& EXPECT EMPLOYMENT

EMPLOYMENT FIRST TASK FORCE

Expanding Employment Opportunities for Tennesseans with Disabilities

This report was developed by the Employment First Task Force with assistance from Janet Shouse and funded by the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities.

August 1, 2014

The Honorable Bill Haslam
Office of the Governor
1st Floor, State Capitol
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Haslam,

On behalf of nearly one million Tennesseans with disabilities and their families, we want to thank you for your leadership in creating Executive Order No. 28, making Tennessee a leader in declaring employment the number one goal for citizens with disabilities who receive state services and supports.

The Order created the Employment First Task Force that has worked over the past year to identify barriers to employment for Tennesseans with disabilities, develop strategies to aggressively address these barriers, and set goals to significantly increase employment outcomes for these individuals. Task Force members included state agencies, nonprofit organizations, universities, service providers, Tennesseans with disabilities and their families who met over the course of this past year and participated in a variety of workgroups to delve into issues and find creative, effective, and efficient solutions that will lead to better outcomes for all.

Through community conversations with hundreds of Tennesseans across the state, as well as surveys from more than 1,000 individual families, the Task Force gathered a great deal of information to inform our work. New partnerships were formed, both public and private, that will continue into next year as we take our work to the next level.

One recurring comment throughout this process was the vital importance of visionary leadership in changing the employment landscape for people with disabilities. As the Governor and the chief executive officer of the State of Tennessee, you have set the bar high and provided the rallying point that will move Tennessee forward toward great outcomes for citizens with disabilities, for businesses in Tennessee, for state government, and for communities across the State. Your continued leadership is critical to implementing this vision.

The Task Force hopes you find this report informative and that you will endorse its recommendations. Thank you, Governor, for your commitment to increasing opportunities for all Tennesseans.

Sincerely,

Debra K. Payne
Commissioner

EMPLOYMENT FIRST TASK FORCE MEMBERS

1. Jordan Allen, Deputy Commissioner, Program Operations, Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, and Co-Chair of the Task Force—Nashville, TN
2. Susie Bourque, Director, Policy and Special Projects, Division of Workforce Development, Department of Labor and Workforce Development—White House, TN
3. Cherrell Campbell-Street, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Human Services, and Co-Chair of the Task Force—Nashville, TN
4. Erik Carter, Associate Professor of Special Education, Peabody College, Vanderbilt University—Goodlettsville, TN
5. Stephanie Connell Cowherd, Associate Director, University of Tennessee-Knoxville's Center for Literacy, Education and Employment—Clinton, TN
6. Barbara DeBerry, Director, Provider Supports and Services, Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities—Nashville, TN
7. Evelyn Doxey, Disability Rights Attorney, Disability Law & Advocacy Center of Tennessee—Nashville, TN
8. Gayle Feltner, Director, Transition School to Work Program, Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Human Services —Nashville, TN
9. Amy Gonzalez, State Director, Employment and Day Services, Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities—Nashville, TN
10. Donna Goodaker, Executive Director, Progress Inc.—Nashville, TN
11. Sarah Harvey, Program Director, TennesseeWorks, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities—Brentwood, TN
12. Joey Hassell, Assistant Commissioner, Special Populations, Department of Education—Ripley, TN
13. Lynnette Henderson, Research Assistant Professor, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center—Murfreesboro, TN
14. Carrie Hobbs-Guiden, Executive Director, The Arc Tennessee—Old Hickory, TN
15. Sue Karber, Director, Consumer Wellness and Employment Programs, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse—Nashville, TN
16. Yovancha Lewis-Brown, Program Director, Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Human Services—Nashville, TN
17. Elise McMillan, Co-Director, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities –Nashville, TN
18. William McMillan, self-advocate—Nashville, TN
19. Michelle Morse Jernigan, Deputy of Long Term Services & Supports Care Quality and Administration, Bureau of TennCare, Department of Finance and Administration—Old Hickory, TN
20. Robert B. Nicholas, Coordinator, Project SEARCH Knoxville– Corryton, TN
21. Doria Panvini, parent advocate—Nashville, TN
22. Diedra Sawyer, Regional Supervisor, Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Human Services—Nashville, TN
23. Lauren Stewart, Director, Intellectual and Developmental Services, Bureau of TennCare, Department of Finance and Administration—Nashville, TN
24. Dwayne Webb, Program Director Day and Employment Services, St. John's Community Services—Martin, TN
25. Wanda Willis, Executive Director, Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities—Nashville, TN

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EMPLOYMENT FIRST TASK FORCE REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2013 Governor Bill Haslam signed Executive Order No. 28 establishing the Tennessee Employment First Initiative to expand community employment opportunities for Tennesseans with disabilities. This report summarizes the work of the Task Force over the past year, addressing each of the four directives in the Executive Order. The report outlines barriers to employment and ways to address each barrier. It summarizes the accomplishments of state agencies, community providers, private citizens and employers to date, and sets forth recommendations for continued work and collaboration in the future. The table on pages 12-15 provides details about the projects underway.

