

## **Employment Works Task Force Meeting Minutes 9/16/2013**

### Opening comments

Now that the taskforce has identified priority areas and made a variety of recommendations on what's needed and barriers, we need to focus on prioritizing and action items to move toward recommendations for the report to the Governor.

Department of Human Services Secretary Laurie Gill is now the Commissioner of Human Resources, but will see this project through to the end. We need a statewide commitment and recommendations to improve the status of employment for people with disabilities. If we can get far enough along today for action steps for the report, we can decide then if we need to continue through email, or if we need a 4<sup>th</sup> meeting that has been tentatively scheduled for October 18.

### Introductions & Recap

When reviewing notes from the last two meetings, we found some common themes: navigators, service teams, interaction with business, urban vs. rural, Social Security disincentives, and that we should not recreate models that already work. Members of the taskforce contacted Commissioner Gill with suggestions of topics needed for consideration of models when we address action items for priority areas. We will start to take a look at recommendations and top priority areas identified by the taskforce this afternoon and move forward with action steps and recommendations.

Common themes in reviewing documents are a breakdown of main priority areas. Take a look at these and see what we can potentially have in a document based on the top priorities. Discussion of navigators to help people that need services make their way through a sometimes fragmented system, interaction with business, urban vs. rural, services teams, social security disincentives. Refer to the Blue Print for Governors by National Governors Association, looking at what state government can do. Right now, state government is putting together this group. As Commissioner of HR, this will put the state of SD up as a model employer in terms of hiring decisions and policy making to put departments in a position to hire more people with disabilities.

### Presentations

The first presentation described the Business Resource Network – Several members from the Sioux Falls Business Resource Network Board of Directors are on this taskforce (Jennifer Erickson, Terry Rist, and Julie Benz)-this model is working in Sioux Falls and they are replicating that in the Rapid City area. We want to look at this, get into details, and potentially model parts of this in other parts of the state.

Business Resource Network, Julie Briggs, BRN Executive Director and Julie Benz, BRN Board Member agreed to share their approach for addressing employment of people with disabilities. The mission of the BRN- to work with businesses, employers, employees, job seekers, and providers in our community to collaborate to enhance and improve employment in Sioux Falls. The goal of this model is to work with everyone in the community who has anything to do with disabilities, but also meet one on one with employers to educate them and act as a bridge to provide support to employers when hiring people with disabilities.

Julie attends monthly SHRM (Human Resource Managers) meetings, presents to community groups and organizations, acts as liaison between employees and employers, and assists area schools on transition-cluster sites working with special education teachers to identify businesses that would be possible for them to work with. She also attends bi-monthly provider meetings to discuss hiring and struggles providers have. Disability mentoring day is a day where businesses are matched with people with disabilities interested in those careers to give opportunity to see if that is something they would really like to do, and expose employers to people with disabilities. They have a Disability Friendly sticker program for employers to let the community know they are disability friendly.

The BRN approaches employers with benefits to their business and educating them. “Spread the Word to End the Word” through Special Olympics, educating the community to not use the word “retard”, helps business and educates them to treat others right and be respectful. Providing disability etiquette training is part of this.

During the NDEAM (National Disability Employment Awareness Month) event, BRN presented a panel of employers and Board of BRN members to talk about the Americans with Disabilities Act. They did a survey of participants, and found they wanted information and education about mental health in the workplace.

Awareness activities the BRN participates in include job fairs, social media (Facebook), website (70% increase in website hits over the last few months). Julie provides educational opportunities and participates as a member of boards and committees. Disability Awareness Commission assists with doing mock interviews.

She has found they need to provide more than education to employers. They need partnerships and collaboration, navigation for the employer, and support of a parent or person with a disability. Success stories instill confidence in all parties, which makes BRN successful. It's about relationships. How to use this model statewide? Would take more work, but don't see why we can't do this throughout the state. BRN PowerPoint is on the DHS website at: <http://dhs.sd.gov>

Shelly Pfaff -Dept. of Labor and Regulation does some interviewing skills, resume writing and mock interviews. VR does job carving. How do you not repeat what others are already doing? She is concerned about duplicating services already available. Julie has made some referrals to VR when appropriate, and some of these participants were not VR clients.

