

Pennsylvania Message

WHAT IS THE WIOA?

WIOA stands for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. With overwhelming support from both Republican and Democratic legislators, it became federal law in July of 2014. Its broad intent is to improve how people in the United States learn skills for work and become employed - this is called “workforce development”. WIOA has a focus on improving employment for individuals who have low incomes and/or need support in learning job skills, and many of its changes will impact how people with disabilities are employed in Pennsylvania.¹

WIOA has a broad impact in the United States, and its new rules affect people with and without disabilities. Some general requirements of WIOA include: improving employment for young adults; improving employment skills training to better match with labor market needs; streamlining multiple smaller workforce programs, improving the outcomes and assessment of American Job Centers; more coordination among federal workforce agencies; and requiring states to complete a unified state plan that will detail their updated activities in alignment with WIOA.

WIOA updated and replaced the previous federal workforce law, called WIA (Workforce Investment Act), which became law in 1998 and expired in 2001. Nearly 20 years after WIA was written, WIOA intends to improve how people are trained for and seek jobs in the 21st century economy. Several disability rights organizations advocated for and contributed to the final language of WIOA, including The Arc US.

It cannot be over-emphasized that while WIOA does not in any way shut down or end admittance to sheltered workshops, it is a clear sign of the national movement away from sheltered settings for people with disabilities and towards increasing community-based work experiences. Several of the changes in WIOA are intended to increase the community employment of people with all kinds of disabilities.

At the federal level, WIOA creates the Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities. This Committee is studying and preparing findings on how to increase competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities and decrease the use of sheltered workshops for employment of people with disabilities. Their most recent report and activities, including information about who serves on the committee, is available at <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pdf/20150808.pdf>.

Each state was required to submit a unified state plan by March 2, 2016; this unified plan details how the state will implement the requirements of WIOA. Each state must meet the requirements of WIOA by July of 2016.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation shared a draft of their part of the state plan with the public for comment and the entire draft of the unified state plan was also available for comment. OVR's portion of the state plan has the most direct impact on people with disabilities in Pennsylvania. Comments were due February 5, 2016. The Arc of Pennsylvania's comments can be viewed at http://www.thearcpa.org/file_download/6ff23c0b-c68a-4929-8free-8e3d7e6c6b56.

Pennsylvania's unified state plan reiterates our state's commitment to an “Employment First” policy towards people with disabilities. Employment First is a policy and approach to employment for people with disabilities; it is centered on the idea that all people, including those with significant disabilities, can have meaningful employment in the community.² Employment First is important because it emphasizes integrated community employment for people with disabilities. Just as the education system shifted (and is still shifting) towards first considering how a student can be in the most inclusive educational environment, Employment First pushes support services towards first considering how an individual with a disability can have employment in the community.

The Arc of Pennsylvania's primary priority in this time of transition is that the changes and improvements to services do not inadvertently hurt people with disabilities. As young adults with disabilities graduate high school and sub-minimum wage settings are no longer considered as employment transition options, families are losing a model that guaranteed their child with a disability would have transportation and activity during the standard work day. The Arc of Pennsylvania unequivocally supports living-wage, community-based employment for people with disabilities; we also recognize that jobs in the community come with different obstacles to success, including different schedules and transportation considerations.

The Arc of Pennsylvania is concerned that, due to the more irregular nature of employment in the community, young adults with disabilities could inadvertently be forced into non-paying volunteer positions or day programs simply because these options offer a steady schedule and regular transportation. While sheltered workshops are not the consummate model for employment of people with disabilities, we know that individuals with disabilities have a sense of accomplishment from going to work and earning some money. It is essential that the opportunity to have a paying job is preserved for youth with disabilities as they transition from high school.

1 David Fischer and John Twomey, *Implementing WIOA: State Policy Choices to Assist Low-Income Working Families*, <http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/WPPF-Summer-2015-Brief.pdf>.

2 “Employment First”, ODEP, <http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/employmentfirst.htm>.

President's Message - Ken Oakes



45 Years...

“Charles O’Laughlin and Christopher John Kelly, retarded children who have been excused from public school as uneducable and untrainable.”

“Mark Moser, William Reese, David Tupi and Sandra Lydard, retarded children who have been excused from public school as unable to profit therefrom and refused the right to attend school.”

“Emery Thomas and William Wenston, retarded children over the age of six whose attendance at public school has been postponed.”

“Cindy Mae Hatt, Ronald Green and Glenn Lowrey, retarded children over six years of age who have been refused the right to attend public school because they have not attained ‘a mental age of five years’.”

These children were plaintiffs, along with The Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children, in *PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* - filed January 7th, 1971. The descriptions of their denial to a public education are laid out in the first pages of the complaint.

It has been 45 years since the board of directors of PARC, which was renamed The Arc of Pennsylvania in later years, changed the lives of countless children with intellectual and other developmental disabilities forever. How bold and brave those leaders were.

A few years later, the U.S. Congress passed a federal special education law built on the commitment that our organization made to ensure that all children, regardless of disability, had the right to a free and appropriate public education. The Arc of Pennsylvania has always been a leader, both in our state and across the nation.

Even with the PARC Consent Agreement and IDEA, children with disabilities are still denied an education, and the effort to ensure their rights goes on. Every day, The Arc’s parents, advocates and lawyers fight for school age children with disabilities and their families. It is a battle that never seems to end. We thank them for their never ending work.

So, 45 years later, this board and our state office staff, partnering with the local chapters, continue to fight the good fight of expanding inclusion in schools, jobs, and communities. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank those who came before us and those of you who lead our movement today. We have come a long way, but in many ways, a strong Arc movement in Pennsylvania is more important in ever and I am very proud of the work you do.