Employment First is a concept to facilitate the full inclusion of people with the most significant disabilities in the workplace and community. Under the Employment First approach, community-based, integrated employment is the first option for employment services for youth and adults with significant disabilities. Integrated employment refers to jobs held by people with disabilities in typical workplace settings where the majority of persons employed are not persons with disabilities, they earn at least minimum wage and they are paid directly by the employer.

The Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities was directed by the Executive Order to convene the Employment First Task Force to carry out the charge outlined in the Order. When the Task Force convened on August 1, 2013, members immediately began forming strategies to address the following specific areas assigned through the Executive Order:

1. Identify state agency policies and procedures that create barriers and disincentives for employment of people with disabilities and develop recommendations to reduce or eliminate those barriers and disincentives to better meet the needs of individuals who desire employment;
2. Best practices, effective partnerships, sources of federal funds and opportunities for shared services among state agencies;
3. Recommendations from the U.S. Office of Disability and Employment Policy; and
4. Training on disability employment for state and provider agencies, individuals with disabilities and their families to raise awareness about effective strategies for successful employment.

Each of these areas is addressed in a table that accompanies the Report, specifying activities that were accomplished this past year and proposing activities to work on in the coming year.

Through the information gathering process, Task Force members learned that while 75.2% of people in Tennessee without disabilities are employed, only 28.2% of people with any type of disability find work.[1] Likewise, citizens with mental illness or substance use disorders have substantial difficulty finding and maintaining employment.

Surveys and conversations with citizens across the state reveal that Tennesseans with disabilities want to work; however, they report a number of barriers to finding and keeping employment. The most frequently mentioned issues include poor coordination among state programs that fund supports to people with disabilities, a lack of adequate funding for supports, inadequacies in service delivery, insufficient opportunities for professional development for service delivery personnel, insufficient resources for job training and post-secondary education leading to employment, lack of a high school diploma, inadequacies in transportation services, and cultural beliefs in our society that lag behind what we know – that citizens with disabilities can do far more than we tend to expect, including working alongside peers in their community.

The Employment First Task Force concluded its first year on August 1, 2014, with the following recommendations:

1. Develop a Memorandum of Understanding among state agencies to facilitate coordination among programs and produce successful outcomes for people with disabilities.

2. Engage and support Tennessee businesses in employing people with disabilities in support of the Drive to 55 goals.

3. Make the State of Tennessee a model employer of people with disabilities, including the expansion of opportunities for internships.

[1] Erickson, W., Lee, C., von Schrader, S. (2014). 2012 Disability Status Report: Tennessee. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute (EDI).

4. Ensure every student with a disability leaves high school with a smooth transition that would include a choice of (but not be limited to) postsecondary education, a job training program, or paid, integrated employment to the same extent as students without disabilities.

5. Support individuals with disabilities and their families by increasing their knowledge about the benefits of employment as a life goal.

6. Ensure that all working-age Tennesseans with disabilities have access to a system of supports that enables them to obtain and maintain employment in the community throughout their lives.

7. Create and implement a three-year strategic workforce development plan, continuing the work of the Task Force under the authority of Executive Order 28.

Executive Order 28 provides a rallying point for state agencies, providers, professionals, advocates and Tennessee citizens with disabilities and their families to join forces and make a positive and meaningful impact on employment outcomes for citizens with disabilities. Going forward, the Task Force hopes to develop a strategic plan to address our recommendations. With continued support from the Governor, increasing collaboration of state programs, innovative approaches and updated policies and practices, it is evident that Tennessee is on its ways to becoming the top performing 'Employment First' state.

OVERVIEW

In June 2013, Gov. Bill Haslam signed Executive Order No. 28, which directed the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities to convene an Employment First Task Force to formulate ways to improve the employment landscape for Tennesseans with disabilities, including those with mental illness and substance use disorders. The Task Force was asked to identify state policies and procedures that create barriers to employment, to make recommendations to eliminate those barriers, to forge effective partnerships among the related state agencies and other stakeholders and to identify best practices to increase opportunities for "integrated employment."

The term "integrated employment" refers to jobs held by people with disabilities in typical workplace settings where the majority of persons employed are not people with disabilities, where they earn at least minimum wage, and where they are paid directly by the employer. Many states, including Tennessee, have begun to implement policies that promote integrated employment with earnings at or above the minimum wage as the first option of service for individuals with disabilities. Employment First is the name adopted to reflect this policy initiative.

