written into the Individual Support Plan (*Tennessee Memorandum Of Understanding*, 2015).

☆ Scattered Site Employment

If a geographical area is rich in a number of worksites, scattered site employment may be an option for agencies seeking to provide an Employment First service model. In scattered site employment, placement is in a large company or close geographic area that has multiple competitive, integrated employment opportunities and is open to the provision of supported employment services or customized employment to many individuals at one time. Arrangements are made to ensure that workers with disabilities can be successful. If needed, a job coach is assigned to a business site where multiple individuals with disabilities will be working in various areas of the business in integrated settings. Or, an employer with several departments hires a

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group of people but they all work independently in each department doing a different job. The job coach is available to check in as needed with individual workers with disabilities throughout the organization and to provide supports to individual workers with disabilities at varying levels. (*Tennessee Memorandum Of Understanding*, 2015).

☆ Self-Employment and Individual Entrepreneurship

Self-employment services entail designing a business model where the person with a disability receives an income directly from his/her own business, trade, or profession. This individual has full ownership of the company, not a provider or an organization, and is the primary person in control of the business (Winsor, 2014). In these instances, the individual with the disability is responsible for obtaining or providing a service or product and for the financial risks. Additionally, the income is provided to the individual directly from the business, not from the agency, and the individual is not required to have federal income tax and FICA payments withheld (*Tennessee Memorandum Of Understanding*, 2015). All these business activities, from designing the business plan to the day-to-day running of the company, can include the use of agency supports for the owner with a disability. A variation of self-employment can be an individual acting as an entrepreneur by conducting freelance work. Agencies can support individuals in self-employment by offering monetary support and technical assistance in writing the business plan and by providing skills that the person with a disability might otherwise have to pay for (Bose, 2010). For example, Maryland's Developmental Disabilities Administration and Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services teamed together to offer these supports to individuals seeking to become self-employed by creating the Reach Independence through Self-Employment, or RISE, program. These efforts have enabled people with disabilities to attain competitive employment by constructing an assortment of businesses (Bose, 2010).

Agencies can support individuals in self-employment by offering monetary support and technical assistance in writing the business plan and by providing skills that the person with a disability might otherwise have to pay for (Bose, 2010).

☆ Agency Entrepreneurship

Another avenue that agencies can pursue in attaining competitive and integrated employment is by beginning start-up businesses in their community. Beginning with a needs assessment of available resources in the community, the provider agency can create a self-sustaining business that aims to meet identified community needs that match the resources they have. Extraordinary Ventures in North Carolina illustrates how an agency can act as entrepreneurs through their establishment of laundry, office supplies, candle making, bus cleaning, and event facility rental businesses where all employees with disabilities are compensated at or above minimum wage ("*About EV*," n.d.). Best practices for Agency Entrepreneurship include hiring people without disabilities to work alongside people with disabilities (making it integrated and competitive) and to make sure that people with disabilities represent all levels of staffing within the business.

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☆ Prevocational Services

For those individuals who may not be ready for Supported Employment, Prevocational Services may be a better fit. Prevocational Services can be provided in a variety of ways including volunteering at nonprofits; touring businesses; job shadowing; improving health and fitness; practicing job-seeking skills in a job club; taking college courses, adult learning community classes at the library or community centers; learning financial management skills; participating in community groups; conducting workplace assessments; job exploration; reaching out to employers; providing government benefits training; or providing information on potential benefits available to employees and their job coaches (Winsor, 2014). As a prevocational training activity, an individual or group may volunteer or not receive payment for their work in order to gain experience and to demonstrate their skills to an employer. These services are an avenue to competitive employment offered in a community setting outside the provider's facility that are time limited and geared toward furthering work skills needed to gain employment. If these prevocational training opportunities are unpaid, agencies should make sure that volunteer work and internships meet the DOL definitions for these employee-employer interactions. Goals may include task completion, problem solving, coworker relationships, safety procedures, and consistent attendance. In regard to payment, some individuals in prevocational settings may collect minimum wage or higher, but they typically do not receive benefits (Winsor, 2014; Mann, 2011).

☆ Career Center

To develop the necessary employment skills in people with disabilities with whom agencies work, while making the most productive use of their facility, agencies can transform their facility into Career Centers where people with disabilities receive Prevocational Services, including employment skills training and job exploration. SRVS, a provider agency in Tennessee, transformed their sheltered workshop of Industries, Inc. into a Career Center (Tyler Hampton, personal correspondence, 11/7/2014). Individuals receive career training using an individualized proprietary curriculum, allowing SRVS staff and potential employees to feel confident about job readiness upon completion. More information about how your agency can develop a curriculum can be found in the Appendices.

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Transition to an Employment First Service Model

Organizations that are successful in their transformation to an Employment First provider agency share three elements, all of which should be addressed:

1. **Strategy:** What will you do? At heart, you will still be putting people to work, but the type of work and the way in which your agency will go about that will be different.
2. **Structure:** Who does it? Who on your staff will be responsible for the new tasks and roles that will be required?
3. **Systems:** How will your agency do it? What changes in the policies, procedures, and day-to-day lives and habits of management, service staff, and individuals with disabilities will occur? An understanding of these elements can give a framework for an agency to understand what parts of the organization need to be changed. In order to help agencies decide what to change, an Agency Assessment is provided in the Appendices.

While these three framework questions can help the provider agency begin thinking about the process of transformational change, to actually accomplish it, in this Guide 5 strategies have been selected from the literature and are listed below. These strategies are: (1) establish clear and uncompromising goals, (2) communicate expectations to everyone, (3) reallocate and restructure resources, (4) find a job one person at a time, and (5) develop and maintain partnerships (Butterworth, Gandolfo, Revell, & Inge, 2007).

☆ Strategy 1: Establish clear and uncompromising goals.

Are your organization's goals measurable? Do they touch on strategy, structure, and systems (Rogan, 2013)? Do they include a clear timeline (Butterworth and Fekko)? Be sure to measure your agency's performance in order to drive the development of goals. Measure what's important for your organization, such as the unemployment rate of the individuals served, their time at a job placement, and individual and job supervisors' satisfaction (Gurney, 2015). Include specifics, such as target completion dates. For example, "By May 2015, we will transition 20 people from services provided in a facility to an integrated and customized employment setting" (Rogan, 2013). Staff should collaborate with each other and with stakeholders to define clear goals, such as heeding feedback from the consumers or the executive director defining the change while direct care staff champions the progress. In order to effectively collaborate, leadership should be capable of leading effectively in prominent roles as well as facilitative roles. Organizations should be wary of the temptation to focus too much on the goals, instead keeping the purpose of the change in mind. For example, a provider may over-focus on closing a facility without prioritizing employment outcomes for individuals. Once goals are established, the organization should be unwavering in their objectives and relentless in its pursuit (Butterworth & Fesko, 1998).

Staff should collaborate with each other and with stakeholders to define clear goals.

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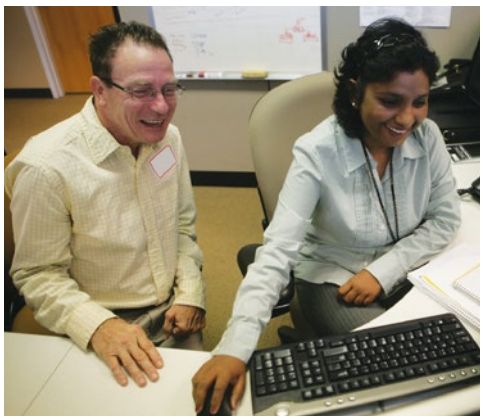
☆ Strategy 2: Communicate expectations to everyone.

In order to maintain positive rapport with stakeholders, it is imperative that agencies make every effort to communicate accurate expectations during systemic changes. This may occur in the form of newsletters, presentations, small group meetings, website, or social media. Provider agencies may consider promoting successes of integrated employment in order to boost morale (Rogan, 2013). Lee Brown says that in incorporating an Employment First model, "transparency is really important…. It's really important that you let them know that this is something new, that something is going to be happening" (Brown, 2015). The importance of this communication is reflected in our example section of this Guide, and samples are provided in the Appendices.

☆ Strategy 3: Reallocate and restructure resources.

The demands of transitioning to Employment First in a provider agency may result in that agency finding new roles for their staff and resources. This may include the unloading of sinking costs, such as selling buildings or equipment, or partnering with non-disability agencies to re-purpose the space (Rogan, 2013). Financially, the pursuit of new grant monies can also warrant the reallocation of financial resources. Reallocation and restructuring may encompass new staff roles. Ways to restructure staff include modification of job descriptions and a commitment to staff mentoring and empowerment in new roles.



Agencies may find it useful to develop a new staff role, the "change agent." A change agent is a mid-level manager or direct service staff member who plays a critical role in planning activities. If an organization should need to hire additional staff, it is critical for the organization to hire staff members who align with the organization's value of individual choice and inclusion (Butterworth & Fesko, 1998).

A form of restructuring that can serve as a catalyst is the presence of new leadership within the organization, such as new board members, executive director, or president. Board members should represent the people supported and their community. They should believe in the organization's mission, as well as possess strong communication skills, technical skills, and the ability to commit to the time demands of the role. If an organization is in the process of restructuring its board, specific strategies can be used to ensure the development of a robust board of directors. Strategies for board change include developing a relationship with each member, addressing each board member's needs, identifying areas of consensus, offering continuous education by utilizing speakers or success stories, creating tools and rules for communication, ensuring there are no surprises in regard to vision and challenges, and incorporating team-building activities that facilitate problem solving. Boards must acknowledge that changing the model is a necessary and unavoidable financial risk due to the changing times and commit to a funding stream that funds integrated services. (Wilds, 2015).

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☆ Strategy 4: Just do it! Find jobs one person at a time.

While traditional employment focuses on being "ready" for competitive employment, Employment First allows a person with a disability to acquire the skills for employment "on the job" in the community. Through person-centered planning and individual orientation, supports can be designed around the person based on his or her capacities (Rogan, 2013). Personal one-on-one job coaching avoids "the basics" being overlooked and allows staff to truly grasp and to assess an individual's talents and capabilities (Brown, 2015). Finding jobs may require staff to think creatively about resources and their role (Ditson, Dlouhy, Fisher, Mitchell, & Schmitter, 2015). Managers can empower staff by allowing risk tasking, so that direct staff develop creative solutions and feel empowered (Butterworth & Fesko, 1998). Impact, an agency that utilizes Employment First, focuses on "Discovery" in order to find the most suitable jobs for their clients. To put it simply, Lee Brown portrays Discovery like this: "If this person wants to go work, working in flowers, then does he really want to work or does he just like the way flowers look? You've got to find that out in Discovery. Then, if that interest is still there and he's picked that interest where staff can say, yes, he wants a job working with flowers, then that's when we start working with the supported employment department."

