

Employment Works Task Force Meeting Minutes 8/27/2013

Opening comments-Secretary Gill: This is the second meeting of the taskforce. There are three meetings scheduled, and it will be determined whether we need the fourth. Task force members should have received a copy of the minutes and had chance to look at those. Materials needed for the state to reimburse you are provided. Slight change to minutes was requested by Gloria Pluimer (Black Hills Works to Black Hills Special Services on page 3).

Introductions-Secretary Gill: [introductions completed]. Today, we will do presentations including two mayors who joined us as guests regarding policies they have made in their city. We will also talk about data and statistics, discuss priority areas, what's working and what isn't working, and prioritize what we need to address regarding the low employment rate of people with disabilities in South Dakota. The third meeting will be to discuss strategies to improve our situation in South Dakota and will conclude with our recommendations.

Meeting 1 Recap-Secretary Gill: The first meeting included presentations from Department of Human Services, Department of Labor and Regulation, Department of Education, and Department of Social Services regarding what is already happening in South Dakota. Sometimes what we do is dictated by fund sources and regulations, and sometimes it's just the way we've been doing things. Task force members brainstormed at the end of the day to identify "what's working" and "what's not working". We need honest and frank discussions in these meetings so task force members should not censor themselves.

Presentations-Secretary Gill: two mayors were invited today to present on disability policy initiatives and hiring practices in their cities. Sam Kooiker, Mayor of Rapid City, and Mike Levsen, Mayor of Aberdeen have done work on hiring people with disabilities.

Sam Kooiker- Sam was a client and counselor of Vocational Rehabilitation services, and now someone who has an impact on policies regarding hiring people with disabilities. As mayor and on the city council in Rapid City, Sam focused on disability issues and having an ADA transition plan. Rapid City didn't have one when he started, and now they have a robust plan for

curb cuts and access in residential neighborhoods. The Mayor's Committee for Employment of People with Disabilities has policy discussions and an annual ADA picnic, which Senator Thune spoke at. Sam had a handout of a policy implemented in 1992 by the state legislature and Department of Human Services that is easy to understand and administer; he believes every city and state government should implement. If you have a disability as certified by a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, have a substantial impediment to employment, and meet minimum requirements, you will get an interview. This policy works, so encourage implementing this in your communities now. Rapid City is working on becoming a Fair Employment Practices Agency (FEPA) that Sioux Falls is implementing to handle EEOC complaints to help people with disabilities. It's good for Class A and Class B cities to do because they are larger cities and have the infrastructure to handle charges.

Stigma is a very serious issue, especially with mental illness. It is a responsibility of this task force to be upbeat about tools in our tool box that are unpolished, like the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). There is more the legislature can do but there is also more we can do to fully implement hiring people with disabilities to become a reality.

Mike Levsen- had heart surgery 13 months ago after insurance company dropped him, turns 65 next year, and he feels it is a matter of time before he is in one of the disability categories. When elected as mayor in 2004, Mike had no experience dealing with disability issues. There was an existing mayor's committee doing "Disability for a Day" activities. In this experience and checking accessibility in stores, he ran into someone on the street who he knew that didn't acknowledge him in the wheelchair. They looked right through him and didn't see him as a person.

The Mayor's Committee on Accessibility is breaking down barriers. One of the activities is Barrier Awareness Day, where business people are invited to events to demonstrate barriers and what can be done to make those accessibility issues better. In the springtime, they invite 4th graders from all schools into The School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and go through stations to experience different disabilities. Eric Vetter uses a wheelchair as result of accident and the 4th graders had question and answer time with him. Aberdeen also has an awards event for employers, employees, and for those who have done things for people with disabilities. The monthly committee meeting is enjoyable because this committee is comprised of

people with disabilities and providers working with people with disabilities and these people are always positive and fun. Committee members upon initiation will inspect a business and will give them a sticker when they pass the inspection for accessibility.