I am proud to be your partner, and I am very proud of the great work you do.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Oakes', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**“To whom much is given, much is required –
not expected, but required.”**
– Andrew Young

Ken Oakes recently became the new President of The Arc of Pennsylvania.

Achieve with us.



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Executive Director's Message Maureen Cronin

Moving Forward Together



We are in the midst of an exciting time in the disability rights movement. Since the beginning of The Arc's advocacy that urged society to treat people with disabilities with respect and humanity, community inclusion has been hard-fought.

In recent years, the push towards increasingly community-based supports for people with disabilities of all ages - from birth to seniors - has gained momentum especially in employment, led by people with disabilities, families, and advocates who imagine a better world of self-determination.

The Arc in Pennsylvania is helping drive the conversation on improving employment for people with disabilities in Pennsylvania. As people with disabilities, family members, advocates, and providers of support in Pennsylvania, The Arc has a vast network of people that have insight and experience both in seeking employment as a person with a disability and employing people with disabilities. We are part of coalitions pursuing Employment First policies in Pennsylvania; increasing pre-employment transition services; and engaging employers in hiring people with disabilities.

As we look forward to the improvements and challenges coming to the disability rights movement, particularly around employment, we know that as The Arc in Pennsylvania we will move forward together to empower people with disabilities to live full lives in the community.

LEARN MORE / DO MORE

Stay Informed with PIE - The Policy Information Exchange (PIE) covers policy issues for Pennsylvanians with disabilities, their families, and advocates. The Arc of Pennsylvania manages PIE for the PA Developmental Disabilities Council.

Email us at pie@thearcpa.org to receive electronic alerts and the quarterly newsletter.

HOW WIOA IMPACTS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN PENNSYLVANIA

While WIOA has broad impacts on the US workforce, it has many provisions that specifically impact people with disabilities, their families, and service providers. An amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that passed with WIOA created many of these changes. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is the law that created many programs supporting people with disabilities, including vocational rehabilitation. WIOA puts more emphasis on community, integrated employment for people with disabilities, particularly youth transitioning out of high school.^{3,4}

WIOA Changes to Vocational Rehabilitation

The Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is funded from two streams of money - state and federal. The amount of state funding that Pennsylvania's Governor and Legislature approve for OVR impacts the amount of federal funding that is given to Pennsylvania's OVR. Under WIOA, Pennsylvania's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation must also now allot 15% of its federal money for pre-employment transition services for youth with disabilities. For the first time in many years, Pennsylvania's state 2015-2016 budget commits increased state funds to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation so that the state will be able to draw down additional federal funds.

One major change that is coming for OVR as a result of WIOA is that OVR will be responsible for providing "pre-employment transition services" to students age 14-21 with disabilities, beginning July 2016. Pre-employment transition services include internships and other work-based learning opportunities, job exploration and postsecondary education counseling, self-advocacy training, and workplace readiness training.⁵ This is a significant expansion of OVR's responsibilities and is meant to increase the community employment opportunities for young adults with disabilities, through preparing and equipping them before they graduate.

Pennsylvania OVR regional offices have additional requirements as a result of WIOA. Local OVR offices are now responsible for attending Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings if invited, working with schools to provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities, working with local American Job Centers (in Pennsylvania, this is usually the local CareerLink) and local groups of the Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board to help find jobs for students with disabilities, and going to person-centered planning meetings if invited.⁶

Under WIOA, all people with disabilities are presumed to

have an employment outcome regardless of their disability.⁷ Currently, many individuals supported by The Arc in Pennsylvania are considered ineligible for OVR services and supported employment because of their disability. We do not yet know if this provision of WIOA will impact how the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation evaluates if a person is eligible for OVR services. If WIOA will have an impact on the eligibility process it will be more evident in the WIOA regulations, which are expected in spring 2016.

WIOA changes to sheltered workshops

WIOA requires several changes to the current process people with disabilities tend to follow before working in a sheltered workshop. These changes generally don't apply to people who are already employed in workshops that pay subminimum wage or people who are 25 and older.

Changes to sheltered workshops for people with disabilities take effect on July 22, 2016. Under the new rules of WIOA, youth leaving high school cannot work at a sheltered workshop unless they have completed several steps meant to make them aware of customized, integrated employment opportunities. The intent of this process is to increase the expectation that youth with significant disabilities can work in the community and help young adults with disabilities and their families know what choices they have for community employment. Young adults 24 and under who are already receiving a subminimum wage in a sheltered workshop are considered "grandfathered" in under WIOA, meaning they can continue working in a sheltered workshop.

Beginning in July, before a young adult who is age 24 and younger can work in a sheltered setting, he or she must:

- Receive pre-employment transition services, such as job readiness training;
- Apply for and be rejected by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation as ineligible for services;
- Have career counseling and information and referrals to other public programs that allow the experience of competitive, integrated employment; and
- Have worked toward an employment outcome for a reasonable period of time without success.

According to WIOA, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation must provide supported employment services for 24 months; individuals can also request further support if needed.⁸ If after going through the above steps a young person still does not have a job in the community, he or she can work at a sheltered workshop. It is unclear whether a young person will be able to work part-time in both community-based employment and at a sheltered workshop; further guidance on this is expected when WIOA regulations are released in spring 2016.

7 WIOA: What it Means for People with I/DD. The Arc. <http://www.thearc.org/document.doc?id=5183>

8 Community Jobs and A living Wage: Opportunities for People with Disabilities in Pennsylvania. Disability Rights Network.

3 Federal Register, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2015-04-16/pdf/2015-05538.pdf#page=1>

4 Statement of Managers to Accompany the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, http://www.murray.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/ee9c8cfd-cb3f-4dd5-8574-92d9337f02c9/signed-wioa-managers-statement.pdf, May 21, 2014.