"We (at the U.S. Office of Disability Employment Policy) have been pleased to see the progress Tennessee has made in just the past three years investing strategically in building provider capacity and aligning public policies to help individuals with significant disabilities obtain and maintain jobs in typical community settings at competitive wages."

Kathleen Martinez
Assistant Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor's
Office of Disability Employment Policy

The Governor's Employment First Task Force has been meeting quarterly since Aug. 1, 2013 to carry out the work specified in Executive Order 28. The Task Force took advantage of momentum that had begun in 2011, when 28 agencies and organizations that work with individuals with disabilities and their families formed a collaborative to pursue grants available to states for increasing integrated employment for individuals with disabilities. This collaboration paid off for Tennessee.

Chris has always enjoyed working as long as it is out in the community. Chris has a very strong sense of himself when working. You can't give him a lecture about how work affects self-worth, but he lives it. He can understand it, wants to do it, and feels good about himself.

Doria Panvini
with her son, Chris Panvini

TENNESSEE AGENCIES' WORK TO DATE

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development

In 2011, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development was awarded a three-year Disability Employment Initiative Grant to increase the capacity of the America's Job Centers and local workforce investment areas to meet the needs of Tennesseans with disabilities by training Disability Resource Coordinators and Integrated Resource Teams to leverage available funding and resources to help Tennesseans with disabilities get hired.

The Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

In 2012, Tennessee was selected as one of three states to participate in the Office of Disability Employment Policy's Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program. The Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities was awarded the grant that provided funding as well as consultation from experts in converting sheltered workshops to integrated employment. Two of the state's largest sheltered workshops received technical assistance in the first year, with training available to other interested providers. In the second year of the initiative, additional sheltered workshops joined the initiative to receive technical assistance in converting their operations to integrated, community-based employment.

Vanderbilt Kennedy Center

Later in 2012, Tennessee was awarded a Partnerships in Employment systems and policy change grant for transitioning youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities, funded by the U.S. Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Under the leadership of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, this five-year grant helped to formalize the statewide employment consortium formed in 2011 around the three federal grants now operating in Tennessee.

The consortium became known as the TennesseeWorks Partnership. This partnership is the unifying structure within which all of the grants collaborate and all public and private stakeholders come together to pursue the goal of increasing employment of Tennesseans with disabilities. To our state's credit, Tennessee is one of only two states to receive all three national employment grants available over the past three years.

The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

TDMHSAS recently worked in partnership with the Tennessee Division of Rehabilitation Services to increase the number of individuals with serious mental illness and co-occurring mental and substance use disorders to obtain and retain integrated employment. In October 2013, these two agencies began working with Frontier Health, Helen Ross McNabb Center, Park Center, and Ridgeview to implement the innovative employment program, Individual Placement and Support system. Through this program 154 individuals have been served, with 62 job placements in a variety of jobs. The average hourly wage is $8.07, and the average hours worked per week is 25.

IPS is the model of supported employment that has the most evidence and research behind it in supporting individuals with behavioral health disorders gaining and retaining employment. IPS was developed by the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center and showed a mean competitive employment rate of 58% in 19 randomized controlled trials. Significant gaps still exist for Tennesseans with serious mental illness who need supported employment services. Research has shown that supported employment helps individuals achieve and sustain recovery; yet such services in Tennessee are scarce.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Human Services

The Division of Rehabilitation Services' Vocational Rehabilitation program, which provides services to help working-age individuals with physical and/or mental disabilities enter or return to employment, closed 1,966 cases with individuals in successful employment in the last federal fiscal year, and has closed 1,440 cases in this federal fiscal year. Through the collaboration occurring as a result of the Executive Order, the Vocational Rehabilitation program plans to achieve more than a 10% increase in the number of successful employment cases.

How is Disability Defined?

A person with a disability is typically defined as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Generally, most people associate individuals with disabilities with a condition that contributes to their disability, such as an intellectual disability, an autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, a serious vision or hearing impairment including blindness or deafness, a significant mobility impairment or a traumatic brain injury. The Task Force also addresses employment for individuals who have a mental illness or substance use disorder in its work.

SRVS of Memphis has made a major commitment to move to integrated employment for the individuals the organization assists and AutoZone has been an enthusiastic partner in employing people.

"I got friends and I like having a good team to work with and a boss that cares for me and provides instruction."

William Hunter
AutoZone employee
supported by SRVS

"I like it here – the work is interesting and challenging, and I work with good people."

Eric Ryan
AutoZone employee
supported by SRVS

"We are thrilled with them. Their work is impeccable. They have been a great addition to our team."

Dennis Johnson
AutoZone Fulfillment Center Manager

Prevalence of Disability in Tennessee

Tennessee ranks seventh highest in the nation for the number of individuals with disabilities, with 13.9% of our population reporting a disability of some kind, according to the American Community Survey.

