

WELCOME!

This is the inaugural and extended edition of the 2015 Quarterly Bulletin of the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP). The objective of the EFSLMP Quarterly Bulletin is to provide the EFSLMP Community of Practice and other interested stakeholders with news related to ongoing activities of core states participating in EFSLMP; developments in Federal policies, initiatives, and funding announcements that can be used to support ongoing State Employment First activities. Each EFSLMP Quarterly Bulletin will also spotlight EFSLMP Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and EFSLMP State Ambassadors from around the country. Finally, the EFSLMP Quarterly Bulletin will provide timely information on technical assistance offerings and trainings available through the EFSLMP and other ODEP funded initiatives. Readers will also get information on state and federal initiatives related to Employment First as well as tips for making the most of Community of Practice experience including ePolicyWorks.

EFSLMP Launch Meeting

On December 2, 2014, ODEP launched Round 4¹ activities of the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP). This one-day event was attended by state government officials across various systems from both EFSLMP Core States and other states participating in ODEP's EFSLMP Community of Practice (EFSLMP-CoP). A panel of senior officials from DOL, DOE, HHS, and SSA gave updates on relevant Federal initiatives. SMEs worked side-by-side with EFSLMP Core State teams to flesh out their goals for participation in the EFSLMP in 2015. This activity culminated in the development of detailed training and technical assistance plans. Simultaneous to the strategic planning activities for the core states, an Employment First technical assistance "Boot Camp" was offered to state government representatives from non-core states that participate in ODEP's E1st-CoP. The E1st Boot Camp focused on the deployment of innovative strategies to build the capacity of front-line direct support professionals, systems, and providers through the development of high-impact policies and effective practices.



Pictured (top to bottom): CoP states attend the EFSLMP Launch Meeting in December 2014; Amy Gonzalez speaks during the 2014 EFSLMP Launch Meeting



¹ The EFSLMP was launched in the fall of 2011 with Round 1 activities. Round 2 activities occurred between 2012 and 2013, and Round 3 activities occurred between 2013 and 2014. The initiative is now in Round 4 activities, which began in December 2014 and will be completed in calendar year 2015.

EFSLMP Community of Practice (CoP) Webinar Series

The EFSLMP-CoP webinars are designed to coincide with the topical areas for training and technical assistance offered to the Core States: Capacity Building; Provider Transformation; Transition from School to Work; and, Employer Engagement. The EFSLMP-CoP Webinars hosted in January-March 2015 focused on Capacity Building. Webinars in March-April will concentrate on Provider Transformation.

April 8, 2015	Getting provider organizational leadership on board: Building an outcomes-oriented vision
May 13, 2015	Biting the bullet: Prioritizing and implementing effective practices that lead to Integrated employment & community based supports
June 10, 2015	Building on the momentum of initial success: Taking the plunge as a state into full provider transformation

All EFSLMP-CoP webinars are scheduled for the second **Wednesday of every month from 3:00-4:30 p.m. ET**. Additionally, thematic blogs are written by each of the featured speakers at the conclusion of each webinar. Below are the webinars that have been presented in 2015. These archived webinars can be found at <https://www.epolicyworks.org/incubator/eWorkgroups/efi/Lists/Links/AllItems.aspx>

January 14, 2015	Infusing core competencies of integrated employment effective practices into training & professional development requirements for direct support professionals, managers, and providers
February 11, 2015	Recommended approaches to training, professional development and certification in core competencies & effective practices that lead to integrated employment
March 11, 2015	Ensuring long-term results with capacity building— State examples of aligning policies/practice to support ongoing capacity building in integrated employment effective practices

EFSLMP CORE STATES HIGHLIGHTS

ODEP selected fifteen core states to receive intensive technical assistance and training in FY2015 under the EFSLMP. These fifteen Core States include: **Alabama, Arkansas, DC, Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Illinois, Maryland, Maine, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Utah.** After completing an initial planning process that included participation in ODEP's National Employment First Conference in December and subsequent planning sessions with SMEs, the core states have solidified and are in the process of implementing comprehensive training and technical assistance (T/TA) plans focused on at least one of the following areas:

- **Provider Transformation:** Core states involved in Provider Transformation identified a small cohort of community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) in their state, who will receive T/TA from EFSLMP's pool of SMEs to assist them in their provider transformation strategies. In exchange for receiving technical assistance, these provider entities will be expected to identify and commit to implementing a subset of systems-change recommendations that are proposed by the SMEs and negotiated with the core state team. SMEs have already begun conducting onsite assessments of participating CRPs, which will provide baseline data leading to the development of an individual organizational strategic plan.
- **Capacity Building in the Use of Effective Practices:** A vast majority of 2015 Core States have requested T/TA on the systemic infusion of effective practices that lead to sustained integrated employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities. SMEs have been dispatched to provide training and ongoing technical support to front-line staff, provider networks, and management across various systems providing publicly-financed supports in the areas of customized employment strategies; individualized placement supports (IPS); individualized supported employment services, and small business development and entrepreneurship. Core states focused on building capacity in these areas have developed ambitious schedules that combines both virtual and onsite training to targeted stakeholders.

- **Employer Engagement:** In gearing up for implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), several states will be using some of their EFSLMP technical resources to bridge, align, and strengthen employer engagement strategies across systems so as to focus more attentively to the dual needs of employers and job-seekers with disabilities.
- **School-to-Work Transition:** Focusing efforts within EFSLMP this year on aligning policy, funding, and service delivery strategies to assure that youth and young adults with significant disabilities receive an array of integrated work experiences, mentorships, internships, and skills training during critical transition years, and that they are exiting the school system with either a competitive, integrated job and/or admission to a post-secondary education program.

Several core states are also building upon onsite training and technical assistance by creating longer-term virtual technical support that can be sustained overtime. For example, some core states are developing their own cross-systems virtual learning communities and communities of practice. Additionally, understanding the importance of policy and funding alignment to support sustained systems-change efforts over time, several core states are simultaneously working on the development of new and strengthening of existing policies, including interagency agreements (MOUs, MOAs, data sharing agreements, resource braiding arrangements), updated reimbursement/rate structures, revised contractual agreements with provider networks, coordinated eligibility/enrollment processes across systems, updated service definitions and performance metrics, etc.

EFSLMP VISION QUEST SERIES 2015

In an attempt to expand the available technical assistance focused on public policy development and policy reform, ODEP piloted the Vision Quest (VQ) Working Group series in 2013. Vision Quest is a unique opportunity for participating states to focus work directly with 1-3 SMEs to focus specifically on developing and implementing one policy outcome critical to the state's current *Employment First* systems-change efforts. Under the Vision Quest model, states are assigned to one primary SME facilitator, who will meet in person with the state 1-2 times during the year and also be available for up to ten hours of virtual technical assistance/month. The state teams work with their primary facilitator to complete a three-phase process, which includes the completion of a comprehensive assessment of opportunities and gaps related to each state's work in a particular policy area (Phase 1); development of a set of specific policy recommendations and at least one policy product (Phase 2); and ongoing mentoring and coaching focused on implementing the specific policy milestone (Phase 3). On a quarterly basis, the Vision Quest working groups each meet to allow state teams to come together and discuss common themes and challenges they are facing with respect to the specific topic they have collectively opted to focus on.

During these quarterly exchanges, the state teams benefit from the collaborative feedback of all SME facilitators engaged in their respective VQ working group as well as from guest presenters/SMEs. This year, fifteen states are participating across four VQ working groups:

- Rate/Reimbursement Restructuring to Support *Employment First*
- Implementing HCBS Final Rule to Align with *Employment First*
- Infusing Innovation in Workforce Development Systems to Support *Employment First* (Focus in this VQ working group is on WIOA implementation)
- Improving Employment Supports for Individuals with Behavioral Health Issues through Cross-Systems Collaboration

Phase One of Vision Quest Activities are underway, and comprehensive policy assessments will be completed by the SME facilitators for each of the participating 16 states by April 10. The assessments are focused on the state's existing policy landscape *as it relates to the specific topic addressed via the selected VQ Work Group*, and are based on a thorough review of data, existing policies, discussions with individual state officials, and other information provided by each core state.