Employment First allows a person with a disability to acquire the skills for employment "on the job" in the community.

Additionally, some provider agencies are rewarding staff by offering extra pay for staff members who place an individual into a job site for a minimum of 30 days. In order to accommodate for staff members with individuals on their caseload who have higher support needs, a sliding scale is used to reward employment outcomes for those individuals (Gurney, 2015).

☆ Strategy 5: Develop partnerships.

No organization can make the change alone. In order to be successful, agencies should collaborate with stakeholders to develop productive partnerships. Examples of internal stakeholders whom agencies may want to engage include family members, board members, and staff. Family members and board members should be asked about employment opportunities and connections to employers. External partnerships with agencies like Vocational Rehabilitation, the local Workforce Investment Area staff, or Chambers of Commerce may also facilitate a successful shift to Employment First services. Developing partnerships with other service providers in an agency's area can foster healthy competition or specialization that can facilitate change (Butterworth & Fesko, 1998).

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Examples of Transformation to an Employment First Service Model

To illustrate how structure, strategy, and systems change can come together, this Guide highlights the process of a successful transition to Employment First by SRVS and Impact Center, Inc., two providers of employment services to people with disabilities. They serve as models for other provider agencies that aim toward similar goals.

Example 1 of Transformation to an Employment First Service Model: SRVS

Contents of the SRVS's vignette were assembled via individual interviews with five SRVS staff members, all of whom serve in different positions at various levels. These staff members were selected due to their unique positions and viewpoints on the transition to Employment First.

SRVS is a nonprofit agency in Memphis, Tennessee, which has been providing residential, vocational, and home living services to people with disabilities in the Mid-South community for over 50 years. Their mission statement is to "enhance the lives of people with disabilities in a way that brings peace of mind to families and unmatched stewardship for our benefactors" (www.srvs.org/faqs). This organization currently employs 1,000 staff members, many of whom have worked in this field for 15 or more years and have transitioned from direct support staff to leadership roles. The agency serves approximately 2,000 people with disabilities across a wide assortment of programs including Kids & Families, Learning Center, Community Living Residential, Community Participation, Clinical Services, Family Support, Elderly and Adult Day Services, and Community Employment Services.

> **"Regardless of the experience that [staff] come here with, the first thing is that they have to believe in people with disabilities. They can't just do this because it is a job. Their heart has got to be in this. They have to believe that all people can benefit from quality employment."**
>
> -Donna Palmer, Program Developer

☆ Strategy 1: Establish clear and uncompromising goals.

The Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) approached SRVS to participate in the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP) grant in late 2012. The agency initially responded with hesitation in fear that DIDD was looking to close Industries, Inc., SRVS's sheltered workshop and hallmark program for which SRVS was most commonly known. However, after connecting with EFSLMP Subject Matter Experts, SRVS leadership discovered that the ambition of the EFSLMP was not to terminate Industries, Inc., but rather to transition people from the sheltered workshop into integrated employment settings.

Looking nationally to other provider agencies, SRVS leadership heeded the advice given by the U.S. Department of Justice to sheltered workshops in Oregon and Rhode Island, which made the case for the advantages of Employment First (Barry, 2014; Denson, 2013; Heasley, 2014;

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http://media.oregonlive.com/politics_impact/other/lawsuit.pdf; www.justice.gov/opa/pr/department-justice-reaches-landmark-americans-disabilities-act-settlement-agreement-rhode; www.justice.gov/iso/opa/resources/3392013613134127625 71.pdf; www.justice.gov/iso/opa/resources/7802013613134111197274.pdf).

In these cases, the Attorney General outlined (1) the need for community employment and (2) insufficient conditions in sheltered workshops, worksites that mirrored Industries, Inc. The "writing on the wall" was obvious to SRVS leadership: a transition for Industries Inc. and sheltered workshop services was imminent. For SRVS, the risk was *not* in transitioning to Employment First; instead the risk lay in what might happen if SRVS *ignored* the approaching change.

Understanding the drive of the EFSLMP, the agency began changing their service model to Employment First in late 2012 and completed it with the closing of the workshop in June 2015. Following meetings with stakeholders, SRVS began to modify their services to match the outcomes of Employment First. The alteration that has had the greatest impact on SRVS is the development of its Career Center, a service designed to equip people with "soft skills" vocational training and community-based job exploration outings. In addition to exposure to a variety of jobs and abilities, one side effect of the Career Center's community-based employment outings is increased community partnerships and collaboration with other providers, which result in both exposure and connections for individuals served by SRVS to leverage as they seek integrated employment. Now, much effort goes into the development, maintenance, and implementation of the Career Center, including a proprietary curriculum designed to prepare their people for success in the workplace. Through their people's participation in SRVS's Career Center, their families are beginning to acclimate to Employment First and are beginning to believe "This isn't so scary" (Donna Palmer, Former SRVS Program Developer).

> **"It was important to us to be on the leading edge. We might as well get ahead of the curve and get ahead of what is being done, and hopefully gain a little political capital at the same time."**
>
> – Frances Metheny, Board Member and EFSLMP Steering Committee Member

☆ Strategy 2: Communicate expectations to everyone.

When initially introducing participation in the EFSLMP, SRVS leadership anticipated pushback from its Board of Directors. Forecasted concerns from the Board included loss of Industries Inc., the "face of SRVS" (Tyler Hampton). However, with knowledge that the national philosophy of services has changed from workshops to community employment, Board members agreed to participation in the EFSLMP. Some Board members understandably complied with hesitation; however, other Board members were receptive to transitioning individuals from the sheltered workshop to integrated employment. A Steering Committee was formed of the most supportive Board members and staff. Of particular importance was the involvement of Public Relations and Development staff on the Steering Committee, who "broadcast" the progressive partnership between SRVS and Employment First in order to garner new community partnerships.

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Meetings were then conducted with (1) SRVS staff, (2) family members in a large group, and (3) family members individually in order to share SRVS's intentions with stakeholders, to receive questions, and to predict barriers. First, SRVS intentionally met with its staff so that they could present a united front in support of Employment First to families. Next, families were gathered in a large group meeting where representatives from the Board of Directors, SRVS, and DIDD presented information on Employment First. Justifiably, many family members felt concern for the safety of their loved one and even betrayal by SRVS; yet, SRVS staff assured family members that the staff would be with the families and persons supported throughout the process. Finally, individual meetings between families and staff members indicated a family's receptiveness towards Employment First. If a family was receptive to integrated employment, SRVS staff began collaborating with the family and the person receiving services in order to move from the sheltered workshop to a community-based employment worksite. These successes were then used as exemplars to demonstrate to wary families that Employment First is a promising service model for their loved one.

"A lot of parents were concerned about making the move from that supervised environment to more of a workplace environment. But those [concerns] have largely been overcome, to the best of my knowledge."

– Robert Sutton, SRVS Board Member and EFSLMP Steering Committee Member

"For a long time, everything was status quo, and now we've had to get more than just the employees involved. That was our decision as an organization."

– Frances Metheny, Board Member and EFSLMP Steering Committee Member

While SRVS leadership enthusiastically engaged in participation in the EFSLMP, some staff members felt endangered by the change to Employment First. This resistance manifested in miscommunication with families and resistance to employment outcomes. After all, SRVS's sheltered workshop was an amiable environment with friendly staff, many of whom were concerned for their job security. SRVS's leadership recognized that Employment First needed to be embraced by all staff members in order to make an effective conversion. After receiving education on the national movement, learning about the benefits of community employment, and viewing successes for other individuals, several staff accepted the movement to Employment First.

A barrier encountered by SRVS was some families' persistent fear of transition to the Employment First model. Fearful of an integrated employment setting, many families were skeptical of the safety of their loved one outside a sheltered workshop. As SRVS demonstrated successes, offered personal assistance, held meetings to educate families, and offered employment activities in the Career Center, families began seeing that employment was feasible for individuals with disabilities. Sometimes SRVS arranged for families to visit the job site, something they would never have done prior to this initiative, but that step was helpful in allaying fears and creating connections between the home and work worlds of the person with the disability.

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☆ Strategy 3: Reallocate and restructure resources.

Transition to Employment First within SRVS is not exclusive to these services but also has implications for other staff roles including developing new positions, redirecting current roles, and relocating staff to other departments. SRVS lost some staff, since some employees were unwilling to adapt or were unsuited to the demands of the new approach. New positions included hiring part-time Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who discover job leads and collaborate with individuals on employment opportunities. SRVS also hired a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor from the University of Memphis for the Ticket to Work program, a federal program designed to promote work among those receiving SSI/SSDI, and to provide government benefits counseling. Many staff who had previously worked with Industries, Inc. were reassigned to new roles within the Career Center.

The scope of responsibilities changed in many positions. Intake coordinators who managed admissions to and discharge from SRVS were trained to conduct intake for employment services. Marketing staff increased communication to the community through consistent emails, YouTube videos, and local media. In addition to shifting the focus of marketing staff to community employment, SRVS also used the promotion skills of its marketing staff to connect SRVS to employers in order to find job placements.

"The other issue is financial: how it will affect the household financial situation. [Families] are used to getting an SSI or SSDI check every month, and they know that if additional income is generated, then it is going to affect benefits. So we try to give [families] an idea of how it will affect their benefits."

– Troy Allen, Director of Community-Based Services, previously director of SRVS Industries

SRVS overcame a funding obstacle by maneuvering funding as they transitioned their program structure. Although DIDD promotes Employment First, DIDD's funding structures did not facilitate a seamless changeover at that time. DIDD and the Subject Matter Experts (SME s) worked collaboratively to receive feedback regarding the rate structure by convening a small group of providers across the state. The feedback was taken into consideration and an executive decision was made to address the rate restructure for the current 1915c waiver at a later time. In response to the funding barrier, SRVS increased its submissions of grant applications in order to fund their employment initiatives.

"It's partly like when a football team goes out and tries to figure out who is best where, and they will find that that's the best way to direct."