5 WIOA: What it Means for People with I/DD, The Arc <http://www.thearc.org/document.doc?id=5183>, page 5.

6 WIOA: Will it Deliver on its Promise for Transition?, APSE, <https://wise.unt.edu/sites/default/files/WIOA%20APSE%20Connections%20Dec%202014.pdf>.

For people who are already working in a sheltered workshop and receiving a subminimum wage, the following changes will take effect under WIOA:

- Individuals participate in reassessment every six months; and
- Individuals must receive work readiness and job training services.

Under the new rules of WIOA, schools can no longer subcontract with entities that pay subminimum wage. This means that pre-employment transition services, like job training programs and internships, will no longer be provided by schools at sheltered workshops. School districts are working to shift their approach for the 2016-2017 school year, in preparation for supporting students with disabilities towards employment after high school. The Arc of Pennsylvania's ADEPT program (detailed later in this newsletter) and several of our chapters have been in conversation with school districts as they navigate this change.

Snapshot of employment for people with disabilities in Pennsylvania

While it's difficult to get accurate numbers on how many people with significant disabilities are employed in Pennsylvania, it is helpful to know estimates of where we are at currently. There are an estimated 190,330 people with disabilities in Pennsylvania, with over 53,000 receiving support services from the state.⁹ Approximately 13,000 people with disabilities in Pennsylvania currently work in subminimum wage settings or sheltered workshops.¹⁰ A little over 5,000 people with disabilities are employed or working towards employment in integrated, community-based settings.¹¹

⁹ Estimates from Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs.

¹⁰ Halle Stockton, Thousands of disabled workers in PA paid far below minimum wage, <http://publicsource.org/investigations/thousand-of-disabled-workers-pa-paid-far-below-minimum-wage/#.VkOqWCCrS-o>

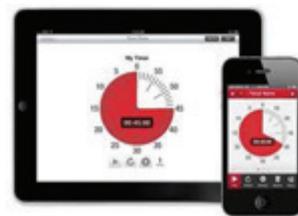
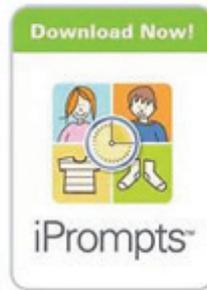
¹¹ State Employment Snapshot: Pennsylvania, <http://www.state.data.info/statepages/Pennsylvania>

Getting Work Done with a Little Help from My (Assistive Technology) Friends

by Jule Ann Lieberman, ATP, PA's Initiative on Assistive Technology

Nearly everyone uses some tool or method to stay organized or complete job assignments in a timely manner. Memory, organization, and time management are skills needed for employment that may be a challenge for persons with intellectual disabilities. As assistive technology (AT) specialists we look at what the person needs assistance doing and consider a range of tools and strategies. Even "low tech" approaches, like color coding labels and folders to help with organization, timers with multiple alarm settings to help with time management, and sequences of pictures to coach someone through all of the steps in a task are possible AT solutions. Many of us use "to do" check lists of tasks and feel a great level of satisfaction when we can mark a task complete! Your list can be in hard copy using paper and pencil, or digital, using an app on a tablet device. Each person and setting is unique: Learning how Mary, a woman with intellectual disabilities, uses AT may help you start to think about AT solutions!

Mary needs help prioritizing her work assignments. Her supervisor places her high priority assignments in a red folder, indicating these tasks need to be completed first. A yellow folder is used for tasks to be done once the red priority assignments are complete. The due times and dates of tasks and other duties are color-coded on a calendar app on her smartphone and "synced" with her computer calendar. Mary uses digital countdown timers so she is aware of how much time she has until it's time to take a break or go to lunch. For assistance with her most complicated or new assignments, the task is broken down into a series of steps captured in actual photos displayed in an app. Although these visual supports can be printed out for reference, Mary prefers to have them available through her smartphone app, with recorded messages attached to the images. Mary plans to try a new app that provides video training with narration when she gets her promotion.



The following are examples of apps that can be used by job coaches and other support professionals, employers and persons with intellectual disabilities:

- VoCal (\$0.99, iOS) is a voice calendar that sends alerts with recorded messages. It can be used for reminders and as 'to-do' lists, and has an echo feature that will continue giving prompts until a task is completed.
- First-Then (\$9.99, iOS) provides help with transitions by using pictorial/video steps with audio prompts.
- Pictello (\$19.99, iOS) can be used to create visual supports with audio instructions.
- iPrompts (\$49.99, iOS, Android) is a visual support app that allows for the creation of schedules with pictures, audio and check lists.
- Time Timer (\$4.99 iOS, \$0.99 Android) gives a visual representation of the passage of time and can be customized.

Not sure what AT would work? Want to find out more? Please contact Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology (PIAT) to request a demonstration or to explore devices (and apps) from Pennsylvania's Assistive Technology Lending Library (www.disabilities.temple.edu/atlend). Call 800-204-7428 or email atinfo@temple.edu for more information.

Brief Overview of Subminimum Wage in US

None of the concerns or issues being raised about sheltered workshops, community employment, and subminimum wage are new - they have all been raised in the past. In order to understand current issues around employment for people with disabilities, it's helpful to understand the history of employment for people with disabilities and the trend towards community-based employment.

How did subminimum wage begin in the United States?

Subminimum wage began in the United States in the mid-1930s, as a way to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities during the recovery after the Great Depression. In 1938 the Fair Labor Standards Act became law. Part of the law allowed employers to get permission from the Department of Labor to pay employees with disabilities less than minimum wage. This employer use of subminimum wage is sometimes called the 14(c) certificate, because it's from section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act law and employers have to get a special certificate from the Department of Labor in order to pay people with disabilities a subminimum wage. If an employer has applied for and received a 14(c) certificate or exemption from the federal government, it means that employer is allowed to pay subminimum wages to people with disabilities and is subject to certain regulations.