In 2012:
2.8% reported a Visual Disability
3.9% reported a Hearing Disability
9.2% reported an Ambulatory Disability (defined as having serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs)
6.4% reported a Cognitive Disability (having serious difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions)
3.4% reported a Self-Care Disability (having difficulty dressing or bathing)
7.1% reported an Independent Living Disability (having difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping)

The prevalence of developmental disabilities nationwide is increasing, according to a 2011 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Over the previous 12 years:

- Prevalence of developmental disabilities increased 17.1% nationwide
- Prevalence of autism increased 289.5%

In Tennessee, the percentage of military veterans who reported a service-related disability grew from 17.7% in 2008 to 20.9% in 2013, according to the American Community Survey.

Also, approximately 275,000 adults in Tennessee met the diagnostic criteria of having a serious mental illness in 2011-2012, according to U.S. Census records.

TASK 1 OF THE EXECUTIVE ORDER: IDENTIFYING BARRIERS

Unfortunately, Tennesseans with all types of disabilities have much higher rates of unemployment and underemployment than other residents of our state. We have actually seen those rates rise over the past 10 years. Virtually every state-level indicator confirms that relatively few Tennesseans with significant disabilities have the opportunities and supports to gain and maintain integrated employment.

Input from Tennesseans across the state as well as discussions among state agencies, service providers, and business owners provided insightful observations about barriers that may affect opportunities for employment for individuals with disabilities.

- A lack of coordination among state agencies that administer funding and programs for individuals with disabilities was among the most frequently mentioned issues.
- A lack of adequate funding to support employment efforts for all those who need assistance in finding and retaining a job, including services such as job coaches, customized employment (an individualized approach to job planning and development), and individualized supports.
- Inadequacies in service delivery, including difficulty accessing services and a lack of flexibility.
- Insufficient opportunities for professional development for those who provide services.
- Insufficient resources and opportunities for training and postsecondary education leading to employment for individuals with disabilities.
- Inadequacies in transportation services to and from job sites.
- A cultural mindset of low expectations on the part of professionals, businesses, parents, and individuals themselves that people with disabilities are unemployable.
- The lack of a high school diploma or other competency based vocational diploma that employers want job candidates to have.

ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT: TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Employment First Task Force, working collaboratively with various stakeholders, puts forth seven recommendations toward eliminating barriers and disincentives to successful employment outcomes for Tennesseans with disabilities.

1. Develop a Memorandum of Understanding among state agencies to facilitate coordination among programs and produce successful outcomes for people with disabilities. We have already begun work to locate model agreements and create process maps that will identify opportunities for linking programs and simplifying processes for people seeking services.

2. Engage and support Tennessee businesses in employing people

with disabilities in support of the Drive to 55 goals. The Task Force has begun educating, supporting, and partnering with business leaders to better connect them with potential employees that will help to meet Tennessee workforce needs.

3. Make the State of Tennessee a model employer of people with disabilities, including expanded opportunities for internships. The Task Force encourages state government to become a leader in the Employment First effort. Making state internships more accessible to students with disabilities will provide excellent opportunities for them to develop job skills, work alongside their peers who are interning, and demonstrate to all of us the value of a diverse workforce.

4. Ensure every student with a disability leaves high school with a smooth transition that would include a choice of (but not be limited to) postsecondary education, a job training program, or paid, integrated employment to the same extent as students without disabilities.

5. Support individuals with disabilities and their families by increasing their knowledge about the benefits of employment as a life goal. Often families and individuals themselves do not see employment as a real possibility. Many families voice concerns about the loss of benefits (such as SSI, SSDI, Medicaid, etc.) for their child if he or she becomes employed. In addition, families may be concerned about the safety of their sons and daughters in integrated employment in the community. With information, communication, and support, families will become more comfortable with assisting their family member in exploring employment options.

6. Ensure that all working-age Tennesseans with disabilities have access to a system of supports that enables them to obtain and maintain employment in the community throughout their lives. Many people need some level of support in order to maintain their employment. Research shows that, for every dollar taxpayers spend on supported employment services, they received between $1.17 and $1.77 that is otherwise spent on more expensive services with far less beneficial and preferred outcomes.[1]

7. Create and implement a three-year strategic workforce development plan, continuing the work of the Task Force under the authority of Executive Order 28. The Task Force members would continue their work with a specific plan detailing action steps and timelines.

Project SEARCH is a one-year, business-led school-to-work program for high school students with developmental disabilities that takes place entirely in the workplace. Since 1996, the program has been so successful that projects have been launched at more than 200 sites in five countries.

"Being a sponsor employer for Project SEARCH was an easy decision from the perspective of alignment with who we are and why we exist–our mission. Even health care professionals can be short-sighted in truly appreciating the potential and ability that these interns possess. It has increased awareness and inclusion far easier and faster than any training class ever could."