– Kennon Oglesby, SVRS Operations Lead

Another consideration is how employment income can affect income from government programs for individuals with disabilities. Without employment, individuals were accustomed to receiving regular checks from Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). SRVS has taken great care to assist individuals and their families in understanding how their household income and benefits will be affected by employment. As is to be expected, when

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one is employed in the community, one generally has more income, but with careful use of the Ticket to Work tools, government benefits can be protected for some time.

☆ Strategy 4: Just do it! Find jobs one person at a time.

Although the individuals at SRVS were at the forefront of the minds of SRVS leadership as they developed new service programs for Employment First, staff found it difficult to determine individual areas of interest in order to generate appropriate programming. This was primarily because individuals with disabilities often lack exposure to employment-related activities. Moreover, depending on their employment preference, questions emerged concerning supports required by each individual to complete employment tasks.

"We don't pick them for the job; we have the job pick them."

-Kennon Oglesby, SVRS Operations Lead

"We are knocking on a lot of doors of people who could potentially help us. We are also talking to a number of different employers and asking them to consider hiring individuals."

– Frances Metheny, Board Member and EFSLMP Steering Committee Member

"We have a ton of tours coming through where people want to know what we are doing. We are educating the general public and people around us."

– Troy Allen, Director of Community-Based Services, previously director of SRVS Industries

☆ Strategy 5: Develop partnerships.

A barrier for agencies in implementing Employment First is developing relationships with employers in the community that are disposed to collaborate with disability service providers. To address this, SRVS staff began an outreach effort in their community to develop a collection of resources that individuals could explore during employment outings. By educating businesses and the community, not only is SRVS opening doors to employers but also is opening minds to the idea that people with disabilities can be high-achieving employees. Now, Human Resources departments at some businesses in Memphis seek out SRVS to hire diverse employees.

Example 2 of Transformation to an Employment First Service Model: ICI

Impact Centers Incorporated, (ICI) is a nonprofit organization in Columbia, Tennessee, which began in 1975 with the aims of providing services and supports to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in order to help people with life challenges. ICI staff support individuals with disabilities in attaining personal success by providing both life skills and opportunities, as well as supporting individuals with respect in a caring environment. Governed by an active volunteer Board of Directors made up of community and business leaders, and family members of individuals served, ICI has served 7 counties as a positive community influence in Middle Tennessee for almost 40 years. In total, ICI serves over 105 individuals with disabilities and employs over 130 staff.

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☆ Strategy 1: Establish clear and uncompromising goals.

ICI closed its sheltered workshops during a previous DIDD Employment First push in 2010. ICI's conversion to an Employment First service model began with four key questions and ICI answers: (1) Why? Employment First is the best practice and what individuals desire, (2) When? Immediately, (3) Who? Everyone involved with ICI, and (4) How? Through rigorous strategic planning. That planning began in 2005 when a collaboration was formed through the support of a 1-year federal grant through the Tennessee Workforce Alliance, made up of the Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD), Tennessee Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), Transitional Programs in School Systems, employers, Corporate Connections, benefits specialists, Tennessee Customized Employment Partnership (Local Career Centers), Centerstone, and the King's Daughters' School. This collaboration spurred the creation of a project management team and self-determination classes. ICI had provided employment opportunities through their sheltered workshop and facility-based program for over 35 years. Over time, these steering teams ultimately made the decision to remove sheltered workshops from ICI's services. This change was especially impactful due to the extent to which sheltered workshops were embedded in ICI's service model. Despite the prior importance of sheltered workshops, in April 2010 the decision was made for the organization to completely transition to an Employment First model with Community-Based and Supported Employment services.

☆ Strategy 2: Communicate expectations to everyone.

After making the decision to convert to an Employment First model, ICI sent a message to the community that it was completely moving away from sheltered workshops. In four of the seven counties that ICI serves, they began holding family meetings and staff meetings to address concerns about transitioning to an Employment First service model. These meetings addressed safety issues, transportation, public interaction, mobility accommodations, personal concerns, activity types, and the perspectives of the individuals with disabilities, as well as each individual's and family's options. The meetings emphasized the importance of a meaningful life and the value of taking their rightful place in the community. In addition to meetings that addressed family concerns, ICI staff began conducting quarterly meetings with advocates, support coordinators, staff, and conservators in order to ensure that progress was being achieved toward the goal of transitioning to an Employment First service model.

> **"After the shift in philosophy, when the [Impact Centers, Inc.] Board met, they would talk about different departments and the last thing they would talk about is the employment department. Now it's the first thing that they talk about, and that's a big change. It used to be something that was dismissed and not talked about. Now it's all they talk about!"**
>
> -Lee Brown, Director of Supported Employment, ICI

ICI conducted a survey in May 2010 as a more formalized method of tracking progress. This survey asked individuals the following questions: What services do you use at ICI? How long have you used services at ICI? As a service recipient, do you want ICI to find a job for you in the

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community? Are you more satisfied now with ICI than you were a year ago? Does ICI value me and work with me to make my life meaningful? Does ICI value my input? The survey results revealed that over 85% of individuals surveyed strongly agreed with the closure of the sheltered workshops and the Employment First direction of ICI.

☆ Strategy 3: Reallocate and restructure resources.

ICI sold three of their workshop facilities in three cities to factories and a real estate investor. However, the team at ICI chose to convert the fourth and final facility into a building that housed "soft skills" job training for individuals. One factor in this decision is that the building is currently leased following a remodel; once the lease expires, ICI will re-evaluate its decision. ICI leadership and families had mixed reactions to the sale of the buildings. While the Board of Directors thought this was a positive move that would enhance ICI's ability to move toward community services, families of individuals thought their individuals might be robbed of their "safe haven."

> **"Meetings, meetings, meetings. Transparency is really important, for staff, community, everyone."**
>
> -Lee Brown, Director of Supported Employment, ICI

ICI reallocated resources that allowed for a restructuring of staff pay in all departments, which included raises being based on a staff member's years of employment, extra paid holiday for birthdays, leasing additional vehicles for community-based services, creating a referral bonus program (an employee receives a bonus for recommending an employee who is hired and stays with the company for at least 90 days). Throughout the transition, DIDD funding sources included the employment special needs rate, employment individual rate, and community-based day rate. Additionally, ICI received funding from the Tennessee Department of Rehabilitation Services (VR/DRS) for trial work experience, supported employment, job readiness, and job placement services.

During the transition, reallocation of staff from the workshop into the community meant that the staff had to initially use their personal vehicles. That was a source of resistance at first for some staff. The revenue and resources from supported employment have now allowed for company vehicles to become the norm. In addition to the reallocation of funding, staff roles also were restructured. Going from a sheltered workshop setting to a community-based setting requires staff who are able to think outside the box, to be creative and willing to brainstorm about Discovery and employment. Impact Centers saw some staff resistance, in some cases more resistance to the changes than from the family members. They began by training all staff on job Discovery services, person-centered thinking, as well as job coach training. The key was to change the mindset of staff doing what they chose and emphasizing that there should always be a person-centered reason for any activity.

☆ Strategy 4: Just do it! Find jobs one person at a time.

Given the transition to an Employment First service model, ICI now focuses on providing individuals with disabilities a meaningful life through the Community-Based Day Program and the Supported Employment Day Program. The Community-Based Day program is for individuals who are

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not working, but are seeking employment or gaining soft skills. These individuals participate in job Discovery and community-enhancing volunteer work such as Meals on Wheels. The DSPs [Direct Support Professionals] who conduct the Community-Based Day program are now trained in Discovery and as job coaches. They need to have the same philosophy as the employment department, to support the philosophy of Employment First and to help each individual to be successful. In the Discovery process, as it relates to employment, ICI DSP staff work with individuals longer on a day-to-day basis to teach them as they look for meaningful things to do with a person than do the staff in the employment department. The expertise about the individuals that the DSPs bring helps the employment department because they know so much about what the person is focused on that might appear to be unrelated to employment. Exposure precedes interest, so DSPs spend Discovery time in the community with the person to expose him to a lot of jobs in the person's interest area. Then they can say to the employment staff, "Yes, he wants a job working with engines, and these are the places he likes and the skills he has."

"One of the managers said to me, Lee, your department continues to show growth." And we're continuing to spend money for supported employment. I actually have a company car, a company expense account, and we didn't have that at first. I make sure my staff understands that even though what we do is very meaningful and very caring, it's still a business and I have to operate my department like a business. I believe that it does work and it can work, but you have to structure and manage it."

-Lee Brown, ICI

The Supported Employment Day Program is for individuals who are currently working in the community in an integrated employment setting that is individualized. Employment adds to a more meaningful life for the individuals with whom ICI works. When Lee Brown started at ICI, he was the only Supported Employment professional. He now has a large department, and his training approach is one of his keys to success. First, all new hires go through the 30-day training that ICI and the State requires all new hires to have, which includes, for example, HIPAA requirements, medication training, and first aid. After these basics are established, the new job coach/developer spends time with Lee himself for 2 to 3 weeks learning about expectations, particularly that 80% of the new hire's time should be in the community, not in the office. He emphasizes networking in the community. Then the new hire completes the required DRS/VR training, followed by time spent shadowing a job developer in the field before the new hire actually starts working with an individual.

Lee uses two levels of job coaches, one for Impact individuals (five of his seven coaches), and another for job coaches trained to work with the DRS/VR individuals (two of his seven coaches), because of DRS/VR annual training requirements. The DRS job coaches receive more intense, one-on-one training, and they work more closely with the job developers or employment specialists and with the new businesses than the other job coaches. Lee finds this approach to be more cost-effective; when the individual's case closes with DRS/VR, then the individual works

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with the job coach trained at the less extensive level, because the individual has been well-established in the job. The Impact job coaches have a given person with whom they work 3 to 4 days or nights a week, at a certain location, and they remain there like a stationary coach. As the employment specialist and job developers find jobs for persons funded by DRS/VR and place them, the DRS/VR coaches fade out coaching that individual and move on to placing and coaching new individuals.

> **"When [an individual has] actually made a big decision to work and you were a part of that change, that's something! I mean, when you can actually say that a 57-year-old woman told me that she never thought she'd ever work and she is working, you know—[big grin]".**
>
> -Lee Brown, ICI

ICI aimed to support individuals seeking jobs through preparing them for and exploring employment. Specifically, the individuals with disabilities received soft skills training through workplace success groups. Job exploration exposed individuals to work choices so that they could determine their interests. ICI found that implementing Job Clubs was a useful tool that enhanced the likelihood of successful employment for participants. Job Clubs should be community-based, embrace integrated settings, offer the opportunity for relationships, encourage career movement, and provide career enhancement.