ODEP Announces 2015 EFSLMP State Ambassadors Network

The purpose of the EFSLMP State Ambassadors Network is to highlight exemplary leadership among government officials who are pushing high-impact systems-change efforts to promote *Employment First* principles in their state and local communities. The following individuals have been selected as 2015 EFSLMP State Ambassadors:

- **Amy Gonzalez**, State Director of Employment and Day Services, Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- **Andrea Zuber**, Social Services Director, Minnesota Dakota County Community Services
- **David Mitchell**, Administrator, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- **Jennifer Joyce**, Director of Employment, Transition, and Day Services, New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities
- **Kristen Helling**, Community Advisor/Employment First Lead, Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities
- **Laura Nuss**, Director, District of Department on Disability Services

- **Steven Reeder**, Director, Office of Adult Services Mental Hygiene Administration, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- **Susie Bourque**, Director, Policy and Special Projects, Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- **Tricia Jones-Parkin**, Employment Program Administrator, Utah Division of Services for People with Disabilities

Guidelines are forthcoming on how states participating in ODEP's EFSLMP-CoP will be able to access State Ambassadors, and anticipate several of our ambassadors to serve as guest presenters in upcoming EFSLMP-CoP webinars and other virtual informational sessions. ODEP is honored to highlight top talent among local and state government leaders who are really making a difference in implementing the vision of *Employment First*. In future quarterly updates, we will be profiling each of our State Ambassadors and sharing information about some of the innovative strategies they have deployed in their respective leadership roles to promote *Employment First* principles.

EFSLMP SME CORNER

*We are proud to introduce and **Rachel Pollock**, a subject matter expert for EFSLMP. Rachel is the Chief Operating Office of Job Path, Inc., a not-for-profit provider in New York City. Rachel brings extensive experience in the implementation of individualized employment services, focusing on new program development and the effective use of funding streams to develop quality programming.*



Pictured: Rachel Pollock

Tell us about your background and what led you to get into the work you are doing?

I started my career as a public interest lawyer working on cases involving homelessness and mental health issues. I became particularly invested in obtaining needed supports for people with developmental disabilities, as a result of a case I worked on for the City of New York to obtain housing and services for young people with disabilities aging out of special education.

I learned within several years that courtroom work wasn't the right path for me. I was more interested in the policies and programs that we were litigating than the litigation process itself. As important, my oldest son was diagnosed with autism in 1992 and I needed to spend as much time as possible helping him to engage with the world. My son's "diagnosis" doubled my interest in developing innovative programs for people with disabilities. I was lucky to find a work home at Job Path, a quite small not-for-profit in New York City with a mission to provide individualized community based and employment services for people with developmental disabilities.

What do you consider to be your greatest successes?

I am proud of the three individualized employment and day programs that we have developed over the last ten years. Job Path's customized employment program has grown from a pilot that served twenty people to a full scale program that serves over 250 people, assisting people to find jobs that match their strengths and needs, and supporting those who have jobs. Our ability to find jobs for young people with autism, including my son, has made a big difference in dozens of young people's lives. Also, I am happy with the work of our individualized day programs that work in tandem with our employment team to help people move toward independence and employment. One focus of our day services team is a life coaching program that supports people with autism to participate in community life including attending college, furthering artistic talents, overcoming social anxiety, and participating in volunteer and recreational activities. Six young people have graduated with bachelor's or associate's degrees since the life coaching launched eight years ago. Opportunities for growth and promotion, and of course, some very good luck. The greatest success though is the development of an extraordinary leadership team at Job Path, and a vibrant committed program staff.

What have been your biggest challenges?

One of the biggest and recurring challenges is matching our individualized program with the funding available, which often is designed for group programming or less individualized job development. It has required being more creative and more efficient, and teaching both our managers and support staff to be creative and efficient as well. The other ongoing challenge is continuing to innovate and create new opportunities for additional people, while providing effective support to those we are already supporting. How many times are we delayed in developing a new partnership with a new employer, because we are focusing on helping an individual in crisis to maintain his job? Sometimes we cannot move a new program forward because we are assisting people we are already serving to keep their benefits, obtain medical care, or stabilize a family situation. In working with providers on transformation, it is so important to remember the daily pressures they are dealing with.

What are your interests outside of work?

Always, I like to have a novel on hand to read—whether it be a detective novel or a well-worn classic. I just read All the Light We Cannot See, which was one of the best books I have read in years, in part about a young visually impaired girl during World War II. In the last few years, I have become an enthusiastic bird watcher. I love the Winter Olympics, and watching figure skating in particular.

FEDERAL UPDATES

WIOA Advisory Committee to Increase Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Underway

The Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities (ACICIEID), authorized through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), has hit the ground running on its time-limited duties to develop findings and recommendations to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor and Congress related to increasing competitive, integrated employment options for individuals with significant disabilities. Thus far, the Advisory Committee has held two public meetings in 2015.