Legislator Bruce Rampelberg-Is there a process of trying to match people up with jobs? Julie Briggs-We work with DRS, SBVI and other organizations and refer consumers who are appropriate. For identifying jobs, as part of provider meetings, they will also share this information.

Alan Solano-The SHRM chapter could be a good linkage to identify employers, so would want to tie in with local SHRM's. Julie-The NDEAM event in Sioux Falls was successful, but once BRN presented to SHRM, they saw an increase in employers participating in NDEAM events.

Disability Employment Initiative (DEI)—Gloria Pluimer, taskforce member presented on the Department of Labor and Regulation Disability Employment Initiative or DEI. The DEI is modeled after the Disability Program Navigator Initiative and focuses on hiring staff with expertise in disability and workforce issues. The grants also support extensive collaboration across multiple workforce and disability service systems in each state, including vocational rehabilitation services, mental health and developmental disability agencies, Medicaid Infrastructure Grant-supported activities, independent living centers, business leadership networks, and

other community and nonprofit organizations. It has a West River focus. Keep in mind for recommendations where this can go.

DEI is jointly funded by Dept. of Labor agencies, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and Employment and Training Administration. Goal is to improve education, training and employment opportunities of youth and adults with disabilities who are unemployed and underemployed. Grants of \$63 million awarded for this initiative in 23 states with additional \$18 million for additional projects. South Dakota is one of five states with a youth focus. South Dakota receives almost \$2 million over a three year period and this project covers seven counties in the Black Hills region with a priority of youth. It is projected jobs in South Dakota will grow by 7% but workers will grow by only 2.1%. DLR staff this week will meet and talk about services for people with disabilities with plans to go statewide. Need to develop lasting projects and systemic change. DLR is committed to this initiative with a goal for 200 participants to have an employment plan, and see a 20% increase of people with disabilities working with DLR.

Impacts in the Black Hills: A 19% increase in WIA enrollment, increase from 51 to 72 participants in the last year working with Wagner-Peyser services (basic employment services in DLR) and outreach provided to over 100 young adults ages 18-24. Staff are being trained on providing services to people with disabilities so DLR can assist and support them. DLR can no longer work in a silo and is now receiving more staff training on disability issues.

Emphasis: Integrated Resource Team (IRT) is created to support individuals and their employment goals. This resource team, led by the participant, works to coordinate services and supports that they need. Programs blend and braid their services and products. This IRT changes as needs of the jobseeker changes.

Guideposts for Success is a set of five key career and education interventions to make a positive difference (school based experiences, career preparation, youth leadership development, connecting activities, and family involvement). Representatives of SD DEI Partnership Committee formed the Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills, which also includes private industry. Job carving helps the bottom line and there is a need for business model training for those providers who approach employers to hire people with disabilities.

The Teacher Toolkit is a high school level class teaching employability for special education students. The curriculum showcases products and services through Dept. of Labor, such as disclosing disability, Skills to Pay the Bills, and FDIC Money Smart.

SD Resources online is an internet based program that lists services and resources available from agencies and service providers. It is customized for the individual, and has personalized resource maps based on employment goals.

Career Development Forum at Western Dakota Technical Institute provides pre-employment skills training, team building, importance of work, interviewing skills, resume development, and various training and disclosure videos. The South Dakota DEI website is [www.SDDEI.org](http://www.SDDEI.org).

Kim Malsam-Rysdon-For the Career Development Forum, young people complete an application process and special education transition teachers make the referral to the forum. They pull in VR, Disability Coordinators, etc. The criteria for the forum is for a student to have documented disability and ability to be independently employed at some time. Some referrals come in from Project Skills and special education teachers.

DEI is in the last year of this grant, what are thoughts of life after the grant and modeling this elsewhere? Marcia Hultman-The plan is to make this sustainable, with training being conducted for all staff and processes being formalized.

Alan Solano- Is there an analysis tool available that employers can use to identify non-primary job tasks that another employee could perform that would permit employees to efficiently carry out their primary duties?

Julie Benz takes more consideration of lower turnover of positions through Project Search as more beneficial than taking certain tasks away from professionals as part of job carving. Develop more formalized analytical process for employers to critique the job and look at opportunities for changes that improve their bottom line. Darin Seeley stated he would be open to having someone look at his business that he has a rapport with. It may be difficult for employers to approach DLR out of fear of oversight and regulation. He could see it as a benefit of having BRN do that.