As a result of the transition to an Employment First service model, 30 individuals with disabilities are employed in integrated jobs, working an average of 20 hours per week, with the average pay above minimum wage of $7.75 per hour. ICI is now proud to claim that 27% of the individuals served through DIDD are employed in the community.

☆ Strategy 5: Develop partnerships.

ICI has memberships in the Chambers of Commerce in all four counties it serves. The ICI Employment Director attends employment-related meetings to stay connected to employment initiatives and opportunities through Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Department of Rehabilitation Services, and Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. He and his job developers work hard to stay connected to employers' needs.

> **"We have actually placed [almost] everybody at ICI who really wants to work. We've found them a job. There's probably only one or two people who want to work whom we haven't placed."**
>
> -Lee Brown, ICI

Since the population that ICI currently serves is an aging one, ICI would like to develop ways to work with and serve youth with disabilities. Under the new Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA), there are opportunities to work with the youth in school. ICI would like to establish partnerships between schools and ICI's transitional employment specialists on social skills and expectations, so that when students leave school and want to work, platforms are set for them in the counties that ICI serves and staff will already know these individuals.

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Another of ICI's goals is to increase involvement in the Ticket to Work program. ICI is already an Employment Network but would like to be more successful administratively at using the Ticket to Work system. Lee acknowledges that ICI may need to hire someone to do the associated administrative work. He also expressed a desire for ICI to have grants as a future resource stream, which might necessitate hiring a grant writer.

Stories of Individuals with Disabilities in an Employment First Service Model

☆ Lisa's Perspective

Lisa begins her workday similar to most–pouring a cup of coffee, greeting colleagues, and checking for new messages. Yet, not long ago, Lisa's morning routine looked very different. While working as a dedicated employee at SRVS's sheltered workshop for more than 30 years, Lisa repeatedly expressed interest in working in an office setting. As a part of the Employment First initiative, Lisa collaborated with SRVS staff to meet this goal by acquiring competitive employment at Medtronic. Lisa attained a carved and customized job as a general clerk, where she sets up tables for luncheons, gathers dishes following lunch, rinses the dishes, and puts them in the dishwasher. This role uniquely meets previously unmet needs of Medtronic. In order to perform her job proficiently, Lisa worked with her supervisor and job coach to learn how to log into a computer, to navigate through multiple computer programs, to clock in and out, to review memos from her supervisor, to manage her schedule on a calendar, to sharpen her typing abilities, to use a labeling machine, and to join conversations with coworkers. Being one of Medtronic's first employees with a developmental disability has not stopped Lisa from making an impact. She models fearlessness in embracing new challenges, eagerness in completing tasks, and motivation to her coworkers. When asked about her role as a general clerk at Medtronic, Lisa says "I love it here." Lisa's job really filled a need for Medtronic. Each department was asked about tasks that were not getting done on a regular basis, tasks that were always put on the back burner. Those tasks were compiled to make one job description based on the skills that Lisa possesses or ones she could be taught how to do. Now that's a win-win!

☆ Will and Eric's Perspectives

When looking for competitive employment for Will and Eric, the AutoZone Fulfillment Center in Memphis was a natural fit. Both Will and Eric were able to transfer their skills learned at SRVS Industries to their responsibilities at AutoZone, including transferring packages from a conveyor belt, sorting and stacking packages for distribution, and shrink-wrapping packages. While the jobs may be similar to their previous employment at a sheltered workshop, the work environment contrasts. Instead of working alongside all employees with disabilities as in SRVS Industries, Eric and Will now work in an integrated setting with and without people with disabilities. In response, Eric and Will are enthusiastically involved with AutoZone's activities and are eager to form relationships with their coworkers. Eric shared, "I like it here – the work is interesting and challenging, and I work with good people." Despite the initial concerns of AutoZone's managers who were willing but inexperienced in working with people with IDD, this company has embraced employing people with disabilities and is now looking to hire more hard workers like

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Eric and Will. Since then, AutoZone has hired 7 more individuals with disabilities to work in its fulfillment center.

☆ Gwendolyn's perspective

Gwendolyn was one of four people in their 20s at Impact Centers who needed jobs. She was shy and did not want to be around people. Lee and his team found her a job working at Sodexo, the catering company inside Martin College. Lee says, "Because [she was shy], I did not want her to be working in the back in the kitchen. I wanted her to be out front. So I had a coach work with her for 6 months to a year, and she ended up on the serving line, serving all the students who come through there. She's accepted. She's a part of the team. She goes to work without a coach. Her mom says that's all she talks about, going to work. She's flourishing, the shyness has gone away. She speaks up for herself."

☆ Debbie's perspective

Debbie works at Goodwill. She loves her job, and she has become a part of the family there. She stocks shelves and assists customers, because she knows the store well. When she and her family go out in their community, people recognize her, and she loves the interactions she now has with her "public." Her family has never known her to be so happy. Like a lot of the workers whom ICI has placed in jobs throughout this largely rural and small-town area, employers have a "family focus," and ICI's workers become a part of that family. As such, they attend their companies' annual employee picnics; they go, they participate, and some of them take part without needing a job coach or any assistance. They're a part of the team, and they interact with their co-workers in a relaxed setting.

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Appendices

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Grant Writing Resources	
Welcome Nonprofit Grantseekers offers Online Training, tutorials, and grant funding resources to take you from a beginner to an expert.	http://foundationcenter.org
In its books section, find the how-to book you need to grow your non-profit, to get a grant, to empower your board, or to change the direction of your fundraising efforts; on the blog side, find the same information in handy bite-size pieces.	http:/charitychannel.com
This introductory session was designed for teachers, but could be just right for you if your funder is coming from a place in the social sciences. Great examples and templates are shared.	www.tennesseeworks.org/grant-writing-101
The resources on the PDF from the session listed above are great real-world success tips from an experienced grant writer.	www.tennesseeworks.org/wp-content/uploads/Grant-Writing-101-Resources.pdf
W. K Kellogg Foundation presents tools for developing the logic model required by many granting agencies. Additional resources are a template for a strategic communications plan and an evaluation handbook. While you are there, see about applying for one of their grants.	www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide
The University of Wisconsin Extension office offers this self-paced course and tools on developing and using a logic model to improve a group's planning, implementation, evaluation, and communication.	www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html
Everyone has their preferred version of the logic model, and it pays to know the funder's version and to use it. This example is how one group used United Way's approach.	www.slideshare.net/lynnereed/united-way-logic-model-presentation

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Communication tools to help you get your word out to your external and internal customers	
Nashville-based Emma helps you build smarter email programs that maximize the power of marketing's most effective channel.	myemma.com
Join more than 10 million people who use MailChimp to design and send multiple emails/newsletters every day.	mailchimp.com
Powerful Email Marketing, Made Simple. Create professional emails that bring customers to your door.	www.constantcontact.com

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Community Investment in Transition Youth with Disabilities

An Agency Self-Assessment Tool to Develop Community Capacity to Support Employment Outcomes for Youth. See next 16 pages.

Community Investment in Transition Youth with Disabilities

An Agency Self-Assessment Tool to Develop Community Capacity to Support Employment Outcomes for Youth

EMPLOYMENT FIRST
Realizing Employment First for Youth

EmploymentFirst@dodd.ohio.gov

August 2013

VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER
FOR EXCELLENCE IN DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

TennesseeWorks is a partnership of agencies and organizations working together to improve employment outcomes for young people with disabilities.

Community Investment in Transition Youth with Disabilities

An Agency Self-Assessment Tool to Develop Community Capacity to Support Employment Outcomes for Youth

EMPLOYMENT FIRST

Realizing Employment First for Youth

Community Investment in Transition Youth with Disabilities

An Agency Self-Assessment Tool to Develop Community Capacity to Support Employment Outcomes for Youth

Employment First sets the expectation that youth with developmental disabilities will exit high school to meaningful community employment. This means that schools and agencies will be working to help with ALL youth, regardless of the complexity of their needs, achieve community employment. Schools, County Boards of Developmental Disabilities, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities Agency, Job and Family Services, Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and providers will need better, more descriptive, and complete data, and strategies for gathering and analyzing data. This will include systematically assessing progress of skills and effectiveness of supports; collaborating to provide for ongoing supports across agency timelines; provision of ongoing services; and adjusting services to meet changing conditions or youth needs. Achieving these outcomes will require many to do business in a different way than they are accustomed to doing using a collaborative, multi-agency, person-centered approach.

What is the Community Investment in Transition Youth with Disabilities Tool?

The Community Investment in Transition Youth with Disabilities Tool was developed to assist agencies (including schools) and organizations that teach and support transition age youth with disabilities to prepare for adulthood. The tool is a self-assessment process that will guide the agency to examine their readiness and capacity to serve the transition needs of youth in community employment. The tool assists in the identification of areas for improvement and supports the development of a plan for improvement.

What is capacity and investment and why is it important?

Capacity in this tool refers to an organization's knowledge, skills, resources, and foundational readiness to participate in preparing youth with disabilities for adulthood. Capacity is necessary because the transition process for youth requires wide-ranging knowledge about multiple aspects of both educational preparation and ongoing adult service and support. Necessary resources are equally as broad-based and require partnerships throughout, and outside of, an organization.

Investment refers to the level at which an organization has dedicated resources and the importance placed on developing and maintaining the necessary capacity. Investment implies more than a monetary commitment. Investment also includes the value that an organization places on the future success of the youth. Investment requires organizations to make the commitment central to the daily operations and vision of the agency. The commitment to the outcome of employment requires determination, regardless of the barriers that may be encountered.

Community Investment in Transition Youth with Disabilities

An Agency Self- Assessment Tool to Develop Community Capacity to Support Employment Outcomes for Youth

What does the Community Investment in Transition Youth with Disabilities (CITYD) include?
The sections of the tool include:

- **Investment Indicators:** Areas that should be addressed to build capacity and investment are identified. The tool has seven indicator areas that include:

  1. Mission Statement
  2. Professional Development
  3. Policies and Procedures
  4. Practices and Programs
  5. Communication and Collaboration
  6. Ongoing Support
  7. Perceived Barriers to Employment

- **Indicator Statements and Evidence:** Each section includes statements that describe activities, priorities, or ways of functioning that create investment with an agency. Groups discuss how they view their agency's capacity related to each of these indicator statements. Examples of what the agency has done to operationalize each statement can be documented in the area of the document labeled "evidence".

