



***“Successes of Youth with Disabilities Transitioning
From School to Competitive Integrated Employment”***

September 26, 2018

The Delaware Division of Developmental Disabilities values persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, honors abilities, respects choice, and achieves possibilities. We work together to support healthy, safe and fulfilling lives. Currently, the Division supports 4799 individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Delaware’s Early Start to Supported Employment Model

2005-2013

Early Start to Supported Employment (ESSE) is a collaborative program sponsored by the Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the Delaware Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS), the Delaware Department of Education (DOE) and the Local School Districts. The ESSE philosophy is that all persons, regardless of disability, are able to be employed and be successful, active, participating members of their communities.

The ESSE program was developed as a way to connect students to supported employment services early and obtain competitive, integrated employment prior to exiting high school. It provides a more seamless transition and alleviates student and family stress during the difficult transition from school to an unknown adult life.

The ESSE program started as a pilot in 2005 with only ten students. The pilot operated for three years; ending in 2008 when ESSE became best practice for transition aged youth in Delaware. From 2005 through 2013 the number of students who engaged in ESSE totaled 320.

Under the original design, the ESSE process began at the start of the student’s “junior” year, or two years prior to exiting high school. The local school districts are encouraged to refer all students who are interested in working and have a disability. Once eligibility for DDDS and DVR is established, students and families are introduced to adult services and the supported employment process begins.

The constant communication among state and local agencies along with the supported employment service providers and families is one of the many strengths of the ESSE program. In addition, schools have access to specific information that can be included in a student's IEP to better align the career preparation activities they receive in school with what is needed to be successful in employment. The collaborative nature of this program is critical to facilitate full inclusion of employment and community life for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Data from this period reflected the following:

70.4% of ESSE participants obtained competitive employment

14.8% of ESSE participants were actively looking for competitive employment

14.8% of ESSE participants opted not to continue to pursue competitive employment

Although the original ESSE model was shown to be effective, we were still not supporting all youth who expressed a desire for competitive employment to realize their dream.

2014-2018

Building on both the successes and lessons learned from the original ESSE model and incorporating recommendations outlined in the 2012-2013 National Governors Association's Blueprint for Governors: A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities, Delaware designed and implemented a Medicaid Home and Community Based State Plan Option, Pathways to Employment (PTE), for youth aged 14-25 with a qualifying disability: IDD/visual impairment/physical disability and functional limitations. Youth who access services under the Pathways to Employment Program, have an expressed desire to obtain competitive employment in their community. The services included in this program were all designed with the needs of youth wanting to enter the adult workforce in mind.

Delaware's Pathways to Employment services include:

1) Employment Navigation: involves performing the initial assessments to develop employment plan. It connects individuals to employment services. It ensures employment supports and services are working together; monitors employment plan. Employment navigation is conflict-free and is provided by state staff.

2) Supported Employment: provides limited one-on-one supports to participants to help them get and maintain jobs or carry out self-employment in competitive, integrated settings

3) Career Exploration and Assessment: involves person-centered employment planning services, which help individuals identify a career plan. Identifies jobs that match interests, abilities and skills

4) Benefits Counseling: assists participants in understanding the impact of their wages on benefit programs. It helps them make informed choices and use work incentives and other tools to help achieve self-sufficiency through work

5) Financial Coaching: available to develop financial strategies identified through benefits counseling; to help understand tax credits; and to increase clients' economic self-sufficiency.

6) Personal Care Supports: provides assistance with activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, personal hygiene, transferring, toileting, skin care, eating, and mobility) needed by participants to get ready for work, while at the workplace, and/or in getting to and from work. The service can be provided by an agency or by an attendant hired and supervised by the participant.

7) Assistive Technology: allows for evaluations and assessments to identify the client's needs. Select, acquire and instruct on how to use device, etc. Increases independence in the workplace

8) Non-Medical Transportation: is available to participants who have no other means to get to work. Whenever possible, family members, friends, carpools, ride shares, or community agencies must be used

Since the implementation of Pathways to Employment in 2015, the program has served 630 individuals. Currently, there are 407 individuals receiving one or more available services.

Of the current 407 individuals receiving services:

89 are aged 14-17 years old:

- All of these youth are actively engaged in local education program and may also be enrolled in pre-employment transition services with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Services routinely accessed from Pathways are: Employment Navigation, Benefits Counseling, Financial Coaching, and Career Exploration and Assessment
- There are currently 13 PTE individuals who are currently employed in this age group (15%)

213 are aged 18-21 years old:

- Since Special Education Services are available through age 21, many of the youth in this group are actively engaged in a local education program. They are also actively supported by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation who provides: pre-employment transition services, supported employment services, or traditional employment services. Services routinely accessed from Pathways are: Employment Navigation, Benefits Counseling, Financial Coaching, and Supported Employment

- There are currently 34 PTE individuals that are currently employed in this age group (16%).

