

# Expanding Employment Opportunities in Pennsylvania

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Conference

Baltimore Maryland

# What We've Been Doing in PA.

- Targeting waiver and state only funds to achieve employment and community inclusive outcomes – 1,100 youth in the last two years at a cost of \$20M
- Ensuring that employment is considered first - for certain groups of people
- Offering training and technical assistance
- Studying employment and adult service outcomes, characteristics and satisfaction

# What Else We've Been Doing....

- Working in collaboration with other agencies
- Promoting access to community resources
- Supporting communities of employment practice
- Holding county based administrative entities and State operated ICFs/MR accountable

# What We've Discovered

- It takes more than 'rah-rah' and 'pretty pilots'
- Employment first policy must be tied to standard statewide practices where details really matter
- Our employment message needs to be inclusive and consistent going forward
- Accountability to employment outcomes is the real test
- Supported employment specialists need to have specific skills and abilities
- We don't use the technology and proven approaches like we should
- State policy makers, educators, families and practitioners have different points of view that are reflected in how they respond to change
- Systemic quality improvement requires accurate performance related data
- Other eyes on the prize, like SELN and advisory groups, really help in designing action steps and priorities
- Universal buy-in is probably not a worthwhile endeavor, but opportunities for buy-in must always be there

# Take-aways for leadership: One's humble opinions

- State adult service systems must take the lead in closing the gap between what is known and done
- Policy, networking and planning won't mean much if resources, practices and accountability aren't in place
- This change is so doable, but it will take courage and persistence to be successful
- Employment is today's single greatest challenge to realizing self-determination, accommodation and inclusion for people with disabilities
- Know your priorities and exercise the authority you have

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