- **Indicator Statement Implementation Rating:** After discussion, the group determines a rating for the statement. A 1 – 4 rating scale allows the group to identify where the agency currently functions. The rating may reflect that the item is not in place at this time, is in place but minimally effective, in place but needs review or in place and effective. The total rating of all statements in a section is calculated and documented in that section.

- **Priority for Change Rating:** In addition to the rating of implementation, the team will also decide if this statement is a high, medium, or low priority for action or intervention. Some low rated items are also low priority as there may be other actions that need to be in place before addressing this target. Some high rated item may become a high priority as well because they can be addressed quickly and create momentum for further change.

- **Resources/Needs:** During and after completing each of the indicator discussions, the team can record the resources or assets that currently exist within the agency that address each global indicator. These may be people, practices, collaborations, materials, etc. In addition, the team can identify needs that would allow the agency to improve the investment in the corresponding indicator.

- **Score Table:** The scores are graphed in order to quickly view where the global strengths and needs exist. Teams may identify patterns that cause them to re-examine the items or may validate the general discussions of the group.

- **Action Plan:** Finally, the action plan template allows the team to select several indicator statements that require action.

How was the CITYD developed?
The CITYD emerged as a tool developed by a multi-agency group of transition and employment leaders that helped identify and develop the content and format of the tool. The target areas in the CITYD were identified when leaders in transition and employment across Ohio identified the need for agency collaboration, cooperation, communication, expertise in Evidence Based Practices and resources as essential to successful transition to employment. The absence of these components was also reflected in other work groups as barriers to community employment. Experts in the field of transition recognize the need for regional or local community investment in order to implement individual transition programs.

Community Investment in Transition Youth with Disabilities

An Agency Self-Assessment Tool to Develop Community Capacity to Support Employment Outcomes for Youth

The resulting tool addresses these important needs and offers guidance in creating action steps to improve the commitment and investment in an agency's ability to support transition youth with disabilities to reach successful adult community employment.

How is the CITYD completed?
This tool is most effective when completed collaboratively by a group of people from a single school/agency. Discussion with resulting consensus of how the school/agency is performing related to each indicator guides the group to identify both strengths and areas needing improvement. The team can also use the information from the tool to prioritize the most critical areas to address and to develop an action plan for improvement.

Guidance/Technical Assistance. A guidance document will accompany the tool that provides additional resources (ex: web based tools), including examples from effective programs and people in Ohio and examples of evidence for each Indicator.

Directions for Use

1. TEAM. Identify a team from the agency that includes people of different roles, different viewpoints and different experiences in order that agency assessment will be complete and comprehensive. The "final" completed document is intended to represent consensus of the agency. Team members may choose to complete the tool individually from their own perspective and then meet as a group and come to consensus on one response. Or the team could meet as a group and complete together. In either situation, the tool is NOT intended to be a numerical average of multiple responses.

2. EACH AGENCY COMPLETES. In use by multiple agency teams, each agency should first complete the tool as a single agency. After each agency completes the tool and identifies individual strengths and areas of improvement, multiple agency representatives may come together to review common strengths to build from, common needs to work on together. This information can allow the multiple agency team to come to consensus of the focus of an action plan for a particular catchment area or community

3. TIME TO COMPLETE. This will be affected by size of team, method for completing, amount of discussion needed to come to consensus. Overall, all 7 areas are designed to be reviewed in one hour (less than 10 minutes per Indicator area) with discussion and consensus building this may increase the process to several hours.

4. RECORDER. Identify a recorder that will be able to document the discussion and the collective decisions on ratings and evidence

5. FACILITATOR. It is recommended that one person be identified as the facilitator to the process. This person introduces the process and helps move the process along. In some cases, especially if it is a large group, a person with experience facilitating may be necessary in order that the group does not get stuck on one particular issue or item. The facilitator can help the group move through the items in a way that encourages participation and prevents fatigue with the process.

6. REVIEW. Review the general profile at the end. After the tool is complete, the team should review the profile. Identify areas that stand out as strong and can be used as foundational to a transition action plan. Identify areas of challenge or weakness that will require strategic development. Gain consensus from the group that the profile is reasonably accurate

7. CREATE A PLANNING PROCESS. Finally, discuss how the group will move forward on making a plan of action. Who will be included? How and when will the group meet to plan? Where will this occur?

Community Investment in Transition Youth with Disabilities

An Agency Self- Assessment Tool to Develop Community Capacity to Support Employment Outcomes for Youth

Before beginning the Self-Assessment process, as a team discuss the following questions and develop statements that clearly articulate the mission/vision. If there is no agreed upon answer to these questions, an action plan should include the development of mission and vision statements.

What is the Agency's Mission, Vision and Focus for transition youth with developmental disabilities related to community employment?
Is there a regional transition network, council or other collaborative entity? If so, what is this group's Mission / Vision and shared purpose for the transition youth with developmental disabilities related to community employment?

Rating Scale: (circle one) 1 = not in place 2 = in place minimally effective 3 = in place, needs review 4 = in place, effective				**Indicator** Mission Statement, Vision, Philosophy that Guides Agency Commitment to Community Employment	**Evidence** Include descriptions or location of evidence to support the Indicator Statement	**Priority for Change**
1	2	3	4	1. The school/agency has a mission statement that communicates a value for community employment.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	2. Staff at all levels can articulate the mission statement and describe how it supports community employment.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	3. The mission statement is evident in the daily work of the school/agency.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	4. The school/agency mission statement is supported by the prioritization of resources (i.e., funding, staff) allocation.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	5. The school/agency's mission statement communicates intent to work collaboratively with other agencies/systems to achieve community employment.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	6. The school/agency's mission specifically includes working with transition youth to achieve community employment.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	7. The school/agency has a process to include youth and family input in developing or revising the mission statement.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
				Grand Total Mission Statement	**Team Consensus of Priority Rating**	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High

Rating Scale: (circle one) 1 = not in place 2 = in place minimally effective 3 = in place, needs review 4 = in place, effective				**Indicator** Staff Competencies for Supporting Community Employment Embedded In Professional Development/ Training Plans	**Evidence** Include descriptions or location of evidence to support the Indicator Statement	**Priority for Change**
1	2	3	4	1. The school/agency views the ongoing development/ training of staff skills as an essential function of the agency.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	2. The school/agency has a plan for engaging all staff in professional development/training that furthers the mission of community employment as it is related to their professional role.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	3. Evidence based practices for transition is the core of the school/agency's professional development /training related to transition youth and includes a focus on skills/ experiences youth need for community employment.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	4. The school/agency's professional development/ training includes skills to facilitate person-centered planning approaches with youth.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	5. The school/agency's professional development/ training includes approaches for understanding and implementing meaningful transition assessment,		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	6. The school/agency's professional development / training includes knowledge and skill development of individual data collection systems and analysis of data for ongoing improvement of the youth's programs, supports, and services.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	7. The school/agency's professional development/ training makes use of high quality strategies such as inter agency training and professional learning communities.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
				Grand Total Professional Development	**Team Consensus of Priority Rating**	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High

Rating Scale: (circle one) 1 = not in place 2 = in place minimally effective 3 = in place, needs review 4 = in place, effective				**Indicator** Established Agency Policies and Procedures that Facilitate Community Employment	**Evidence** Include descriptions or location of evidence to support the Indicator Statement	**Priority for Change**
1	2	3	4	1. The school/agency has policies that promote the culture of Employment First (community employment as the preferred outcome) for transition youth.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	2. The procedures of the school/agency promote the culture of Employment First (community employment as the preferred outcome) for transition youth.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	3. The school/agency policies support braiding and blending of funds from other sources to provide transition services for youth to achieve community employment.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	4. The school/agency procedures promote flexibility and individualization in service delivery or planning to meet short-term and ongoing support needs for community employment.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	5. The school/agency procedures promote community employment outcomes based on the youth's preferences, interests, needs and skills.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	6. The school/agency procedures encourage collaborative relationships with other partners in serving transition youth.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	7. The school/agency policies set an expectation for staff to engage in ongoing high quality professional development.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
				Grand Total for Policies and Procedures	**Team Consensus of Priority Rating**	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High

Rating Scale: (circle one) 1 = not in place 2 = in place minimally effective 3 = in place, needs review 4 = in place, effective				**Indicator** Staff Practices and Agency Programs that Positively Influence and Encourage Community Employment	**Evidence** Include descriptions or location of evidence to support the Indicator Statement	**Priority for Change**
1	2	3	4	1. The school/agency practices include interagency partnerships to guide the processes of transition to achieve community employment.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	2. The school/agency gathers and analyzes youth post school outcome data annually to review and revise practices and programs to ensure they are effective for youth to achieve community employment.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	3. The school/agency's transition assessment practices include collaboration with partners to jointly conduct and interpret student information within the context of a plan for community employment.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	4. The school/agency practices incorporate consistent use of instructional practices and transition programs that have evidence of being effective (EBP).		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	5. The school/agency practices make time for planning with youth and families for community employment a priority.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	6. The school/agency practices prioritize and value collaborative relationships between staff in other regional agencies.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	7. The school/agency practices include a process for using data about youth and family satisfaction with planning and service provision for continuous improvement.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
				Grand Total Practices and Programs	**Team Consensus of Priority Rating**	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High

Rating Scale: (circle one) 1 = not in place 2 = in place minimally effective 3 = in place, needs review 4 = in place, effective				**Indicator** Internal and External Communication and Collaboration to Support the Transition Process	**Evidence** Include descriptions or location of evidence to support the Indicator Statement	**Priority for Change**
1	2	3	4	1. The school/agency has an established process to communicate in a timely and ongoing manner to the members of a youth's transition team (internal and external partners).		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	2. The school/agency staff has sufficient knowledge about the transition practices of other partners to inform youth and families.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	3. The school/agency staff knowledge of partner agency's policies/ procedures is sufficient to make appropriate and timely referrals/ connections.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	4. The school/agency has a process to ensure that website, print resources, documents and all information designed for general use is jargon - free and understandable to all transition partners, especially youth and family.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	5. The school/agency has an internal process to communicate information that affects agency policies, practices and priorities.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	6. The school/agency has a process to provide orientation to new employees regarding policies, practices and priorities to ensure consistency over time.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	7. The school/agency has a process for regular communication with external partners to share data and information about agency policies, practices and priorities.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
				Grand Total Communication and Collaboration	**Team Consensus of Priority Rating**	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High