Nonprofit and human services organizations set up sheltered workshops, and they especially grew in number after the end of World War II in 1948 as services to people with disabilities began expanding.¹² People with significant disabilities and people who were blind worked in these settings. From the beginning, wages in sheltered workshops were based on the productivity of a person with a disability and there was no "wage floor", which means there was no minimum rate that person had to be legally paid. In 1966 this wage rule changed so that people with disabilities had to make at least 50% of minimum wage in sheltered workshops. In 1986 Congress reversed this decision, replacing the requirement of people with disabilities making at least 50% of minimum wage back to people with disabilities being paid a commensurate wage.¹³

How many people work in subminimum wage settings?

According to the Government Accountability Office, approximately 420,000 people with disabilities work in subminimum wage settings in the United States.¹⁴ About 13,000 Pennsylvanians work in subminimum wage settings. While one goal of subminimum wage settings is to train individuals with disabilities for community work, there have been immense obstacles to this. Across the nation less than 5% of individuals who work in sheltered settings find a customized, community-based job; this means 95% of people who work in sheltered workshops are there for their whole careers.¹⁵

How is subminimum wage calculated?

Subminimum wage rates are complex to calculate, but are generally based on considering the productivity of a person who is impacted by a disability in contrast to the productivity of a person who does not have a disability that impacts their work. Subminimum wage providers start calculating subminimum wages by considering the "prevailing wage" for the job that will be performed in their area, which is the hourly wage that workers who do not have a disability are paid. The provider then has to measure productivity of the individual worker with a disability doing the job. To calculate the individual's pay rate, they apply this measure of productivity to the prevailing wage rate. Assembly work, like putting parts of a product together, is usually paid by the piece; service work, like food service or cleaning jobs, are usually paid by the hour. Assembly work is the most common type of work in subminimum wage settings.¹⁶

For example, if the prevailing wage for a job is \$8.00 an hour for a person who is not impacted by a disability, this would be the starting point for calculating subminimum wage for a person with a disability who is doing a similar job or task. If a person with a disability is considered 50% as productive as a person without a disability for this specific job or task, their wage would be \$4.00 an hour. There is no minimum amount that a person must be paid.¹⁷

12 Sheltered Workshops, *International Journal of Rehabilitation*, <http://cirrie.buffalo.edu/encyclopedia/en/article/136/>.

13 William G. Whittaker, *Treatment of Workers with Disabilities Under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act*, http://digital-commons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1211&context=key_workplace

14 Special Minimum Wage Program, Government Accountability Office, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/240/232264.pdf>

15 National Council on Disability Report on Subminimum Wage and Supported Employment, http://ncd.gov/rawmedia_repository/FINAL_Subminimum%20Wage%20Report%20with%20Transmittal%20Letter.pdf

16 Special Minimum Wage Program, Government Accountability Office, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/240/232264.pdf> page 8, 11.

17 William G. Whittaker, *Treatment of Workers with Disabilities Under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act*, http://digital-commons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1211&context=key_workplace

GO GREEN

The Pennsylvania Message is now available via email. Please send your full name, local chapter, and email address to ahouser@thearcpa.org to receive your electronic copy.

Interviews on Community Employment Initiatives

To give some concrete examples of how The Arc of Pennsylvania and some of the incredible chapters and advocates we work with are working to increase community employment for people with disabilities, we interviewed several leaders about initiatives they are running across the state.

Ashlinn, our Policy Director, interviewed Susan Harwood, Executive Director of The Arc of Dauphin County, in December 2015 about pre-employment activities the chapter is offering to local students. Their Learning for Life program has been running for several years, providing pre-employment transition services in partnership with local school districts.

A: *Can you tell me a bit about what The Arc of Dauphin County is doing in employment for people with disabilities?*

S: Our pre-employment skills program is called Learning for Life. It is a transition program that we've been offering to Susquehanna school district for three years now. The program has three parts - it involves career exploration, job coaching, and health and wellness. Each year we have a contract with them and do this transition program. To me, it's the way we need to go. It gives the students a better sense of independence and work expectations, and we are linking them in with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and CareerLinks sooner.

A: *I'd love to hear more detail about the three different parts of the program.*

S: We serve about 20 students at a time, and they spend about 8 weeks in career exploration. We started with students who were within two years of transitioning, but this past year we also started a middle school program. It's a little different program but it's still focused on preparing for the future. We have trainings on a host of topics related to employment: how to do elevator speeches, Discovery activities, career interest profile, Dress for Success, interviewing, and other soft skills like time management and phone etiquette. We also spend time on how to apply for a job and how to do paper and online applications.

After career exploration, they go into job training. With supervision of a job coach they work in a community setting. Our community employer partners are Holiday Inn, Giant Foods, and a local sub shop. They students cycle through different roles at the businesses and learn things like bagging, cart retrieval, food preparation, how a small business operates, working with customers, kitchen, laundry, maintenance, housekeeping, etc.

The last piece of the program is the wellness and nutrition piece, which is one day a week. They work with local chefs to learn about how to prepare healthy meals. We also work with the Central Pennsylvania Food bank and learn how to prep meals in the kitchen.

School has been helpful with transportation and identifying the students that have been part of the program. They have aids come along so they have staff support. We see that as a real step in transitioning people out to jobs or higher education.

A: *What happens after students complete the Learning for Life program?*

S: We've had some good success - people have been hired at the community employers we partner with and with other employers in the community. Our job coaches will help the students as they ready to move on out of the program. We keep supporting all the students by talking to them about what is required to work with OVR. Students can participate in the program throughout their transition years.

A: *How are families involved in the program?*

S: Parents have to agree for their children to participate in this. We do an orientation with parents and throughout the program we have periodic graduation steps that bring parents in, so families stay engaged. There's also the typical parent-teacher type interactions.