Presentation Sisters College does a lot of work and is a great resource, as well as Aspire. Planning and Zoning Department attitude has changed and now not only enforces rules, but also gets things done to help people. Planning & Zoning staff now reach out and are initiators to make sure short cuts don't happen and are enthused with providers that assist people with disabilities, including the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Division of Rehabilitation Services staff. In their budget, they allocate \$100,000 per year to cut curbs and plan to be totally accessible within 10 years.

In employment, they contract with Aspire to do custodial services in city hall. For some levels of disability, it takes time and money to do this for some people with severe disabilities, as the people hired require a supervisor with them all day. With other employers, most crucial factor in any success of getting people hired is finding someone in business with good intentions. Kessler's grocery store got award last year as Employer of the Year. They make accommodations and benefit from it, but it comes down to Mr. Kessler's personal commitment and intentions. Human Resources staff say incentives are fine, but they are finding employers who are committed to doing the right thing. There are high performing people with disabilities.

Transportation is key. Aberdeen doesn't have wheelchair access to public transportation on weekends and the city doesn't have money for it. A local cab company tried it but it was expensive to keep people and equipment certified so now a person has to pay the ambulance service at least \$20 to get a ride on the weekends. The city continues to work on solving this issue. Affirmative Action in 1960's and 70's became a burden to some. It isn't necessarily universally positive, but need to go back to that term to "affirmatively act" to treat people with disabilities equal to everyone and decide to make the extra accommodations. Whatever we can do with this task force to encourage that, find the right employers and work with them to get the results.

Q&A time: Julie Benz: Working with mayoral committees, transportation is always an issue. Is there something else challenging as far as gaining or seeking employment aside from that? Mike: People with disabilities are usually the last one hired or first one fired and they encounter employers who fear they are stuck with someone they can't fire and they feel that resistance, even if unspoken.

Mayor Kooiker: Stigma that employer needs to break a paradigm of hiring people with disabilities. Sam worked at Golden West call center and with a remote desk top, was able to allow people to work from home. This worked well. There is still a stigma of working from home and perception they are less productive and lazy. The city is being more progressive and accommodating for people, and is working on issues regarding transportation, service animals, and pedestrians. Rapid City took receivership of new transit busses that have more accommodations for people with disabilities, so they can now ride the fixed route system. There is continued discussion on need for improving the aging Barnett arena that has 406 ADA violations. There is a need to have a transition plan so once you have the mindset that it is a moral responsibility to help, there can be action.

Mayor Levsen: Changed to a softer, less confrontational approach to hold businesses accountable for ADA. Sit down with them face to face and explain benefits of accessibility.

Secretary Gill-The National Governor's Association (NGA) Summit in Washington was a focus on employment of people with disabilities. Secretary Roberts, Governor, Governor's office staff and DHS staff went there as a team and a representative from Walgreens was at their table and they have done high level work to hire people with disabilities.

Don Wiltgen represents Walgreen's at the local level. The distribution center was opened for Walgreen's in South Carolina. About 30-40% of people there have a disability. It expanded to four centers South Carolina and Connecticut are the most efficient centers they have. They now have this initiative in all 20 distribution centers with goal that 20% of all employees have disabilities, and are extending that to 10% of all positions in new local stores. The willingness to work with providers is what made it work at the local level.

Secretary Gill: Other initiatives from businesses?

Cindy Walsh of Dakota King, Inc.—The people we hire are dedicated people, always willing to come in on the fly, and come with great attitudes. We have three restaurants that hire people with disabilities and they are an asset. SD Achieve helps train them.

Jennifer Erickson of Camille's: Two factors that can be obstacles: we don't have connections to find people with disabilities and we don't have time to look for them. You need to make the connection and find the resources when you need them.

Julie Benz: Avera McKennan is doing Project Search and proud to be part of it, and have hired people with disabilities in the past. Project Search allowed them to partner with different job coaches and VR counselors, which can be overwhelming. When it became one partner, it opened doors. Avera brought in a job coach and educator and found that staff was open to trying it. They currently don't have enough students to fill all the needs. Modifications resulted in making things easier for everyone. Being open to partnering with agencies makes it less scary to hire people with disabilities.