Rating Scale: (circle one) 1 = not in place 2 = in place minimally effective 3 = in place, needs review 4 = in place, effective				**Indicator** Provision of Ongoing Supports and Services that Promote and Sustain Successful Community Employment	**Evidence** Include descriptions or location of evidence to support the Indicator Statement	**Priority for Change**
1	2	3	4	1. The school/agency collects and analyzes data to monitor the effectiveness of ongoing supports provided to youth by the agency to youth employed in the community.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	2. The school/agency has a process that guides a team to make data based decisions regarding the duration and intensity of ongoing supports.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	3. The school/agency promotes mobile technology as a means to extend/enhance support provided for community employment.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	4. The school/agency explores/considers multiple and individualized options for ongoing support, using monitoring data to determine the effectiveness.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	5. The school/agency facilitates connection and coordination of services with other agencies for youth beginning at age 14 to ensure supports are continued following exit/graduation from secondary school.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	6. The school/agency participates in blending and braiding of resources with other partners to make available and extend supports for youth.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	7. The agency participates in the identification/ development of natural supports and the use of work incentives to extend needed supports.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
				Grand Total Ongoing Support	**Team Consensus of Priority Rating**	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High

Rating Scale: (circle one) 1 = not in place 2 = in place minimally effective 3 = in place, needs review 4 = in place, effective				**Indicator** Proactively Addressing Family and Youth's Perceived Barriers to Employment	**Evidence** Include descriptions or location of evidence to support the Indicator Statement	**Priority for Change**
1	2	3	4	1. The school/agency utilizes a benefits analysis as part of the data and information considered in planning for community employment.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	2. The school/agency networks with or provides families of young children with information that promotes community employment as the first and priority outcome for all individuals with disabilities.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	3. The school/agency staff has a working knowledge of benefits and work incentives to discuss with for youth and family their concerns about loss or inadequacy of benefits due to employment.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	4. The school/agency staff proactively addresses concerns about the youth's safety or vulnerability to physical or attitudinal harm in the community and develops plans to support youth in these areas.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	5. The school/agency prepares youth with skills and/or supports needed to make informed choices.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	6. The school/agency works with youth and families to develop self-determination and independence skills needed for community employment.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
1	2	3	4	7. The school/agency encourages families to share concerns about safety or vulnerability on an ongoing basis.		☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
				Grand Total Concerns of Employment	**Team Consensus of Priority Rating**	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High

Indicator Area	Currently Available Resources/Assets to Assist in Improving this Indicator	Resource Needs Related to Improving this Indicator
1. Mission		
2. Professional Development		
3. Policies and Procedures		
4. Practices and Programs		
5. Communication and Collaboration		
6. Ongoing Support		
7. Perceived Barriers to Employment		

Sample Score Table

Enter Grand Total for each Indicator.

A. 15 Mission Statement

B. 18 Professional Development

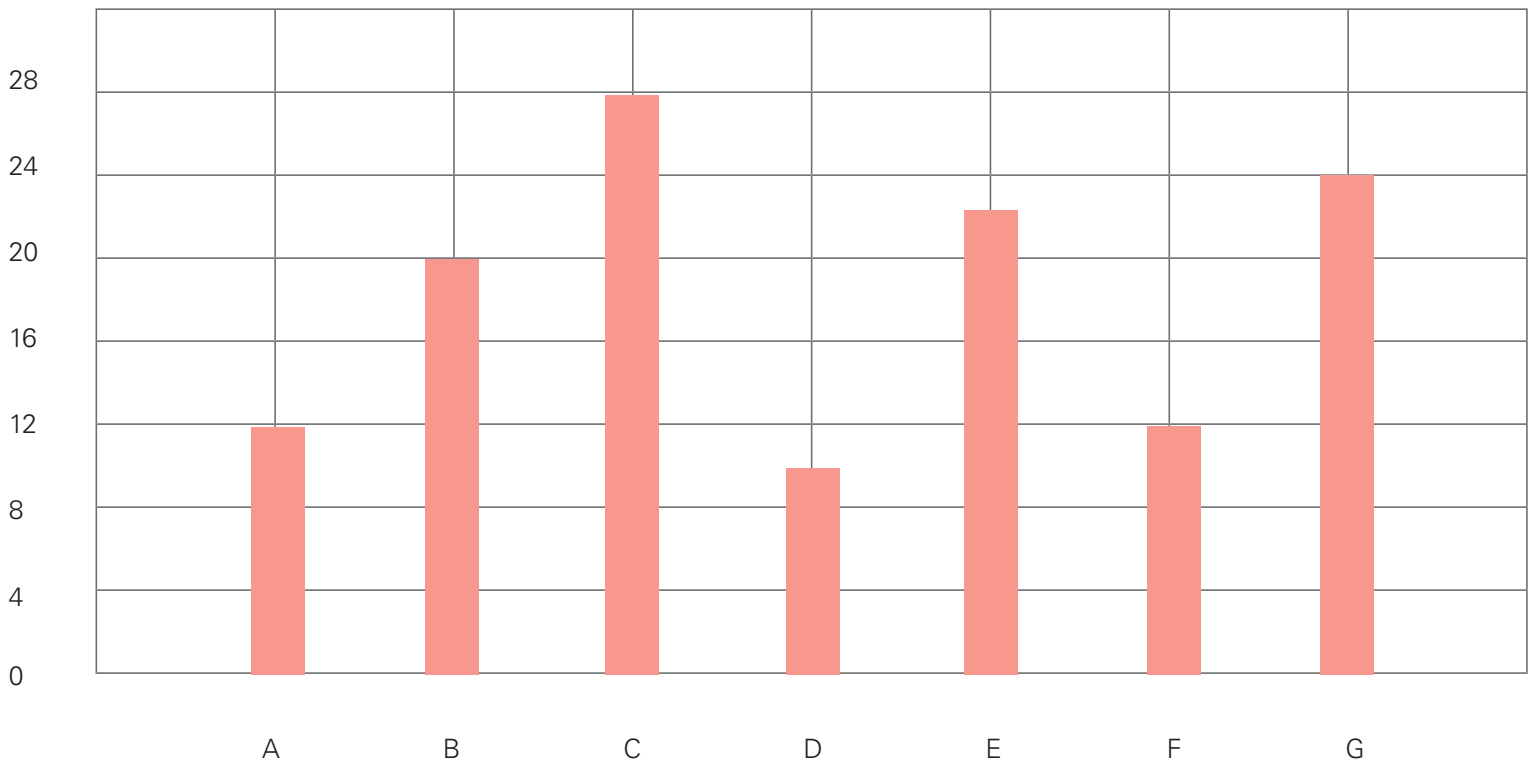
C. 28 Policies and Procedures

D. 10 Practices and Programs

E. 23 Communication and Collaboration

F. 12 Ongoing Support

G. 24 Barriers to Employment



Score Table

Enter Grand Total for each Indicator.

A._____Mission Statement

B._____Professional Development

C._____Policies and Procedures

D._____Practices and Programs

E._____Communication and Collaboration

F._____Ongoing Support

G._____Barriers to Employment

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
28							
24							
20							
16							
12							
8							
4							
0							

Indicator/ Indicator Statement Including Current Rating and Evidence	**Desired Rating/Change** How will the status of the indicator change after action plan?	**Objective** What do we want to achieve? Example: What will be developed or how will current practices, policies, knowledge, skills change?	**Action Steps** What specific activities need to occur to achieve the outcome?	**Timeline/Person Responsible** Who and When
			1.	
			2.	
			3.	
			4.	
			1.	
			2.	
			3.	
			4.	
			1.	
			2.	
			3.	
			4.	
			1.	
			2.	
			3.	
			4.	

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Communications from SRVS

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Executive Director
Tyler Hampton

September 19, 2014

Re: SRVS Industries Update

To: Individuals supported at SRVS Industries, staff, family members and Independent Support Coordinators

It has been over a year ago that we met at SRVS to discuss plans to close the SRVS sheltered workshop and helping people find community employment. We discussed the hopes and fears of such a move and promised to support you in the process of transitioning from facility based employment to integrated, competitive employment in the community.

As of today, we have had many successes. William Hunter and Eric Ryan are employed at Autozone. They have become an integral part of that company and William received the "Extra Miler" award for his hard work. In fact, Autozone thinks so highly of their work and conduct that they have asked for two more employees from the shop.

Lisa Thompson is employed at Medtronic. Simply hiring Lisa had a huge effect by boosting the morale and changing the culture at Medtronic and encouraging employees who had children or family members with Down Syndrome to expect more for their loved one. We have also helped people find employment at Pizza Hut, Taco Bell, Kroger stores, Independent and Second Presbyterian Churches, Mellow Mushroom and others. Please help us express our thanks to these companies by patronizing them whenever possible.

Included in our support for the people in the shop is our state-of-the-art Career Center located in front of the shop at 3592 Knight Arnold. The Career Center has a detailed curriculum designed to help people obtain soft skills necessary to be successful in the community and to date we have had over 40 people complete the eight week training. The courses are designed to allow people to repeat modules as needed and will continue to operate throughout the course of the transition from shop to community employment. We have also begun a series of volunteer and community opportunities to provide people with experiences simulating actual work in the community. This will help as we develop resumes and speak with potential employers.

Our goal was to close the shop by December 2014 and have everyone either employed in the community or exploring employment opportunities like skills training, job exploration and volunteering in the community.

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To help people prepare for community employment and allow time to fully consider and support the individual and the family members and support groups involved, we are moving the date to close the shop to June 30, 2015. At that time any person not employed in the community will be fully supported in community based activities with the intention of preparing them for employment.

We made a promise that we would work hard to fully support the people in the shop and we still intend to do so. It is our hope that you will allow us to work with you to decide what that support will be. It is our sincere belief that everyone at the shop can work, given the right accommodations and the right employer.

If you have any questions or need additional information you can contact our employment team, Connie Bowlan, Director of Program Operations, Troy Allen, Director of SRVS Industries or Stephanie Potter, Director of Community Employment Services.

Sincerely,
SRVS

Tyler W. Hampton
Executive Director

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Communications from SRVS

SRVS Community Employment Bulletin

A monthly bulletin highlighting SRVS community employment initiatives.