A: *What are some obstacles you've encountered in offering this pre-employment program?*

S: The availability of the program can be constraining, because it depends on schools being able to pay for their students to participate in the Learning for Life program. We've also worked with a few districts who have faced financial obstacles to partnering with our program long-term, but from what I've heard they are incorporating some of the practices from the Learning for Life program at their school. We're excited about the employers that are already working with us and are on the lookout for more community employers that are interested in working with us - we're always looking for that. School districts will be looking to contract with a pre-employment transition program like Learning for Life because of the changes WIOA is bringing.

A: *What do you see as some systemic barriers to community employment?*

S: Businesses need assistance understanding how people with disabilities can benefit them. We really need to let them see how this can work for them and really help their organization. Another systemic barrier is increasing the expectation that people with disabilities can and want to have a community job. Plenty of people we work with want to work, but they need certain basic skills in order to work. When I worked at CareerLink we worked with employers who, when we asked what they wanted in an employee, would say, "I want someone who shows up on time, every day, and does what needs to be done". It sounds so basic but shows the barriers people have. Transportation impacts being on time and you need soft skills to interact well with other people - these basic expectations are what employers really struggle with. They can adapt the job to the skills of the person they've hired, but the timeliness and basic expectations are important.

Interview with Nicole Turman, Project Specialist for ADEPT

ADEPT is a project run by The Arc of Pennsylvania since 2013. Ashlinn interviewed Nicole Turman, Program Specialist for ADEPT, in December 2015 to share some insight into what the project does and how its innovative approach can support youth in transition with the most significant disabilities.

Ashlinn: Please share some basics about ADEPT with our readers. Where does the project work, what does it do?

Nicole: ADEPT has consultants that are working statewide with youth who have a significant impact of disability. We are following the model for customized employment developed by Marc Gold & Associates (MG&A). The three-part model consists of: Discovery, Customized Employment Job Development, and Systematic Instruction. ADEPT partners with MG&A to provide national certification training in the three elements of the program.

The process starts with Discovery, which is a non-comparative vocational assessment. It is different from traditional vocational assessments, because you can't fail Discovery. Competence and readiness for work is presumed from the beginning - and then we move forward to identify skills from everyday life that a person can use in employment. Discovery really starts with the person and what they already do in everyday life, and then considers how that can translate into employment skills. Discovery takes about 20 to 30 hours over 4 to 6 weeks.

Our consultants observe and participate with the person engaging in activities of everyday life. A Discovery profile is developed for each participant. After the Discovery profile is written, the consultant facilitates a Customized Plan for Employment meeting. The Customized Plan for Employment meeting is driven by the job seeker. She/he identifies who should be at the meeting. The meeting includes people who know the person well and support that individual, and also people who may have connections to employers in the community. The meeting looks at clearly identifying tasks, skills, and contributions identified through Discovery as well as the conditions that need to be in place for employment success; some of these conditions are flexible and some aren't. For example, as a condition for employment success, someone may need to have their own work space, instead of sharing space with others; or need to have work that includes a combination of physical activity and sitting. They may need one identified supervisor

instead of many, so they are getting direction from one person. At the meeting the consultant also develops a list of potential employers and considers possible connections to that employer, who has that initial in and contact to start the job development activities.

The visual resume came up as a need because many individuals that we work with through ADEPT would not be successful via traditional processes in applying for employment - they are individuals who have the most significant impact of disability - they may be non-verbal or have other barriers that would make participating in a traditional application process or interview difficult and likely less successful for them. We develop a visual resume with photos taken during Discovery that emphasize skills and tasks, so it's a way for the job seeker to present themselves as a potential employee. We also provide participants with a 'swivel' card that has a USB attached (looks like a business card, which contains the visual resume) - it adds a nice piece of technology to their job seeking.

The next piece after Discovery is Customized Employment Job Development. After a person has had this meeting and developed a plan for employment, then we have a list of potential employers. Customized Employment Job development is negotiating a position with an employer; this focuses on the employer's need being met. This step really focuses on addressing these potential issues for prospective employers: unmet needs of employer that the job seeker could fill, tasks being done by someone at a high pay grade that could be done by someone for less cost, and improving productivity at the business. At this point in the process we haven't shared who the job seeker is, we are just introducing the concept of customized employment to the potential employer. We present information about the job seeker after sharing the initial description of customized employment to the employer. We have received permission to act as a representative of the job seeker to the employer. The job seeker does not attend the initial meeting with us.

What's different about this second step in the ADEPT model is that often when job development is done, the job developer is looking at either existing, available positions at a company or job carving, which is asking an employer to modify an existing job description so that a job seeker is only be responsible for certain parts of that existing job description - what we do is ask employers to forget titles, forget existing positions, and talk to us about their business. Let us talk with them about meeting unmet needs. Let us talk with

them about how to improve productivity, how to improve the bottom line.

A: Could you give some examples of how you'd describe this to an employer?

N: Sure, here's one example of considering unmet needs that I was part of. Unmet needs for an employer are tasks that are supposed to be done everyday, don't happen because other tasks take priority and end up remaining on the to-do list. I was talking to the owner of a small local shop about unmet needs, and he brought up facing. In retail that's where you make sure all the product is facing out so that the merchandise looks nice. It usually didn't happen because employees were busy with other things. My jobseeker was someone who really likes keeping things neat, which I knew from spending time with him in Discovery. So one of the parts of his job we negotiated was that he would be responsible for facing in the store. Through the negotiation process we identified specific tasks for my job seeker to do in that location that fit tasks we identified during his planning meeting and met needs of the employer. He has that job and has been successful in it.