The first meeting, held in January 2015, hosted several panel discussions and received presentations from experts on the following topics: the FLSA 14(c) special wage certificate program, national data on trends in Federal funding of day and employment services for individuals with significant disabilities, and the variance in outcomes associated with such services. Additionally, representatives from the U.S. Department of Justice and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission presented on the linkages between the Americans with Disabilities Act and other Federal civil rights statutes and the work of the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee also heard from a panel of self-advocates that had successfully transitioned out of sheltered workshops and into competitive, integrated employment opportunities. Finally, the Advisory Committee received public testimony from national organizations and stakeholders. The panelists' presentations and the public testimony are now available online.

The second Advisory Committee meeting took place on March 23-24 in Washington, DC. At this meeting, the Advisory Committee heard from state government leaders across various systems about the various opportunities and challenges that both promote and impede systems-change efforts at the state level to increase competitive integrated employment outcomes for both youth and adults with significant disabilities. Representatives from the U.S. Department of Education presented on the Department's enforcement efforts of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as it relates to assuring that youth and young adults with significant disabilities have access to transition services in the *least restrictive environment* (LRE). Additionally, the Advisory Committee listened to perspectives of national employers who serve as members to the ACICIEID on the challenges that large employers face in hiring and retaining workers with disabilities, as well as strategies that have been implemented to increase outreach and inclusion of employees with disabilities. The Advisory Committee has established four subcommittees to divide the focus and work-effort of the Advisory Committee members.

These subcommittees include:

- o Transition to Careers
- o Capacity Building
- o Marketplace Dynamics
- o Complexities in Service Delivery

These subcommittees will be informing the full Advisory Committee's efforts to develop an interim report to Congress, which must be submitted by September 30, 2015. For further information on the activities of ACICIEID, check out the Advisory Committee's webpage at: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/WIOA.htm>

Additional Sub-regulatory Guidance and Toolkit on CMS HCBS Final Rule Published in December 2014

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released new regulations in January 2014 governing home and community-based services (HCBS) provided through state Medicaid programs. The regulations also clarify that in order to receive Federal HCBS funding for services to individuals with disabilities, states must ensure HCBS be delivered in the most integrated setting, and "...support full access of individuals receiving (waiver services) to the greater community, **including opportunities to seek employment and work in competitive integrated settings**, engage in community life, control personal resources and receive services in the community to the same degree of access as individuals not receiving (waiver services)."

To assist states in complying with the requirements of the HCBS final rule as it relates to non-residential settings, CMS recently released a toolkit with a number of various factsheets and resources. In order to share information about the sub-regulatory policy guidance and supplemental resources issued through the CMS toolkit, ODEP's National LEAD Center sponsored a national webinar on March 25th. The webinar was attended by close to 1,000 participants, and focused on the applicability of the final HCBS rule in increasing competitive, integrated employment opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities. The webinar is archived at: **LEAD Center Archived Webinar**

FEDERAL UPDATES

Resources & Upcoming Webinar Series on WIOA Implementation from National LEAD Center

As part of its strategic objectives, ODEP's National LEAD Center is developing a number of technical resources, informational tools, and virtual educational activities to support state implementation of WIOA. For example, LEAD published a **policy brief summarizing several provisions in Titles I and IV of the WIOA** as it pertains to increasing access to workforce development services for job-seekers with disabilities. Another resource on strategies for developing strong unified state plans will be published this spring. Additionally, the National LEAD Center is hosting a 4-part webinar series titled "WIOA from a Disability Perspective":

- **WIOA From a Disability Perspective: An Overview** - Part 1 of 4 (February 25, 2015)
- **WIOA and the Unified State Planning Process** - Part 2 of 4 (April 29, 2015)
- **WIOA Youth Services** - Part 3 of 4 (June 24, 2015)
- **Section 188, the Nondiscrimination Provisions of WIOA** - Part 4 of 4 (September 24, 2015)

ePolicyWorks

In addition to the monthly webinars, participants in the EFSLMP-CoP have access to ODEP's National Employment 1st ePolicyWorks virtual site. The purpose of ePolicyWorks is to promote and support collaborative activities of participating state teams in the National E1st Community of Practice. EFSLMP-CoP members can also engage in interactive dialogues and request additional information through the ePolicyWorks chat feature.

ePolicyWorks is one of the many benefits for joining the E1-CoP. The EFSLMP-CoP is open to government officials and external stakeholders in all 50 states. In order to receive information on upcoming trainings, quarterly community bulletins, educational activities, and programs within the EFSLMP, register with ODEP's Federal contractor EconSys at:
<http://www.econsys.com/eflsmpp/?subscribe>

Comments and
Suggestions?
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