Volume I Issue 1

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the first edition of SRVS Community Employment bulletin. Because of the increased focus on community employment across the country and at SRVS, we decided to issue a monthly update. It will be one vehicle to keep you informed about SRVS Industries' transition to full community employment, and share SRVS community employment success stories. We are proceeding with deliberate pace to make sure your loved ones at SRVS Industries who want to work are fully supported to be job ready and have work that matches their interests and abilities as we move toward our goal for full transition to community employment. I appreciate your support. —Tyler Hampton

Elijah and Jeffrey Make Money and New Friends

Elijah and Jeffrey at McKesson.

Elijah Garner and Jeffrey Walker are warehousemen at McKesson Corp. Elijah started in May 2013. Jeffrey started in November 2011. Community employment has worked well for both, from confidence building to skills development.

They are also building social skills. They are part of the social culture at the company. They are included in all activities, such as pizza day, parties and holiday celebrations. They have become a part of the workforce like all the other employees. They show that their presence at the company is about their abilities, not their disabilities. They're seen as their peers.

"I like working here and I like making new friends and working with my co-workers. It makes me feel good to see them," said Elijah. "I can do more and I like to make money."

Before going to work at McKesson's, Jeffrey gained experience working at SRVS Industries. He's made a smooth transition to community employment.

"I feel real good when I go home from work," said Jeffrey. "I work just like my roommate and I have money when we go out to eat." Since Jeffrey began making more money, he and his roommate can go more places. Employment gives them more choices and increases their independence as they experience life in their community.

Gabriel Ray Earns Employee of the Month

Gabe, at left, receives his award along with co-workers asdfasdf asdfasa and asdfasdfasdfasdfsd.

Gabriel Ray works in food prep at Pizza Hut. He prepares the pizza pans with dough and stacks them on racks. He has done so well on his job that he was recently named Employee of the Month.

When his supervisor saw his ability, he started adding tasks. His responsibilities increased to include making delivery boxes and bussing tables. That built on his enthusiasm for public interaction. When a new employee came through the community employment program, Gabe showed him how to do the food prep as if he was a trainer himself. That helps to build a person's self-esteem and confidence, knowing that he is doing a job so well he gets to show another person how to do it. Making friends that see him as their peer is also important to Gabe.

Continued on back page

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October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

WASHINGTON — "Because We Are EQUAL to the Task" is the theme of this year's National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Chosen by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, the theme reflects the reality that people with disabilities have the education, training, experience and desire to be successful in the workplace.

"When I was growing up, many people doubted what I could do just because I was blind. But because I had people in my life who instilled in me an expectation of work and showed me opportunities to be successful, I completed college and became known for what I *can* do," said Kathy Martinez, assistant secretary of labor for disability employment policy. "I urge all employers to benefit from the skills of workers with disabilities by giving them, including our returning veterans, a chance to show that they, too, are *equal* to the task."

This year's theme echoes the message of ODEP's ongoing Campaign for Disability Employment to promote positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities and expand ideas about what youths with disabilities can do when they receive encouragement and support for their ambitions. Conducted in collaboration with business and disability organizations, the campaign emphasizes that, at work, it is what people *can* do that matters. More information about the Campaign for Disability Employment is available at http://www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org.

Gabriel Ray

"Pizza Hut is like a big happy family. We all make sure everyone is okay. Everybody there is my friend," Gabe said. Now that he is earning money, his spending allowance has increased. He puts it toward his bills and buys things he needs. One purchase was for a special person in his life. "I bought crochet yarn," he said. "I am knitting a scarf for my mom."

SRVS Community Employment Services utilizes trained employment specialists and job coaches to evaluate an individual's work strengths, aptitudes, and interests and place them in community jobs that best fit their needs.

SRVS
The Family Answer for Disabilities

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Communications from SRVS

SRVS Community Employment Bulletin

A monthly bulletin highlighting SRVS community employment initiatives.

Volume I Issue 2

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As 2013 nears a close, we are making steady progress with the on-going implementation of our full transition to community employment.

The process began when the state's Employment First Initiative kicked off in September 2012 with a statewide roll-out meeting to provide details about Tennessee's participation in the national initiative. Conversations with DIDD began in January 2013 for SRVS to participate.

The process continued this year with training from US Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Subject Matter Experts, including job placement expert Nancy Gurney in April 2013. We next met with Michael Callahan, a customized employment expert, in May 2013. Monthly training sessions for SRVS staff with Callahan began in

Continued on back page

Eric and William Excel in AutoZone Positions

Eric and William started working at AutoZone in December of 2013 as full-time employees at the company's fulfillment center. Their job is to take the AutoZone packages from the conveyor belt and sort and stack them onto different pallets which are headed for either ground shipment or next day air. They also shrink wrap the packages.

It did not take long for Eric and William to train for their jobs because they were able to transfer the warehouse skills they learned from working at SRVS Industries. They are so excited about their jobs that they even arrive early to work. "I got friends and I like having a good team to work with and a boss that cares for me and gives me instructions," says William Hunter. Eric is also happy about his transition into community employment. "I like it here, it's more work to do and good people," says Eric Ryan.

Fulfillment Center Manager Dennis Johnson said his staff were at first reluctant to hire a person with a learning disability, but now are looking to hire more individuals. "We are thrilled with them. Their work ethic is impeccable — before, our lines were full and now they are consistently empty," says Johnson. Johnson also said that Eric and William were eager to be included in the companies activities and socialize with the entire staff. Pictured above are Dennis Johnson, William Hunter and Eric Ryan.

Roberson Express Vending Employee of Month

Gene Roberson was October 2013 Employee of the Month at Express Vending, Inc., where he has worked since April. His responsibilities include pulling orders, helping load trucks, stocking shelves and moving pallets of drinks at the company's warehouse. "Gene comes to work with a great attitude and a willingness to help out with any task," said Tom Nelson, his supervisor. "He gives 110% everyday, understands what his job is and eagerly performs his assigned tasks."

Anyone who knows Gene, knows what a personable individual he is. "Gene has a great sense of humor and jokes around with the rest of the guys," Nelson said. "He is pleasure to work around and makes me smile."

Gene is not a stranger to the workplace. He worked three years for Worx of Wood, a high-end custom cabinet and millwork shop in Cordova. In 2008 the company received the Business of the Year award from Tennessee Community Organizations for hiring Gene through SRVS.

Gene also helped SRVS bring awareness to hiring people with disabilities during October's National Disability Employment Awareness when he and other people supported by SRVS were featured in front page advertisements in *The Commercial Appeal*, seen by more than 100,000 people across the city.

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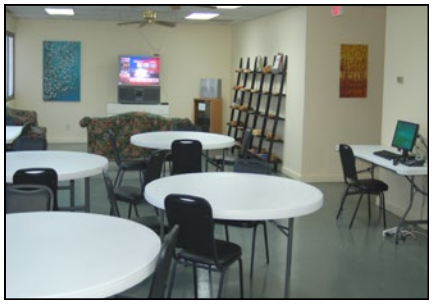
Communications from SRVS

Career Center Volunteer Outreach

People supported in the SRVS Career Center participated in their first volunteer outing December 18 with a visit to United Methodist Christian Center where they helped distribute toys for the needy. Pictured from left are Robert Todd, Ricky Newman, Sonji Orr, Walter Fredrick and Sharon Hipp.



Career Center Lounge

Pictured is the career center lounge on the first floor of SRVS West Campus which is being renovated into the SRVS Career Center. The center will help people supported prepare to enter the community workforce or fully engage in community activities Its emphasis is on skills development by providing soft skills training, group counseling, curriculum development, group activities, job exploration, career exposure, community inclusion and volunteer opportunities.

SRVS Receives Employment Network Approval

(From DIDD *Open Line*)

Employment First: SRVS in Memphis has been consistently working with the department to transform their services into integrated community employment that pays minimum and/or competitive wages. On November 8, SRVS was approved to become an Employment Network (EN). SRVS initially submitted the Request for Quotation (EN Application) in the summer and has been patiently waiting to receive access to the Ticket to Work portal. Now that SRVS is an EN, they will begin working with Ticket holders to assign their Tickets in order to get reimbursed for providing employment services.

Continued from previous page

Nashville in June 2013. These sessions were very helpful in furthering our community employment goals. We received training on nationally recognized and validated approaches to helping people with difficult challenges reach the goal of integrated and competitive employment.

Our employment staff, led by Donna Palmer and Troy Allen, have been working very hard to expedite the transition to full community employment. We're making progress working through some of the bureaucratic processes and getting the people we support jobs in the community. We recently placed two individuals in positions at AutoZone with the potential to place two more, and are busy searching for opportunities for others. We've also been focused on securing a job readiness curriculum, identifying external partners, and seeking locations for our job discovery sites.

Another of our goals this fall was to establish a career center where people supported could prepare for community employment through skills development, career exposure, job exploration, community inclusion and other types of activities. To achieve this goal, we have converted the first floor of the main building of the West Campus into the SRVS Career Center.

Although there is a lot more we need to accomplish, we are off to a great start with the transition effort. Thank you for your support as we continue with the process. Please contact me if you have any questions. -**Tyler Hampton**

SRVS Community Employment Services utilizes trained employment specialists and job coaches to evaluate an individual's work strengths, aptitudes, and interests and place them in community jobs that best fit their needs.

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Communications from SRVS

SRVS Community Employment Bulletin

A bulletin highlighting SRVS community employment initiatives.

Volume II Issue 1 April 2014

TYLER HAMPTON FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I hope you saw the recent SRVS segment on Channel 3's Live @ 9 program featuring Troy Allen and Sharon Hipp. Troy informed viewers about the Career Center and made a great case for community employment. Sherry did a fantastic job talking about her volunteer experiences through the Career Center. The video is on SRVS Web site.

Congratulations are also in order for those who have recently found jobs: Lisa Thompson, Medtronic; Jonathan Moss, Independent Presbyterian Church and Kroger; Winston Matthews, Kroger; Mary Burke who starts work at Second Presbyterian Church in June and James Fuller, who will soon begin at Pro Touch Services. *Next page.*

Lisa Goes to Work at Medtronic

Lisa Thompson from SRVS Industries began a new job on February 25 as a General Clerk I at Medtronic where she works 25 hours a week. Lisa initially expressed an interest to work in an office, and through her job at Medtronic, she is utilizing her organizational skills.