For an example of looking at what work is being done by someone at a high pay grade that could be done by someone else, here's one from a hospital. Nurses were expected to clean equipment as part of their job responsibility while being paid \$90.00/hour. One of our job seekers whose skills and interests align with this need could sanitize the equipment at a fair wage (i.e. at \$15.00/hour) This translates to a \$75.00/hour savings for the hospital. It also frees up the nurses to provide more direct care and improve patient service and satisfaction.

The main goal in customized employment is creating a mutually beneficial relationship for the employer and job seeker. We aren't typically looking at the traditional, entry-level jobs, which is another focus that often happens when doing 'traditional' job development for people with disabilities. Part of what we're looking at doing when creating this relationship between the potential employee with a disability and his or her employer is to develop natural supports within the workplace. If you consider the high turnover in entry-level jobs, the opportunity to develop natural supports or connections in the workplace that individuals with significant impact of disability need to work often don't exist in entry-level jobs because of the nature of the job - people are always leaving those jobs. What we are trying to do is negotiate tasks for the jobseeker, where their coworkers aren't frequently changing.

A: *What happens if someone who has gone through this model in ADEPT finds a job and then, for whatever reason, needs to change jobs?*

N: I would say that when one is conducting customized employment job development - if it is done with fidelity - it is done looking to connect the job seeker - identified tasks and conditions - as closely as possible with an employer's needs. The better we are at customizing the job during development, the less likely it is that the job would not work out. Having said that, job changes happen to everyone, and sometimes jobs don't work out - could be an employer decision, an employee decision, or a mutual decision. If you have the Discovery step done well, which has the conditions for success and tasks clearly identified, the more successful job development will be and finding another job can be a natural step in a person's career path. Additionally, if someone is making this change after some time has passed since Discovery was completed, the Discovery profile and process can be revisited - for 'expanded' Discovery. And this expanded information can help with continued job development.

A: *So what is the final piece of the ADEPT model?*

N: The third piece is called Systematic Instruction. It's based on Marc Gold's Try Another Way approach of teaching skills to people with significant impact of disability. Try Another Way is a methodology or an approach for how to teach job tasks to the jobseeker. It is the methodology for teaching job skills - or assisting the new employee to build on skills they have and translate them into skills needed in the new job. For example, someone who is good at or likes to wash dishes may have that task translated to cleaning surgical equipment. When starting the new job cleaning surgical equipment, he or she might not know all the steps necessary to clean the equipment according to health standards, and that is where systematic instruction comes in - it is the methodology we would use to teach a skill they already have in a way that applies to their work. We always start with how the employer wants to have the job done, and move from there to consider if and adaptation or modification can be made, if necessary for the job seeker. Of course you consider accommodations, but some things are nonnegotiable.

Systematic Instruction is based on task analysis, breaking down the steps of the work task and teaching those steps to complete the work tasks correctly. It's a specific methodology for conducting the job analysis, breaking down the steps of the task, and teaching

them to the individual. When our consultants complete Systematic Instruction certification training, they use the 22-step Bendix bicycle brake assembly to teach this skill to an individual learning consultant with a significant impact of disability. When ADEPT consultants used Systematic Instruction to teach, each of the learning consultants that participated in the training were able to assemble that brake with limited direction and support after just four trials.

The most important thing to take away from Systematic Instruction is that it's a very different method of teaching someone skills needed for work than what's been used before. A lot of times, through the ways we teach today, individuals often become very prompt dependent and reliant on high frequency, positive reinforcement - which does not happen in the work setting. Using Systematic Instruction was really amazing to watch happen. It has very limited verbal direction. Instead of providing high-frequency positive reinforcement, completion of the task is the reinforcement, the internalized success is the reinforcement.

The ADEPT model is employer-focused. Before the individual with a disability starts a job, the ADEPT consultant would go to the worksite and learn how the employer wants to have tasks done and break down the steps, so that when an individual with a disability comes in to work the consultants is available to help teach. Another thing that's very different throughout this process is we consider how the employer manages the aspects of employment. How would they present orientation to any new employee? How do they supervise and manage employees? We are trying to avoid the expectation that we're going to be here forever to help. We want to facilitate that employee-employer relationship and help the supervisor be the employer to this person. We will offer support to modify, if necessary, the orientation, supervision and management of the employee with a disability, with the goal to build that ability and 'ownership' of the new employee within the employer and natural supports available.

A: *How did ADEPT get started?*

N: The Arc of Pennsylvania was working with schools through the Include Me program when we recognized the need for transition support, and schools were asking for support. After the first two years of Include Me, which was focused on students in kindergarten and first grade, our range of service was expanded to working with students in K-12. School districts were asking for help to include older students with disabilities. As we were supporting the teams of high school and transition age students, we recognized the limited options

many students had after they exited school. Employment was not a considered option for many of our students. We had students who were included, involved members in their communities and schools - but then they graduate and didn't have options for community integrated employment.

It was supporting these high school and transition age students that led us to seek solutions. Rita Cheskiewicz, who's our Program Director, went to a presentation on Discovery and immediately recognized its potential. I reached out to Mike Callahan, President of Marc Gold & Associates, to schedule three informational sessions in Pennsylvania. This initial work was supported by our first grant from the Stabler foundation - literally hundreds of people came to the sessions. School personnel, parents, supports coordinators from county agencies, providers all attended and were interested in the approach - discussions with Mike Callahan led to the relationship we have today with Marc Gold & Associates. That relationship continues and led to the ADEPT certification process we now have. This MG&A national certification process that was developed as a partnership between The Arc of Pennsylvania and Marc Gold & Associates was the first of its kind in the nation. The certification process for each of the three elements (Discovery, Customized Employment Job Development and Systematic Instruction) is rigorous and involves 3 full days of face-to-face training followed by 40-50 hours of fieldwork following the training. Certification candidates must submit work samples and successfully complete a test to complete the process.