Senator Rampelberg-How does DEI measure success? Gloria Pluimer-DLR needs to take a look at what they consider success at a federal level, which currently is 40 hours per week of employment only, and we know there can be success in employment, even if it is less than full time work.

Brenda Smith-Are there students with intellectual disabilities in this program due to ability to work independently? Gloria-This program has had several success stories of people with intellectual disabilities. (DEI power point is on the DHS website)

Benefits Management–Brooke Lusk, Black Hills Special Services Cooperative - addressed a reoccurring theme: Social Security Disincentives that affect people with disabilities and their options for employment.

Disincentives-Goal is to assist beneficiaries to maximize their earning potential and achieve greater self-sufficiency through employment. There are 19,195 disabled workers receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and 13,151 Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries under age 65. Benefits Specialists provide benefits planning and counseling services. There are three full time Benefits Specialists located in Pierre, Sioux Falls and Rapid City.

The South Dakota Benefits Specialist Network was funded by SSA, and then the Division of Rehabilitation Services continued funding this after SSA ended funding. However, SSA did reinstate this funding in August 2013 with two years funding for it. Approximately 65% of referrals are VR consumers. Benefits Specialists undergo certification with knowledge of SSI, SSDI, work incentives, Medicaid, Medicare and other public programs and provide referral services, benefits analysis and planning and long term monitoring and follow along services.

The benefits analysis is a lengthy report that explains how work impacts their benefits. They provide trainings for Community Support Providers (CSPs), mental health staff, and other providers have been trained to inform these staff about the myths currently out there regarding employment and benefits, but the focus is mainly on providing this training directly to beneficiaries.

South Dakota has the second highest percentage of blind and disabled recipients who work. Of those receiving SSI and SSDI, there is \$28 million provided to beneficiaries annually, most of it coming from tax dollars in South Dakota. South Dakota ranks second in those returning to work and no longer receiving SSI payments, but who still receive Medicaid (1619b participants).

Vocational Rehabilitation clients who received Benefits Specialist services had a higher success rate of employment, higher weekly earnings, more hours worked per week and higher average hourly earnings. Almost 28% of beneficiaries evaluated wanted to reduce their benefits and 16% wanted to stop receiving benefits altogether when evaluated by SSA in September 2011.

Beneficiaries with SSI and SSDI CAN work. Within SSA, work incentives encourage people to return to work by increasing self-sufficiency. Many people meet the SSA definition of disability but are working and don't receive benefits. Work incentives have improved, with the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 as the largest work incentive program.

Many perceived barriers are benefits myths. Fear of losing benefits or healthcare (biggest reason), Dr. diagnosed them with disability and told them they can't work, and concern disability will progress. SSDI beneficiaries either get a check or no check based on wages, SSI recalculates a check monthly, and both allow deductions (work incentives) to lower countable income. Healthcare: SSDI beneficiaries receive Medicare and Medicare can be extended for up to 8 ½ years after no longer receiving SSDI. There is a formula that calculates this for each person. The Part B premium is currently about \$100. SSI has 1619 (b) if cash payment goes to \$0, they can still receive Medicaid and earn up to \$34,857 per year in wages. MAWD (Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities) eligibility is for monthly earnings of \$4,850 in 2013.

SSI is below federal poverty rate. When working, they pay taxes, have more resources to participate in their community, it widens social networks, creates more choice and increased self-worth. The SD Benefits Specialist Program provides services to about 110 consumers per year and they have never had to turn anyone down. Legislator Paula Hawks expressed surprise that there are 32,000 South Dakotans receiving disability benefits,

and only 330 per year are accessing Benefits Specialist Services, so there is a concern that there isn't a waiting list, and there isn't more people knocking at their door. There are limited funds for outreach aside from a brochure and referrals from vocational rehabilitation, community service providers and mental health providers. Social security beneficiaries are provided a toll free number to contact them, and local SSA offices make referral to their office as well. Provider training is also provided around the state regarding some of those basic services and incentives, so CSP staff can be answering some of those questions.

