

## **Facilitated Discussion: Integrated Employment: What's on your mind? How can we collaborate to improve employment outcomes in Maine?**

We hope that by January 2013 APSE will spearhead a coalition of folks to present an Employment First bill before the legislature.

### **1. What are we most proud of in Maine – what is going well?**

- A lot of CRPs are able to provide long-term supports in the Augusta
- Not only do we have a certification process for Employment Specialists, but we now have a requirement for on-going training (18 hours every 3 years).
- People have access to VR services – no more waitlist; and VR closures must be in an integrated environment.
- It seems to be on people's minds – getting people off supports and welfare, and going to work
- Both this morning's meeting and this afternoon, and the enthusiasm and energy to move APSE and Employment First forward
- A lot of psychological growth happening, since October 2010.
- We're so fortunate in Maine that a pathway to employment is written into the MaineCare waiver (21 and 29 waivers). The language is there and it is in statute. Betsy attributes that to Jane Gallivan and Bill Hughes.
- Also in Maine, we don't have to fight the sheltered workshop battle
- The enactment of the employment policy in the mental health system; in the CSN project we're seeing a lot of people who believed they would never be allowed to work, going to work. We're getting there – there are higher expectations.
- Now we can work on getting more people into integrated settings.
- Economic development is so important in Maine, and Walgreens has made an impact.
- The vast majority of employers are small and "Mom & Pop" businesses
- DEI (Disability Employment Initiative) grant in Washington and Aroostook County
- SSA has said that people with significant disabilities can work
- Benefits specialists (CWICs) – VR pays a portion, SSA pays a portion.
- This momentum may have to do with the IDEA reauthorization – we're in the middle of a movement where people are talking about equality in employment; now that people are getting laid off who never thought they would, they may see unemployment as more of a global issue; less of an "us vs. them" mentality.
- The right people are in the right places – the stars are aligned and the time is now!
- We have over 50% of our Maine APSE members sitting in this room – a feat we didn't think was possible, and incredible momentum.

### **2. What challenges we are facing?**

- LD 28 and a conflict between the provisions and what the federal law says the state must do. We need to think about rolling it back to the 50% rule.
- One of the challenges is the sub-minimum wage issue. The position statement on sub-minimum wage is very controversial over the country. APSE remains committed to the 14 c3 position. But many providers are not happy.

- If sub-minimum wage wasn't financially beneficial for someone, it wouldn't exist. How do you change that?
- The change in the law that no 15-minute break is required, unless you work 6 hours or more
- Kids are coming out of school with no or low expectations for employment
- A lot of good paying jobs require a college degree, but many people can't afford college – we need appropriate training for the jobs that are out there
- Stigma is still there; at mental health agencies when they have open houses, we're not getting to the general public. We need to focus on what people are capable of. We need to tell better stories and illustrate that everybody can go to work regardless of disability.
- The news also sensationalizes crimes involving people with mental illness.
- How the funding is structured is another challenge – we need some changes.
- There are a lot of people in the field who are still not on board – we need to overcome stigma in the existing service system.
- It's hard for a lot of people with disabilities to make a living.
- Maine is not taking advantage of work incentives like PASS plans and IRWE's
- It would be nice for other people with disabilities to be able to be self-employed like Eric Hughes.
- How do we stop doing what we've always done and do different things??

### **3. What are we as APSE or you in your organization going to do as the next steps?**

- David Dubay, CWIC, can walk you through your first PASS plan or IRWE.
- The CWICs are the experts and they are needed (to help people realize a job is possible)
- We need to talk to more people
- For people with Intellectual Disabilities, there will be a new PCP process rolling out, and one component which must be addressed is employment. We need to think of creative ways to have conversations with people. "Would you like to get paid for something you love to do?" rather than "Do you want to work?"
- We need to have a cost-benefit analysis done. This is what people were doing before (and what it cost) – here's what they're doing now (and what it costs).
- Maine Developmental Services participates in a national project: # 1 predictor of someone becoming employed is that they live in their own home. So for many people in group homes or group living situations, that is not going to happen. How do we share more success stories??
- Maine APSE purchased a flip-cam, to begin gathering people's stories on video. We need stories of "down home Maine folk" working in the community that we can share.
- When we go out to our other groups and connections, we need to share the information from this afternoon.
- We need to focus on communication. We need to figure out how the success stories happened. Often times, people get their jobs from networking and relationships. We need to figure out, "who else can help make this happen?"
- How do you affect systems change one person at a time?
- Avery will be doing a blog for Bangor Daily News on disability issues – a great platform to start getting the Employment First message out. Please send him your issues, concerns, stories.