Sue Wilburn, SPH
Vice President, Human Resources,
Organizational Development and Learning
East Tennessee Children's Hospital

Tennessee's Drive to 55 initiative has a mission to increase higher education and workforce and economic development, with an overarching goal to reduce unemployment and improve quality of life for Tennesseans. The Employment First Task Force believes that Drive to 55 aligns perfectly with the goals of the Employment First effort for Tennesseans with disabilities.

Also, the Tennessee Department of Education has been working with businesses to create an occupational diploma for those students with disabilities who are not able to complete the requirements to receive a standard high school diploma, which will help employers know the skills and the competencies students possess.

Research confirms that when people with disabilities are connected to work experiences in their communities, achieving goals such as finding a good place to live, having friends and using their talents all become much more likely. For all of us, a good job is about much more than a paycheck. It contributes to a sense of accomplishment, self-worth, and independence. A meaningful job can make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities just as it does for all Tennesseans.

With the Governor's approval and support, the Task Force stands ready to continue working to improve the employment landscape for individuals with disabilities in Tennessee. The next section details the projects already underway to address the known barriers, and the goals set forth by the Task Force to accomplish the recommendations put forth above.

In Appendix A, we present findings from multiple Tennessee projects that provide important insights into the current employment landscape and suggest possible ways for making change. We also integrate data from other sources that provide a snapshot of employment outcomes. For each, we describe the source of the data, explain its reach throughout the state, and highlight key findings related to employment.

Conclusion

Executive Order 28 signed by Governor Bill Haslam provided a rallying point for state agencies, providers, professionals, advocates and Tennessee citizens with disabilities and their families to join forces and make a positive and meaningful impact on employment outcomes for citizens with disabilities. Results are already evident, with increased collaboration of state programs that support Tennesseans with disabilities, new and innovative employment programs, policy changes and a proposal to develop a multiyear strategy that will move Tennessee ahead as a top performing 'Employment First' state.

[1] Cimera, R. http://thecpsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Is-Supported-Employment-a-Good-Investment-for-Taxpayers.pdf

"Work is important to me because it lets me give back to the community doing something I love. I look forward to going to both my jobs. I work at Barnes and Noble Bookstore Vanderbilt and the Green Hills YMCA. I like working with the team at both places. People with disabilities look forward to work just like everyone else."

Will McMillan
Next Steps at Vanderbilt graduate

TABLE TRACKING THE EMPLOYMENT FIRST TASK FORCE ACCOMPLISHMENTS EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 28

Executive Order 28 directed the Department of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities to convene a task force that consists of representatives from the agencies administering disability services, family members of persons receiving employment services, vocational rehabilitation, workforce services and education, as well as consumer advocates and third party disability service providers. The task force was responsible for the following work. The task force convened for its initial meeting on August 1, 2013, met quarterly thereafter and as directed provides this annual progress report to the Governor.

This grid succinctly details the work the Task Force has accomplished in the past 12 months and outlines its goals for next year.

TASKS FROM EXECUTIVE ORDER	TASK FORCE ACCOMPLISHMENTS YEAR 1	GOALS YEAR 2
1. Identify state agency policies & practices that create barriers and disincentives for employment of people with disabilities (4 a)* *Notations refer to the Executive Order No. 28 (see appendix)	• Identified and documented barriers: 1. Lack of coordination among state agencies 2. Lack of adequate funding 3. Inadequacies in service delivery 4. Insufficient opportunities for professional development for service delivery personnel 5. Insufficient resources for training and education leading to employment 6. Current cultural mindset 7. Inadequacies in transportation services for employment purposes 8. Lack of recognized diploma in place of the standard high school diploma for students with disabilities • Conducted community conversations across the state • Collected surveys from more than 1,000 families across the state	• Evaluate barriers: have they been eliminated or reduced? • In depth review of state policies; identify potential changes to make system more effective and efficient