There is HCBS co-pay when earnings are over \$400 for consumers accessing that fund source to pay for some of their services. If they earn less, they don't have to pay that cost share. Dan Lusk, Director of Division of Developmental Disabilities, explains the waiver renewal has included public forums where some participants expressed they have found this to be a disincentive. The Division is currently pulling together information to see how many people are impacted by that. Not every single person accessing those services is required to pay a co-pay. There is a formula that calculates this.

Affordable Care Act-a hindrance or helpful? Medicaid expansion is being looked at in South Dakota. Self-referrals can receive services through Benefits Specialists free of charge.

Career Development Team (CDT), Beth Haug – Beth asked to describe she and her son's experience working with a Career Development Team. Although Beth and her son Dillon's career development team was supported through the Freedom to Work Project, this approach can be implemented through a variety of approaches. Handouts were provided describing the Career Development Team approach.

CDT is a combination of VR services that exist, and relationships with other individuals in their community with Dan Rounds of Freedom to Work project and Shelly Pfaff of SD Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities through the Freedom to Work Project under the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant. They were the first to use it in western South Dakota, as the program was initiated in the Sioux Falls area. There are six meetings maximum with one meeting over lunch hour per month. They identified team participants made up of business people from the community and who Dillon felt safe and comfortable with, which included a realtor, a self-employed person,



business owner, two business managers and one business and project developer as well as vocational rehabilitation, a facilitator, parents and his brother. Job ideas included fish hatchery, Destination Spearfish, BHSU campus library, Grace Bulloch Public Library and A'viands Food Service. Dillon got two part time jobs at BHSU as a Customer Service Rep in Athletics, and Busser at Student Union Cafeteria. Thanks to the Career Development Team, Dillon was able to change careers and increase his hours and job satisfaction.

### Recommendations

Top priorities from Matrix of Recommendations (attached):

Shelly Pfaff-Shelly has been hearing from board members and other people with disabilities with concerns of what will come out of this group in such a short time. There are concerns that people with disabilities haven't been well represented on this committee, and may see some dissatisfaction from people after make recommendations.

Monica Burgess-Next step may be to make this more global to include more people with disabilities. Those with intellectual disabilities may not be represented by comments made here. DEI is an example of a service that may not benefit someone with intellectual disabilities who needs long term supports.

Wendy Parent-Johnson-Strategically, we need to look at how we can address areas of data collection, sub-committees and task force representation, to be more comprehensive in addressing all the different people with disabilities.

Kim Malsam-Rysdon-We need to make these objectives outcome-based so we can measure success, making it long term so measuring will help determine where to go in the future.

Senator Rampelberg - Many here are involved in state agencies and others are providers. Who is going to do these tasks? We may be looking at a problem that isn't here. We can always improve, but it seems like things are improving already. We need to move on in the direction we are going, with a lot of work for some people, but maybe we can find more funding or education protocol for them.

Commissioner Gill-This has value. We have an opportunity to put something in front of the Governor. We may reposition our focus and make sure we have options for direction.

Julie Benz-This is a diverse group of people that can share what they know. These people have passion about people with disabilities. We have a lot of opportunity to educate, find out what is needed, but foremost maintain relationships and what everyone brings to the table. There is a huge gap from an education perspective. General education as a goal under Section 1 is to educate the public and employers to demystify disability and remove attitudinal barriers. Consolidate and navigate in the electronic mode, linking employers, etc. as part of a one stop shop. Brenda Smith-Training to develop self-employment as an option is needed. Support for business plans and someone with that background to determine if it's a viable business plan.

Shelly-There are people who can't do what they use to do for employment due to their new disability or a progression of their disability becoming more significant, and agencies who have been working with them aren't able to help them are coming up with road blocks, and this group of people needs to be represented and considered. There needs to be a development of flexible support systems to help people with disabilities who are progressing in their disability. Is inflexibility due to an agency "always having done it that way" or because of tight policies?

Darin Seeley-Take the approach of a team coming together talking about options for a person. Develop partnerships between VR and other employment agencies.

Alan Solano - Expand on CDT model and provide that to those who need it. Shelly-The key to success is the facilitator being the person with a disability or person not connected to agencies.

Wendy Parent-Johnson - There is a concern that there is a focus on transition youth in the bullets of the matrix. Recommended that the focus be on all people with disabilities, and not focus on age, as there are a lot of adults who need services.

Julie Benz-BRN is in its infancy, but the task force's goal sounds like a lot of what the BRN is hoping to do with employers, state agencies, etc.