Medtronic

Lisa works interdepartmentally, setting up conference rooms with the Food Service Department for many of the meetings, orientations and trainings the company provides. She also handles shredding and labeling envelopes.

"Lisa represents many of the people supported who are able to learn new skills and higher level tasks," said Donna Palmer, Director of Community Employment. In addition to typing skills, Lisa is learning how to operate a computer — a fear she once had but is now overcoming, thanks to the job coaching supports she receives from SRVS. She is also learning how to build friendships with her co-workers.

SRVS in National, State Employment Conferences

SRVS role in community employment is gaining wider audiences through upcoming state and national forums. SRVS Executive Director Tyler Hampton will be a co-presenter at the 25th Annual APSE (Association of People Supporting Employment First) National Conference July 1-3 in Long Beach, CA. The conference theme is Innovative Practices in Integrated Employment.

Tyler and DIDD State Director of Employment and Day Services Amy Gonzalez will join two Iowa integrated employment specialists in a presentation at the APSE conference. They will share the activities conducted, strategies used and outcomes achieved in developing integrated employment systems. Tennessee and Iowa are two of the three protégé states selected in the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Project funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy Department of Labor.

SRVS will also participate in the *by-invitation-only* Customized Employment Leadership Rendezvous August 24 in Idaho. The conference focus is on fostering inventive strategies to implement and expand Employment First and Customized Employment initiatives.

SRVS Community Employment Services Director Donna Palmer and SRVS Industries Director Troy Allen have two upcoming presentations on SRVS leadership role in the transition to full community employment. Their presentations will be at a DIDD Provider Forum in Arlington on April 24 and at the 12th Annual Tennessee Disability MegaConference in Nashville May 29-30.

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Career Center Hosts Graduation

On February 7, the SRVS Career Center staff hosted a graduation for the second group of participants who completed soft skills training for community based employment. The eight week long training covers one module per week, and includes topics ranging from how to interview for a job, to how to communicate to one's peer's and supervisors. Nine participants graduated from this class representing individuals transitioning out of SRVS Industries, Inc. Since the graduation, the training classes have expanded to include people supported from SRVS Learning Center and Community Living program. Congratulations to all the graduates!

Career Center Spotlight on Live @ 9

Sharon Hipp (at left) joined Troy Allen, Director of SRVS Industries and Career Center, for WREG-TV's Live at 9 show on March 24 with news personalities Marybeth Conley and Alex Coleman. The interview focused on the volunteer work of the participants at the center. In addition to talking about relationship building in the community, Allen discussed how the career center prepares participants for community employment as part of the Employment First Initiative. Hipp was excited to be on the program, and mentioned her volunteer work at the Memphis Food Bank and United Methodist Christian Center. She recently graduated from the Career Center.

From the Executive Director continued

They join Eric Ryans and William Hunter, recent AutoZone hires. Thanks to Donna Palmer and her team for working so diligently to get our people supported in positions where they can be successful. Please look at the SRVS Job Seeker profiles below and let us know if you are aware of any potential opportunities that may match their interests. We've come a long way since joining the Employment First initiative last fall. It is a team effort to make sure the people supported by SRVS have fulfilled lives. Work is a big part of it. Anything you can do to help will make a difference.

Profiles of SRVS Job Seekers

The following people supported are interested in a community job. Contact Donna Palmer at 901-869-9205 and let her know if you are aware of any possible work opportunities.

Sharon Hipp – Sharon's greatest skill is that she likes doing tasks that have steps she has to think about. She would really like to work in an office or retail setting on a part time basis. She has experienced how to arrange products on shelves at a resale shop.

Sonji Orr -Sonji wants to work in the community. She doesn't have a specific industry that she'd like to work in, but doing a good job is important to her. She listens to instructions and with a little practice is able to complete tasks on her own. Sonji loves to work and keep busy.

Walter Frederick - Walter likes to be helpful. He'd prefer to work indoors. He wants a job that's 20-30 hours a week and wouldn't mind working on Saturdays. He loves writing names and phone numbers in a book he keeps. To compensate for some of his reading limitations, he can use colors of products to match up for stocking. Disassembling cardboard boxes is a task he enjoys doing.

James Fuller - James has several interests for a job. His first choice would be to wash cars and use a small broom to sweep out the inside of cars. His other choices would be to do cleaning, janitorial and landscaping work. He'd like to work where there is a time clock. This is very important to him. James would like to work 20-30 hours a week.

SRVS Community Employment Services utilizes trained employment specialists and job coaches to evaluate an individual's work strengths, aptitudes, and interests and place them in community jobs that best fit their needs.

SRVS 3971 Knight Arnold Rd. Memphis, TN 38118
Contact Community Employment Director Donna Palmer
901-869-9205 or Email: donna.palmer@srvs.org
www.srvs.org

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Activities:

Curriculum related activities were specifically planned to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live, work and thrive in their communities. Daily activities are a planned continuation of each training module. Activities are coordinated with the weekly lesson plans so the concepts and skills covered in classroom settings are reinforced by active engagement in the community and worksites. These activities provide opportunities for participants to role-play, ask questions and demonstrate a functional comprehension of the skills needed for community employment and inclusion. Specific lessons and activities include, but are not limited to:

- Proper introduction of self
- Appropriate attire for various professional and social environments
- Personal hygiene
- Environmental awareness
- Modeling of appropriate employment etiquette
- Accessing and utilizing community resources, etc.

Outings – Job Exploration – Interest:

People Supported are provided a list of choices with regard to what community settings they find most beneficial or interesting as such relates to potential employment opportunities. These options are presented to participants a week prior so arrangements can be made to visit a site that reinforces the training, activities and interests of those involved. Participants have various opportunities each week to take part in these outings. They are accompanied by staff members who use the outings to assess individual interests and preexisting knowledge of the business or work performed therein. This information is subsequently documented on daily shift notes and used to assist SRVS Employment staff in creating an employment profile, which begins the process of seeking integrated competitive community employment.

Job Clubs:

Job clubs are specific community-based gatherings that use public resources for participants to have a social outlet and continued employment exposure. Specifically, if a person supported has a job in the community that does not provide a full day or engagement, they have the option of attending a job club site when not working. A staff member is dispatched to any job club site where one or more participants are scheduled. While at the job club, staff members provide opportunities for recreational activities, relationship building or maintenance, job exploration and career enhancement. Job clubs are intended to be an extension of each person's work day with emphasis on continuous community inclusion.

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SRVS Strategy Memo

Volunteerism:

Volunteerism is a fundamental element of community inclusion and provides a way for all people to lend a helping hand to those in need. The people supported are presented with various options for engaging in volunteer opportunities. These options are presented to participants a week prior so arrangements can be made to provide a meaningful volunteer experience. Although the express purpose of such is to help serve and support those in need, these experiences are also intended to reinforce the training, activities and interests of those involved. All volunteers are accompanied by staff members who continuously assess individual interests and preexisting knowledge. This information is subsequently documented on daily shift notes and used to assist SRVS Employment staff with creating an employment profile where applicable.

For more information regarding this curriculum, please contact the SRVS Community Employment Director –
3971 Knight Arnold Rd
Memphis Tn. 38118
(901) 312-9594

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Other Collected Quotes

"Buy-in from families is still an obstacle, but what we are seeing, because of our initiative and because of people going to work and going into the Career Center and getting soft skills training,…we are seeing families change their minds now."

– Donna Palmer, Former SRVS Program Developer

"[Parents] are very concerned about the safety of their loved one and the security of their loved one."

– Frances Metheny, Board Member and EFSLMP Steering Committee Member

"One of my primary concerns was that staff felt threatened by this change. They would resist and send negative information to families and just have a negative influence on it altogether."

– Troy Allen, Director of Community-Based Services, previously director of SRVS Industries.

"At one point, I was not in favor of closing our workshop and making this transition because I had been involved in the workshop for so long. A lot of people there were very happy, the families were happy, and it was a nice environment. But after getting more involved in what is going on nationally and learning about the benefits of community employment, I now feel strongly that community employment is the best option for the people we serve."

– Troy Allen, Director of Community-Based Services, previously director of SRVS Industries.

"I think SRVS has done a good job at communicating back and forth [with families]. I would say that's been one very positive [thing]."

– Robert Sutton, SRVS Board Member and EFSLMP Steering Committee Member

"We have also had more community-based employment outings so we have had to do more grant writing to try and fund some of those initiatives that we needed."

–Troy Allen, Director of Community-Based Services, previously director of SRVS Industries.

"The challenge for us is to figure out what it is they are interested in doing, their learning style, and what supports they need to be successful at work."

– Donna Palmer, Former SRVS Program Developer

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Other Collected Quotes

"Understanding and knowing who is going to be able to work with what assistance, and understanding that maybe everybody won't want to work and everybody won't be able to [are important]."

– Kennon Oglesby, SVRS Operations Lead

"We have developed a pool of resources so our people will have options when they go out."

– Troy Allen, Director of Community-Based Services, previously director of SRVS Industries.

"The issue that we really dealt with more was trying to open doors with employers, as well as pushback from parents."

– Robert Sutton, SRVS Board Member and EFSLMP Steering Committee Member

"I have really seen a change from 'Oh, hell no' to companies having initiative and even corporations having diversity and hiring outreach coordinators, that kind of thing in their HR department."

– Donna Palmer, Former Program Developer

"Now we are really trying to be open and involved with other providers in the city, so we can begin to work together as partners and not[act] as competitors on everything that we are doing."

– Frances Metheny, Board Member and EFSLMP Steering Committee Member

"I gave all the parents at the meeting my number and told them to call, and now I am getting more frequent calls from families who just want to know where we are in the process, how it's going, and how it affects their family member."

– Troy Allen, Director of Community-Based Services, previously director of SRVS Industries

"I think that is one thing that will make a difference –that whoever is deciding to take this approach, should really take the time to meet with the families one-on-one."

– Troy Allen, Director of Community-Based Services, previously director

"For my direct report staff, my Supported Employment staff, I have a Can Do attitude. During training, I let them know that it can be done and that I've done it. One of my pet peeves is 'blaming them before training them.' Don't blame them before you train them."

– Lee Brown, ICI

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"The most significant accomplishments have been: (1) that we have made a concerted effort to educate the business community and Memphis community as a whole about what's going on…And (2) we are continuing to educate the other people who work in this field."

~Troy Allen, Director of Community-Based Services, previously director of SRVS Industries

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