TASKS FROM EXECUTIVE ORDER	TASK FORCE ACCOMPLISHMENTS YEAR 1	GOALS YEAR 2
2. Develop recommendations to reduce or eliminate those barriers and disincentives to better meet the needs of individuals who desire employment (4 a)*	• Developed 7 recommendations 1. Develop a Memorandum of Understanding among state agencies to facilitate coordination 2. Engage and support businesses in employing people with disabilities in support of the Drive to 55 goals. 3. Make the State of Tennessee a model employer of people with disabilities, including expanded opportunities for internships. 4. Ensure every student with a disability leaves high school with a smooth transition that would include a choice of (but not be limited to) postsecondary education, a job training program, or paid, integrated employment to the same extent as students without disabilities. 5. Support individuals with disabilities and their families by increasing their knowledge about the benefits of employment as a life goal. 6. Ensure that all working-age Tennesseans with disabilities have access to a system of supports that enables them to obtain and maintain employment. 7. Create a three-year strategic workforce development plan, continuing the work of the Task Force. • Updated policies of several state agencies • DIDD updated provider manual to reflect the emphasis on employment • All service plans for individuals with disabilities are to address employment • Began revisions of the Medicaid waivers (funding source) to support employment as first option [1] • Drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to align goals, priorities and resources for youth transitioning from school to work • Created new and cost-effective partnerships across the state between state agencies, provider organizations, universities and non-profits • Expanded Tennessee Longitudinal Data System to include DIDD, DHS VR, DCS	• Task Force will begin to implement a three-year plan to develop a state workforce development strategy • Execute the Memorandum of Understanding for youth and draft an MOU among agencies for adults with disabilities. • Complete approval process for Medicaid Waiver revisions focusing on employment and home - and community - based services with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services • All service plans for individuals with disabilities will be shared among various state agencies • Initiate discussions on improving transportation services to workplaces for individuals with disabilities

[1]More details about the Medicaid waivers is provided in Appendix C

TASKS FROM EXECUTIVE ORDER	TASK FORCE ACCOMPLISHMENTS YEAR 1	GOALS YEAR 2
3. Identify best practices, effective partnerships, sources of available funds and opportunities for shared services among existing state agencies to increase integrated & competitive employment opportunities (4 b)	• Launched the Individual Placement and Supports program in four community mental health centers, a model of evidence-based supported employment for individuals with mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorders • Revised Vocational Rehabilitation service agreements with vendors and community rehabilitation providers to increase employment outcomes for people with disabilities • Launched customized employment agreements with three community rehabilitation providers to transition individuals to community-based employment at competitive wages • Recruited additional agencies to participate in the Employment First initiative • Increased the use of financial incentives available for employing people with disabilities • Increased access to benefits counseling for individuals with disabilities who are planning to go to work • Created a Business Services Unit in VR to support the needs of employers • Launched a Walgreens REDI (Retail Employees with Disabilities Initiative) mock store at the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center in Smyrna • Held orientation training with Project SEARCH national staff for interested sites • Launched two new Project SEARCH sites, using training and technical assistance provided by Project SEARCH national staff and funded by the Council on Developmental Disabilities	• Expand Project SEARCH to five additional school systems • Expand IPS program to four additional community mental health centers • Expand the customized employment agreements statewide • Expand the work-incentive training statewide • Vocational Rehabilitation will provide support for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities at Tennessee's post-secondary programs to increase access to employment related education • Evaluate the success and impact on employment rates of the new occupational diploma, which has been developed to increase job readiness for students who do not receive a standard high school diploma

TASKS FROM EXECUTIVE ORDER	TASK FORCE ACCOMPLISHMENTS YEAR 1	GOALS YEAR 2
4. Review & consider recommendations of the Office of Disability and Employment Policy (ODEP) to increase opportunities for integrated & competitive employment (4 c)	• Created an Employment First Executive Order • Endorsed the ODEP recommendations: 1. Technical assistance for providers to transition from offering facility-based employment to integrated employment services in the community 2. Direct support professional capacity building in effective practices 3. Innovative payment schemes; reimbursement/rate restructuring 4. Leveraging and coordination of policy and resources across systems	• Increase the number of jobs held by people with disabilities that pay a competitive wage • Strive to align the use of various resources to encourage Employment First for all individuals
5. Develop training on disability employment for state agencies, provider agencies, individuals being supported and their families in order to raise awareness of effective strategies for integrated & competitive employment outcomes (4 d)	• Developed pilot parent coalitions • Provided additional customized employment and discovery training to DIDD and VR staff and community rehabilitation providers • Provided additional Individual Placement and Support training to VR staff and community mental health center staff • Provided training through the Britt Henderson Workshop series to educators, families, providers & others • Provided online training through DIDD to provider employment support staff • Provided work-incentive training to individuals, families and providers • Expanded training offered by the UT Center for Literacy, Education & Employment for VR staff, community employment service providers, educators and employers. • Focus on employment during the annual Tennessee Disability Megaconference with multiple sessions and keynotes • Collaborative TNCO (TN Community Organizations) Education Conference focused on Employment First co-scheduled with the Disability Megaconference provided information to additional many service providers	• Expand parent coalitions across the state • Provide expanded employment training through the Britt Henderson series, an annual series of workshops for both general and special educators that focus on innovative evidence based practices. • Implement expanded training opportunities addressed in the MOU • TennesseeWorks Employment Summit will offer central cross disciplinary training

APPENDIX A

EXECUTIVE ORDER

STATE OF TENNESSEE

EXECUTIVE ORDER

BY THE GOVERNOR

No. 28

AN ORDER ESTABLISHING THE TENNESSEE EMPLOYMENT FIRST INITIATIVE TO EXPAND COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR TENNESSEANS WITH DISABILITIES