BH Corp-Darin Seeley: Black Hills Corp had a security office in Lincoln, NE and was never satisfied with the level of service so moved it to Rapid City this past winter and partnered with BH Works, who had contract with Ellsworth that was eliminated. They found their work was similar, contracted with them and have found much less turnover. They fit well into the culture and are doing a fantastic job. They want to take this approach further and hire people instead of contracting. Accommodations were pretty easy; they changed a few cubes, tore down a wall, and purchased larger screens. The initial reaction was that people with disabilities can't do that job, so Black Hills Corp had to make sure details were there due to regulations. Seeing them work at Ellsworth changed the attitudes, and seeing other employers do it helped them make the decision much more easily.

Sen. Rampelberg: He was a part of the effort to keep Ellsworth Air Force Base open. It's a good idea to look at companies to do some things and extend it into other companies.

Secretary Gill: We are looking at a broad spectrum of people with disabilities to include mental illness, physical disabilities, developmental disabilities, and sensory disabilities. A lot of resources are available but keep in mind we are keeping a broad look at things.

Gary Isenberg: At Larson Manufacturing, we don't actively look for people but they find us.

Julie Benz: Can we look at Veterans organizations to support hiring veterans with disabilities?

Gaye Mattke: DRS and SBVI work side by side with VA VR to assist veterans with disabilities.

Shelly Pfaff: Small business is where people work in South Dakota. Suggested that the Coalition have a relationship with South Dakota Retailers to train them, answer some of those questions, and relieve some of those concerns.

Elaine Roberts: It is important to start with families earlier with the message that there will be an expectation that their children will work. Attitude follows action. Whatever we put together, need to think about policies and procedures and what works for individuals.

Julie Benz: Suggestion- have navigators that help people navigate through the healthcare system. As a parent of a person with a disability, one of the most difficult parts is trying to navigate the system. As an employer, trying to navigate through all the services available can be overwhelming. Having a navigator for employers and have a navigator for persons with a disability would be helpful.

Sen. Rempelberg: Try to find a way to set up a preference for the state of South Dakota in hiring and bidding on contracts. Government provides incentives- could use a preference and incentive idea for South Dakota. Employers who have initiatives and put them on agendas for what works can make a big difference. The big challenge is coming up with a mechanism to incentivize employers to hire people with disabilities. Who do we have in the state who navigates already?

Statistics presentation-Eric Weiss: Information presented here was designed to better define the problem of the low employment rate of people with disabilities. Employment rates in South Dakota are higher than the national average. Hearing loss has highest employment rate of disabilities while those with an Independent Living disability have lowest rate.

Lyle Cook: Traditionally, people on reservations lived on hunting, fishing and other similar types of activities and the Rehabilitation Services Administration considered this type of work a successful rehabilitation.

Kim Malsam-Rysdon: Employment rates of people with mental illness. Last meeting, it was mentioned that the employment rate of all people is about 41%. Individuals with mental illness have an employment rate half of that at 23%. When surveyed, two-thirds says they want to work. Supported Employment could help them become employed- for those with severe mental illness receiving long term supports, there is only 2% nationwide who get supported employment services. Reasons? There are financial barriers for supported employment through Medicaid because of barriers with Medicaid providing those funds for mental illness. Usually the only option is for support of those with developmental disabilities. Those with mental illness have to rely on VR or natural supports; the lack of funding for long term supports contributes to low employment rates for individuals with mental illness.

Alan Solano of BMS-In Rapid City, employment rate runs 35-40% of those with Severely Persistently Mentally Ill (SPMI) at BMS.

Task Force Discussion:

Consensus on top priority areas: The top priority areas document was developed to capture the brainstorming session we had at the end of the last meeting. What's working and what's not working right now? This information was put into four general categories. These four categories are not prioritized yet. That would be up to this group to decide to prioritize. Categories are acceptable to the group.