A: *What are the main issues ADEPT is trying to address?*

N: We are looking for systems change. We want to change the model of how individuals with significant impact of disability are considered for employment to a model that sees them as ready to work. We need to move away from comparative assessments to determine if someone with significant impact of disability can work. We know they can work, if effective customized employment and adequate support is in place. We want to help families recognize the potential of their family member with a disability. We want to shift the current supported employment process to be focused on meeting employer needs and creating that relationship between employers and potential employees.

A: *What do you see as the biggest obstacles to people with disabilities finding and keeping jobs in the community?*

N: Perception. Perceptions of employers, people with disabilities, and their families.

INTERVIEW WITH ADEPT SPECIALIST,
NICOLE TURMAN continued from page 10

It impacts everything - what jobs we think people can work in; socialization of expectations; what employers expect from hiring a person with a disability - many feel that they're being approached to "help" a person with a disability instead of making a hiring decision that improves their business; what families think is possible - perception impacts all of this and has a significant impact on a person's opportunity for attaining community integrated employment.

Ashlinn interviewed Marsha Blanco, President and CEO of ACHIEVA and Shayne Roos, Vice President of Support for ACHIEVA in December 2015 about the organization's landmark decision to phase out their sheltered workshops and adult day training facilities for community-based services. ACHIEVA is the parent organization of The Arc of Allegheny, Westmoreland, and Beaver Counties.

Ashlinn: *What led to this decision for a more intense effort in developing community-based inclusive employment?*

Marsha: ACHIEVA has been thinking about this for a number of years. Our boards of trustees, about 19 months ago, went through a rigorous process of strategic visioning that included external and internal analyses. We came to the conclusion that a number of our key areas of service should improve. Right now we have 570 people in sheltered settings.

A: *How did you reach consensus as a board on this decision? What was some of the pushback you encountered? How have people with disabilities and their families reacted?*

Marsha: The board adopted some really progressive objectives, and we as staff leadership continued to work with the board over this 18 month visioning period. We concluded we needed to declare that ACHIEVA had already been moving in this direction. We decided we needed to put forth a resolution and affirm our commitment to real work, for real money, in the real world.

Honestly the board did not have a lot pushback, we just had a great deal of discussion over a many-month period. The group of us that were meeting internally were really aware of what was going on nationally, like the Department of Justice cases against sheltered settings. One day I asked the question, "What would we be doing if there was not this pressure building from the external environment?". And Shayne said, "We'd be doing this anyway because it's the right thing to do". We did recently notify

individuals and families in writing about the transformation.

Shane: We sent out a letter on a Friday to the people we support and their families, and honestly we expected people to be knocking down the door on that Monday. But we have really set the stage over the last 18 months for what we were moving towards. I have had a few personal conversations with families, who had some concerns, and other than that the concerns have been minimal.

Ashlinn: *What are the big "growing edges" you see in making this transition - what problems will need to be resolved to make this shift happen?*

M: This is a lot like looking into a wrist-watch and seeing all of the gears that need to be moving together in order for this to be successful for each individual. How to support the staff of these sheltered workshops and training facilities as we transition. How to deal with the actual buildings, what will happen to those as we begin offering more community-based employment.

S: In early December we had a meeting to talk through this transition with the staff of our workshops and day programs - we had over 100 staff in attendance. There were 30-40 questions submitted prior to the event and a number during the time. They want to know how it will impact the people they serve as well as the work they do.

M: I have to say, we are so impressed with the staff because the initial questions are all about the individuals they support and how this shift will be good for individuals. The staff's primary concern hasn't been their own jobs or how the change will impact them.

We also recently spoke with Deputy Secretary Nancy Thaler and Special Advisor Steve Surovic, who both pledged their support in this endeavor. We would rather be in a leadership position in this shift, which is coming and really is already happening, and try to get this right person by person. We've always been very person centered in all of the work we do. I think one of the greatest challenges is that individuals will want different things and we've got to really create communities that accommodate those individual's needs and expressed wishes. While the emphasis will be on real work in the real world, we also don't believe that every individual will want work. For instance, individuals in their seventies might be best supported in a senior center instead of in community work.

A: *I know you're in the really preliminary stages of all this, but are there any specific plans you have yet for developing more community employment?*

S: Sure, a couple of things we came up with: We are looking to start a creative arts programs for people interested in making creative arts into a vocation. There is an organization in Philadelphia of about 25 artists with disabilities who all earn a living with their art. It's funded through supported employment.

M: And they work and create in a regular, multi-studio setting that has other community artists there.

S: Another thing we know that is really important for a community-based model is partnerships in the community, both for employment and relationships. One of our staff has a relationship with Duquesne University. She approached them about a partnership and we are thrilled that they are interested. So right now what we're working on is a group of people we support in the facility will report to Duquesne each day to the student union and be part of the community. Duquesne is really interested, and the university has some students doing their coursework there who are interested in how people transition to community. We are really looking forward to this work with Duquesne.

M: Another aspect we are already seeing and have seen, since this will encompass our operations in Allegheny and Westmoreland County, is differences in rural and urban areas. Westmoreland is more rural in parts of the county. The approaches there will have to be different.

We also have partnerships with Giant Eagle. We actually implanted a staff person at Giant Eagle's request simply to stimulate more employment of people with disabilities.

S: Last year she recruited 45 people with disabilities for Giant Eagle. She also started getting referrals from within of people who were struggling with work due to disabilities, so she supported 70 team members total in that first year. She supports individuals 22 years and older as well as current Giant Eagle team members.

A: *What do you think is the single biggest obstacle to people with disabilities having community-based, inclusive employment?*

S: One of the biggest obstacles we've identified are waiver budgets; of our 570 individuals in facilities right now about 50% of them are using the PFDS waiver.¹⁸ The cost of support goes up as you do more individualized supports to meet the needs of individuals and their families.