WHEREAS, Tennesseans with disabilities, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders and other disabilities, disproportionately experience high levels of unemployment, underemployment, and dependence upon publicly funded programs; and

WHEREAS, my Administration is committed to supporting the Employment First Initiative establishing competitive and integrated employment, where work is performed in a typical work setting for a competitive wage.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Bill Haslam, Governor of the State of Tennessee, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the Tennessee Constitution and the laws of Tennessee, do hereby order and direct the following:

1. State agencies coordinate efforts to increase opportunities for integrated and competitive employment for Tennesseans with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental illnesses, substance abuse disorders and other disabilities.
2. The Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities convene an Employment First Taskforce ("Taskforce").
3. The Taskforce shall consist of representatives from the agencies administering disability services, family members of persons receiving employment services, vocational rehabilitation, workforce services and education, as well as consumer advocates and third party disability service providers.
4. This Taskforce shall:
    a. Identify state agency policies and procedures that create barriers and disincentives for employment of people with disabilities and develop recommendations to reduce or eliminate those barriers and disincentives to better meet the needs of individuals who desire employment;

b. Identify best practices, effective partnerships, sources of available federal funds and opportunities for shared services among existing state agencies to increase integrated and competitive employment opportunities for Tennesseans with disabilities;

c. Review and consider the recommendations of the Office of Disability and Employment Policy (ODEP) to increase opportunities for integrated and competitive employment for Tennesseans with disabilities.

d. Develop training on disability employment for state agencies, provider agencies, individuals being supported and their families in order to raise awareness of effective strategies for achieving integrated and competitive employment outcomes.

5. The Taskforce shall convene for its initial meeting on or before August 1, 2013. Thereafter, the Taskforce shall meet quarterly and provide an annual progress report to the Governor.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have subscribed my signature and caused the Great Seal of the State of Tennnessee to be affixed this 19th day of June, 2013.

GOVERNOR

ATTEST:

SECRETARY OF STATE

APPENDIX B

EMPLOYMENT FIRST AND TENNESSEEWORKS WORK GROUPS

Agencies and Policymakers (including Data Group and Writing Group)

1) Jordan Allen
2) Carly Blustein
3) Susie Bourque
4) Jackie Bruce
5) Cherrell Campbell-Street
6) Erik Carter
7) Betty Dandridge Johnson
8) Evelyn Doxey
9) Amy Gonzalez
10) Joey Hassell
11) Sue Karber
12) Michael Leach
13) Yovancha Lewis-Brown
14) Melissa McGee
15) Elise McMillan
16) Michelle Morse Jernigan
17) Fred Palmer
18) Lisa Primm
19) Jim Shulman
20) Sukey Steckel
21) Lauren Stewart
22) Wanda Willis

Employers and Providers

1) Ronald Basham
2) Darlene Baskette
3) Connie Bowlan
4) Ronald Bynum
5) Debbie Chadwick
6) Lee Chase
7) Alicia Cone
8) Donald Corn
9) Donna Goodaker
10) Stephanie Cowherd

Employers and Providers (cont.)

11) Thom Druffel
12) Naomi Earp
13) Ann Eubanks
14) Trish Farmer
15) Weldon Floyd
16) Audria Frattini
17) Mary Fultineer
18) Phil Garner
19) Jim Gillen
20) Tyler Hampton
21) Sharyn Hancock
22) Kyle Hauth
23) Lynnette Henderson
24) Suelen "CeCe" Hernandez
25) Kristi Lilly
26) Cindy Martin-Hensley
27) Mike McElhinney
28) Jan McKeel
29) John Michael Morrison
30) Sheila Moore
31) Robert Nicholas
32) Sharon Perry
33) Stephanie Potter
34) Suzy Pruitt O'Daniel
35) Tera Roberts
36) Gary Schmitt
37) Amanda Sells
38) Ron Smith
39) Vaughn Smith
40) Dennis Stull
41) Anita Teague
42) O'Dell Tiller
43) Bill Toye
44) Byron Watt
45) Dwayne Webb
46) Pam Webb

Educators

1) Carly Blustein
2) Erik Carter
3) Karen Baynham Curry
4) Kathryn "Kate" Deitzer
5) Sonya Dobbs
6) Joey Ellis
7) Gayle Feltner
8) Becca Fox
9) Allison Gauld
10) Elizabeth Hill
11) Rachel Jenkins
12) Geri Mulligan
13) Jenn Rowan
14) Steve Sparks
15) Marie Wicks
16) Sherry Wilds

Families and Youth

1) Cory Bradfield
2) Phyllis Brunson
3) Deana Claiborne
4) Danna Conn
5) Steven Greiner
6) Ginger Harris
7) Karen Harrison
8) Megan Hart
9) Sarah Harvey
10) Carrie Hobbs Guiden
11) Will McMillan
12) Sheila Moore
13) Doria Panvini
14) Donzaleigh Powell
15) Ned Solomon
16) Tawny Spinelli
17) Laura Tumminello
18) Jude White

APPENDIX C

THE EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE IN TENNESSEE

We have sometimes struggled as a state to ensure Tennesseans with disabilities have the aspirations, skills, supports, and opportunities they need to contribute within the state workforce. Indeed, almost every available measure converges on this critical point: the unemployment and underemployment of people with disabilities in our state is unacceptably widespread.

