It is increasingly clear that employment of individuals with intellectual and development disabilities is expected and preferred.
• Requirements for expanding community employment increasingly part of settlement agreements with states

CMS Bulletin

• Highlights and provides guidance for implementation of CMS's goal to promote integrated employment options through Medicaid waiver program

Federal Hiring

• Increased efforts by federal government to hire people with disabilities under “Schedule A”, including individuals with I/DD.
The Massachusetts Picture

- Over last several years, strategic effort by DDS to expand integrated employment
- Efforts have been significantly accelerated over the last 6 months

Employment First

- Massachusetts is among the 31 states with an Employment First policy

Employment First: What Is It?

- General theme:
  Employment in the community is the first/primary service option for individuals with disabilities

APSE Statement on Employment First

Employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age citizens with disabilities, regardless of level of disability.
Special Jobs at Special Places for Special People

Excerpt from Massachusetts Employment First Policy

For working age adults served by DDS, integrated, individual employment is the preferred service option and optimal outcome. In the development of service plans and service delivery, assistance and supports for individual, integrated employment will be prioritized.
Definition of Integrated Employment Under MA Employment First

- Individual is hired and paid directly by the employer (i.e., the person is not paid via a subcontract with the service provider).
- Employment takes place in a work place in the community, where the majority of individuals do not have disabilities.
- Position is an individual job (i.e., not a group or enclave setting).

DDS Policy

- New entries to sheltered workshops ended on January 1, 2014.
- Funding of sheltered workshops ends on June 30, 2016
- Phase-out of sub-minimum wage payments by June 2018

Implications

- What will hopefully happen: expansion of integrated employment
- What could happen: expansion of Community-Based Day Services and Day Habilitation
- What will not happen: loss of services
Is Paid Employment Really an Option for All?

Cody

- Developmental Disability
- Uses communication device to communicate
- Works at YMCA as greeter and assisting with indoor sports tournaments in summer

John

- Developmental Disability
- Works at Jo-Ann Fabrics, stocking and organizing bolts of fabric and filling bins of yarn
Brian

• “Resource Ownership”: Bought animal hydraulic lift
• Led to job with dog groomer

Scott

• Autism and severe obsessive compulsive disorder
• Works two-part time jobs with limited hours: shredding client files at a law office, stocking shelves at Game Play

Best Practices: Individuals with Significant Disabilities

• High quality person-centered planning
• Extensive exploration and “discovery”
• Strong networking and ability to connect with employers and community resources
• Strong employer negotiation skills to create and carve out opportunities
**Best Practices: Individuals with Significant Disabilities**

- Excellent job matching
- Accommodations expertise
- Highly skilled in provision of post-placement supports
- High level of creativity and ability to problem solve

**Current Disability Service System** ≠ **Best Practices in Employment Services**

**Basic Advice**

- Real work experience while in school - *a must!*
- You don’t need a “program” – *you need assistance and support for a full and rich life*
- Avoid “special” jobs
- Use your connections and community resources
- Have high expectations
- Take charge – *don’t let the service system manage you*
• What is the reality of employment as a component of a person’s daily activities?
• What does a “day program” look like, that is not in a building?
• What is the role of families?

“A ship in harbor is safe --- but that is not what ships are built for.”
• John A. Shedd

Thanks!