## Commissioner Gill

- Development of flexible systems
- Look at all disabilities
- All ages
- Wraparound Teams
- Collaboration
- Network development

We can take this grid to fill out today and send out to you as a living breathing document. Financial disincentives and asset limits are a concern heard about regularly. Benefits Specialist services and providing more outreach so people know about their services with increased availability of benefits counseling to everyone. Myths about benefits and work come from community support provider staff, teachers, parents, lawyers, doctors, etc. General knowledge needs to be expanded to all.

Supports needed for Native Americans-Ongoing cultural competency training to staff in order to help people with disabilities and their families on the reservations. The Chairman's office is best resource to start on the reservations. They will try to answer or refer you to someone who can.

Senator Rampelberg - Are agencies going to the reservations to provide services? Do they want support? Lyle Cook - For National Disability Employment Awareness Month, they invite entities to their event. They may not see representation from an agency after turnover occurs so don't have familiarity. He sees people becoming more comfortable talking to state individuals when they keep coming back to events and they recognize them.

Commissioner Gill-Any action around needs of Native Americans and people with disabilities under some of the other priority areas? Social competency training can be addressed under education and outreach can be addressed under flexible systems. Having a Summit could be in education area.

Have a Career Plan developed to change expectations around services to be provided. Look at new tools for plans in agencies and systems regarding career development.

Raising state government as a model employer will be added as a 5<sup>th</sup> element under state workforce strategy.

Support Businesses to employ people with disabilities.

Focus on building employer champions.

Model of BRN to be expanded over course of state, maybe supported by bigger employers or state agencies, but local chambers or BRN's are what need to be tapped into. Information and education of employers could be part of that.

Technical Assistance for businesses:

Shelly-Maybe look more at SHRM's (Society of Human Resource Managers), Employer Resource Network, and the South Dakota Retailers Association to see what is happening out there because I think we haven't heard everything that is happening.

Kim Malsam-Rysdon-Capitalize on current employer resources out there and support successful business-led models. Connect businesses with people who want to work.

Support of successful business models, connection between employers and workers (Labor exchange, including job development and supports necessary). Find small business development resources available and expertise in entrepreneurship for people with disabilities.

Prepare all individuals with disabilities to work, which includes career changes, youth in school and transition.

Working age adult (perhaps underemployed or with a progressive disability)-could use the DEI model with the career team model.

Families don't have access to information early on and working with special education teachers to get information is what families want. Reach into the schools to get more information to teachers to help families early on.

Best Use of Limited Resources

Promote and support transportation-move to number two on the list.

Leverage technology to improve access to services and education, as an option for employment (internet access to work from home). Look at resources and what we are paying for and are we directing services to help

with employment, if not, what needs to be changed? Eliminate redundancies.

Senator Rampelberg-Workers compensation insurance as incentive may be helpful. Affirmative action that encourages preference to hiring people with disabilities should be expanded, provide additional incentives and work with employers on resource allocation

### Report and Next Steps

Commissioner Gill-We will pull this together and send out to the group, get feedback by email, then draft a document. A fourth meeting might be needed for discussion. Generally in agreement but maybe different levels of where we are at with action steps so may need discussion on whether to have a fourth meeting.

Senator Rampelberg-Determine if there is need for another meeting by seeing what kind of feedback you get from emails.

Commissioner Gill-Action items will go under these major strategies and we could leave that work to stakeholders. Commissioner Gill wants the report finalized by end of October. Something will be sent to the group with a quick turnaround. After group has consensus on it, could put on the website for public access.

### Public Dialogue

Donna Leslie-SD Retailers Association-Engage other employer groups, pull in all groups and give them information that they can give in turn to their members. SD Retailers could help get information to those groups

Patty Kuglitsch-Enjoyed comments and agree about having more people with disabilities on this group. Excited about presenter information today, it would be nice to provide those presentations to providers and other stakeholders. Education is also important, would like to see expansion of the benefits specialist program because it's important to educate people in the state. Supporting businesses on the financial end, education of accommodations or modifications would be beneficial, and access to information. Transportation is a huge barrier to accessing things. Internet access is also important, especially in the rural areas. Marketing to employers and how to get them information about people with disabilities should also be a priority.

Adjourn