Julie Benz-Three aspects to consider are employer, person with a disability, and supports needed to make this work. These aspects could be addressed in all areas.

Gloria Pluimer: Strategy- a navigator type position is needed to increase the bottom line for employers. Bring in job analysts to determine what they are doing and whether there some duties that could be re-arranged. Navigator (job analyst) would be recommended to make things more efficient.

Ideas to address the top priority areas

Strategies: What are some ideas that we should be noting?

Shelly Pfaff supported Julie's idea of how to design this in terms of 3 areas: employers, people with disabilities, and support systems (education, family, state agencies). There are funding options and supports as a model to move forward.

Julie Benz: Could segment out by rural/urban, or by disability.

All three could use same strategies. Biomedical engineering at SDSU could fit into this.

Wendy Parent-Johnson: Technical support may be needed to look at policies and interpretation of policies. Funding across Medicaid Waiver, Division of Developmental Disabilities, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Division of Mental Health should be considered and a survey or evaluation system to find out what the needs are.

How to measure success? Benchmarks are needed as the task force moves forward.

Darin Seeley-Contract with people as providers to be job coaches and how we structure that system to get more bang for the buck.

Jennifer Erickson-It's confusing to get contacted by five job coaches from five different places so it's key to have a contact person who determines what the needs are. Camille's has a good relationship with Southeastern Behavioral Health in Sioux Falls.

Need for business training to understand and talk to businesses in those terms.

Julie Benz: Training opportunities using technology are available in the state.

Rick Disanto: Chamber of Commerce brown bag sessions will provide information and training on resources of hiring people with disabilities, so this could be a strategy for any community to educate employers. We could also use a community club in smaller towns for this.

Secretary Gill: We need to create a culture of expectation as youth. Some sort of information packet that children and parents could look at starting at a young age with options to move forward.

Samuel Jennings: Creating an Employment Summit in this state, starting from the bottom, would improve communication, collaboration and education of employers.

Don Hagggar-Strategy: a mobile unit with Dept. of Human Services, Community Service Providers, Division of Mental Health, and Dept. of Social Services that goes to various communities to share information and do outreach, to market to employers and people in need.

Senator Rampelberg: Involve more people and do surveys to determine what people have for skills and interests and what employers would be attracted to and create a process to put them together.

Kim Malsam-Rysdon: Is there some data about what employers in the state want? Could we leverage some things already available and not have to recreate something?

Shelly Pfaff: We need to be honest that there will still be some people that will choose not to work so need to be careful about that, but not lower our expectations.

Deb Docken: Something sustainable longer term that continues to focus on this issue that collaborates with employers, agencies, and families to always be moving forward.

The Top Priority Areas broken down into four sections was discussed with feedback from the workgroup on additions and deletions. Revisions will be made to the document based on these recommendations.

Public Dialogue-Julie Briggs: Working with BRN and as the parent of an 18 year old son with a disability, she appreciates the educational piece. Great outline so far.

Joanne Haase, Director of Mission Services for Goodwill Industries: Served over 1,800 people in South Dakota with job training and VR services in nine stores, providing Work Adjustment Training in Sioux Falls, Sioux City and Rapid City. Have connection centers (internet connection sites) for anyone who has a barrier. Goodwill is interested in being part of these conversations and collaborating with the public and private sector. Goodwill helped 600 people to get jobs in SD.

Patty Kuchlitsch-CSD: This group is on right track. Success stories are powerful tools that can be utilized.

Donna Leslie-SD Retailers Association: This is a very important issue and we want to be part of solution to educate employers. She met with South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities to put together a webinar and news articles and website to get stories out there so businesses know what is happening.

Senator Heineman: His brother was featured in 1980 as being gainfully employed in a nursing home. He was gainfully employed for 34 years and is now on state retirement plan.

Thank you for all your participation and hard work! Next meeting is September 16 10:00AM to 3:00PM at the same location.