M: I think the other real challenge is more system-wide - when someone is going to a workshop five days a week, Monday through Friday, maybe 9 am to 3 pm, most residential

agencies don't staff during that period. People for whom we've been getting jobs don't work Monday through Friday, 9 am to 3 pm. That puts pressure on the residential end - folks will be working on weekends and evenings. It puts pressure not only on families who are used to this schedule - particularly on older families, since this is their respite period - but also on the residential support system.

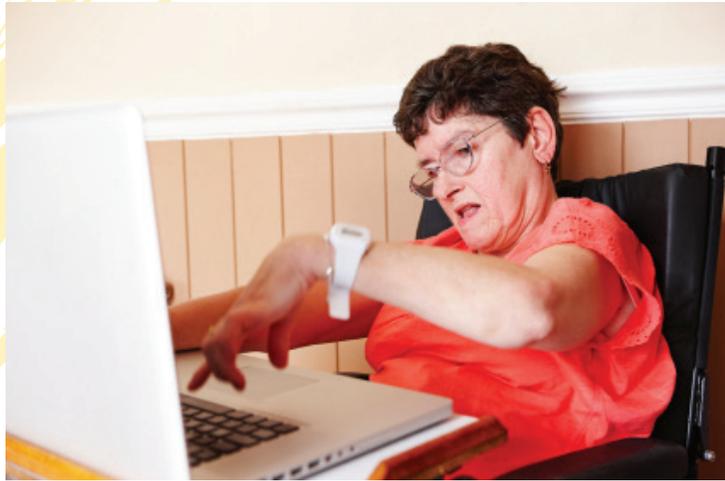
A: I know it's incredibly early in this process - what specific community-based inclusive employment opportunities or models is ACHIEVA considering? Are there any "best practices" you are exploring like ACHIEVA did when you assisted with the transition from Polk Center?

M: I wouldn't even call it a model. When you really embrace person-centeredness, there really isn't a single model. It's much more person by person. And sure, we've been following things in Rhode Island, Washington, of course we have our eyes and ears out on all that. Our declaration impacts three times more people than that of Vermont's when that state transitioned away from workshops.

A: What advice would you give to folks who are concerned with this national trend of shifting from congregating settings?

S: When we presented to the staff, you know what we've shared with staff all along is - we've spent a lot of time on this. We're asking people to devote that same amount of time to looking at this. Look at this through the eyes of the people they support. Are the lives they're leading lives they would want for themselves or their loved ones? We all come to the conclusion that person-centered is the only way to do this.

M: I want to make one more comment about Polk and de-institutionalization. We modeled that after California - there was the belief that for people who had lived in large institutions for long periods of time, they would not be able to live in the community immediately. So



the Commonwealth essentially created 120-150 person mini institutions. But we were wrong - we were following a flawed model. I feel the same way about this. People don't need step-downs or to be supported in enclaves before they experience community support - people should go right into real work or real activities, with the right support.

In your typical workshop, the ratio is about 1:15. You cannot do community supports at a ratio of 1:15. Automatically things become more expensive, and that's where it becomes difficult. There is a spike in cost initially, but hopefully once folks know their jobs - I mean we'll be there as long as it takes - but hopefully as time goes on then we can phase out.

Ashlinn: ACHIEVA is known for its creative and innovative approaches to obstacles facing inclusion. What are you most excited about in this transition to more inclusive experiences?

M: Without a doubt, that folks are going to have real opportunities to live the life that they want to live and experience the things they'd like to experience.

S: I'd echo those comments. Another thing - we talk about choice. I think that the 570 people we're talking about, their choice has

been limited. I don't think all that many have been exposed to what's been available in the community. We've seen so many times that "behaviors" people have are actually indications that they aren't happy where they are. I'm excited for them to see what is available to them, many for the first time ever.

M: I hate that red herring of choice. That's what family members of people in institutions would use when we advocated for people living in the community. When I go to a restaurant, I can't choose to have something that isn't on the menu. And I just don't think that workshops and day programs should be on the menu anymore.

18 The absolute cap for what an individual using the P/FDS waiver can spend in a year is \$30,000. Numerous organizations have noted that this amount is insufficient to support individuals seeking community employment, and the Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs has plans to make this cap more flexible to support individuals seeking community employment through the waiver renewals in 2017.



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Important Agencies for Employment in Pennsylvania

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation - In Pennsylvania, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is responsible for supporting many different kinds of people find jobs - this includes people who have recently been released from prison, people with mental illnesses, and people with disabilities. Under WIOA, Pennsylvania's OVR has many increased responsibilities towards helping people with disabilities prepare for employment.

CareerLinks - CareerLinks are part of Pennsylvania's "workforce development system", which means that they are part of the system that helps people find jobs and learn skills for these jobs. CareerLinks have buildings all over the state where people can use the computer to search for and apply for jobs; get advice about employment; and practice job skills, like interviewing or creating a resume. Under WIOA, OVR is required to work with CareerLinks to help young people with disabilities prepare for and find community-based employment.

Workforce Investment Boards - Pennsylvania has a statewide Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and several local Workforce Investment Boards. People who are leaders and owners of businesses, elected officials, and education personnel are on the statewide and local WIBs. Their responsibility is to work with the state government and offer input on what kinds of jobs are in high demand, how to help students and adults get trained for these jobs, and offer ideas about how to improve employment for Pennsylvanians. Under WIOA, OVR will work with WIBs to improve employment for people with disabilities in Pennsylvania.

Local schools - Local schools are important partners in the employment of young adults with disabilities. Teachers and school personnel can help set the expectation that students with disabilities will have a career as adults and work with local employers and providers to offer pre-employment transition services to students. Under WIOA, schools and OVR have an important partnership in providing pre-employment transition services, meant to increase the community employment of young adults with disabilities.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Arc of Pennsylvania promotes the human rights of people with intellectual and development disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.