105 Individuals enrolled in PTE, 22-25 years old:

- All individuals in this group have graduated from school services. They are actively supported by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation who provides: supported employment services or traditional employment services.
- Services routinely accessed from Pathways are: Employment Navigation, Financial Coaching and Supported Employment
- There are currently 38 PTE individuals that are currently employed in this age group (36%).
- Although the program is available until age 25, many participants do not stay until they “age-out” of program eligibility. Once they obtain employment and have become stable at their new job, a plan to transition them into more appropriate services is developed.

Since October of 2015, 157 youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities enrolled in the Pathways to Employment Program have been supported to obtain competitive employment. Performance outcome data is being collected in order to assess the impact of earlier engagement in employment and pre-employment activities over a longer period of time.

Success Stories

JM

JM was referred to Pathways in April of 2016 by his DVR Counselor as he had not experienced any lasting success in finding gainful employment. He had already exited from the school system and DVR was his sole resource at that time. JM has had two successful job placements, with the latter being a dream job as an Usher at a local Movie Theater. Although JM currently uses Paratransit services, JM has recently begun participating in Travel Training in order to learn how to use public transportation. Public transportation is a more integrated method of transportation, more readily available, and less costly. JM plans to leverage this new found skill to seek supplemental employment and become more financially independent. JM’s family has expressed gratitude at having access to the Benefits Counseling through Pathways as up to that point they had very little luck navigating the Social Security processes. Since JM’s enrollment in PTE he has not only experienced the pride and dignity of employment but he has also grown in his ability to advocate for himself.

NG

NG was referred to Pathways through a post-secondary training program, Career and Life Skill Certificate Program, through the Center of Disability Studies, University of Delaware. NG stated to his Employment Navigator that he had no idea what was possible for him, including post-secondary training and education, and was working part time in food service at the time. Career Exploration and Assessment services provided NG with the means to explore career opportunities based upon NG's strengths, abilities, preferences and talents. NG is now an employee at Bank of America progressing from earning \$8.25 as a starting wage to \$13 per hour. NG is using Financial Coaching to increase financial literacy: budgeting and saving for things such as an apartment and a car.

JL

JL is an example of how the service of Targeted Case Management can make a difference in outcomes. JL's Employment Navigator through monitoring outcomes and services was able to advocate on behalf of JL to keep services aligned with his Employment Plan, ultimately resulting in a higher paying role that aligned with JL's goals and skills. JL was enrolled in Pathways November of 2016 and was dis-enrolled August of 2017 as he had become employed full time at a local Financial Institution, earning a starting wage of \$10, with full medical benefits through his employer. The family had access to Benefits Counseling to help them better understand about work incentives and ultimately decrease the need for public assistance.

Leveraging State and Federal Legislation, Regulation

Since 2012 a number of legislative and regulatory initiatives have helped boost our local efforts.

As previously mentioned, the 2012-2013 NGA Blueprint for Governors: A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities elevated the discussion to a national audience.

Also in 2012, Delaware passed the Employment First Act: establishing Employment as the first and priority service offered to persons with a disability.

In 2014, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Home and Community Based Services Final Rule. Requires Medicaid-funded HCBS programs provide people with disabilities with opportunities to live, work, and receive services in integrated, community settings where they can fully engage in community life.

Also in 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act was signed into law. Directs the provision of pre-employment transition services for transition-aged youth and makes clear the expectation that transition aged youth are offered and experience a robust exploration of competitive integrated employment.

The effect of these legislative and regulatory initiatives Employment First messaging, can be seen by reviewing Delaware's National Core Indicator (NCI) data. National Core Indicators is a

collaborative effort between the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS) and the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI). The purpose of the program, which began in 1997, is to support NASDDDS member agencies to gather a standard set of performance and outcome measures that can be used to track their own performance over time, to compare results across states, and to establish national benchmarks.

- Adult Consumer Survey 2014-2015
 - 71% of adults enrolled in services with DDDS stated they did not have a paid community job, but would like a job in the community
- Adult Consumer Survey 2015-2016
 - 68% of adults enrolled in services with DDDS stated they did not have a paid community job, but would like a job in the community
- Adult Consumer Survey 2016-2017
 - 73% of adults enrolled in services with DDDS stated they did not have a paid community job, but would like a job in the community

The demand for paid integrated employment by Delawareans with IDD has remained high. Given the level of interest and demand for integrated employment, Delaware is redoubling our efforts to ensure we are providing every opportunity to assist individuals to achieve their employment goals.

Some of the efforts Delaware has implemented are to build provider capacity by helping the providers to increase their ability to support individuals with complex support needs, partnering with community employers to better understand their unmet needs, and increasing the enrollment of students with disabilities through career and technical education.

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