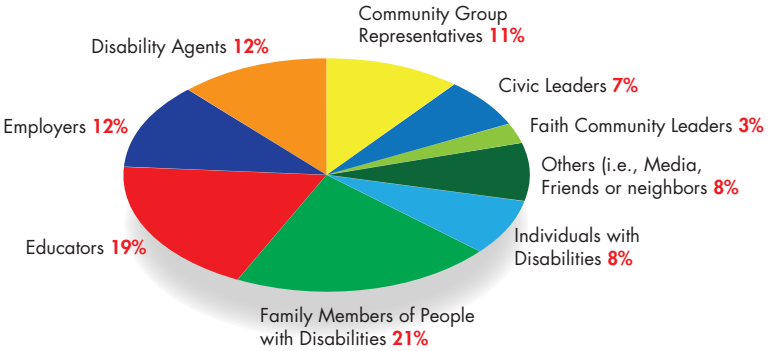
Community Conversations on Employment

"Community conversations" are an asset-based approach for spurring efforts to expand inclusive opportunities for people with disabilities. [1] In 2013, the TennesseeWorks Partnership held a series of community conversation events to engage Tennessee communities in generating creative solutions for improving employment outcomes that reflect local priorities. These events were designed to gather diverse members of a community to generate solutions to the limited access people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have to integrated work for competitive pay. Attendees shared their best ideas related to two questions:

1. What can we do as a community to increase meaningful employment opportunities for people with intellectual disability?
2. How might we work together in compelling ways to make these ideas happen here in this community?

Whose voices were heard? Events were held in six cities reflecting the geographic diversity of our state—Chattanooga, Greeneville, Jackson, Lawrence County, Memphis, and Murfreesboro. Organizing teams included people with disabilities, parents, educators, disability agency representatives, civic leaders and others.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ATTENDEES (< 400)



What did we learn? We analyzed multiple sources of data, including end-of-conversation questionnaires, six-week follow-up surveys, and notes taken during all discussions. Below are key findings:

- Slightly more than one-third of attendees (37%) agreed that people in their community were generally receptive to employing people with disabilities.
- Only about one-third of attendees (35%) felt strong partnerships between employers, community agencies, and families currently existed.
- Nearly three-quarters of attendees (75%) agreed that their community currently had the capacity to support people with disabilities in meaningful jobs.
- However, almost all attendees (96%) felt members of their community needed help learning how to support people with disabilities in meaningful jobs.
- Analyses of the more than 1,300 ideas generated clustered around the following six areas of critical need. A fuller report of the strategies for each of these areas will be released this fall:
    - Enhancing inclusive workplaces: Assist employers who have already hired people with disabilities to better support these employees in the workplace by providing employers information, training, and mentorship opportunities
    - Strengthening school and transition services: Enhance the school-to-work transition process through professional development, work-based experiences for students, and collaboration with other stakeholders, such as agencies and disability organizations.
    - Equipping people with disabilities to be competitive applicants: Finding effective ways to better prepare individuals with disabilities for employment by teaching interpersonal skills, vocational skills, and strategies for networking in the community.
    - Developing new employment opportunities: Expanding integrated employment opportunities by connecting stakeholders through a formalized employment network or an online portal, developing jobs related to strengths and abilities of potential applicants, and recruiting and training new employers.

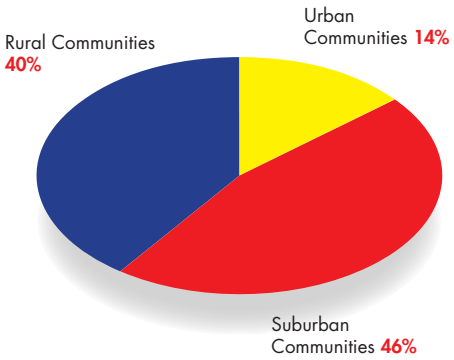
- Undertaking community-wide efforts: Spurring local involvement beyond the disability community to raise expectations and improve employment opportunities by sharing practical resources, new ideas, and success stories.
- Supporting families in transition: Increasing family participation through education, advocacy efforts, and collaboration with community programs, agencies, and other supports.

Family Expectations, Concerns, and Resource Needs Related to Employment

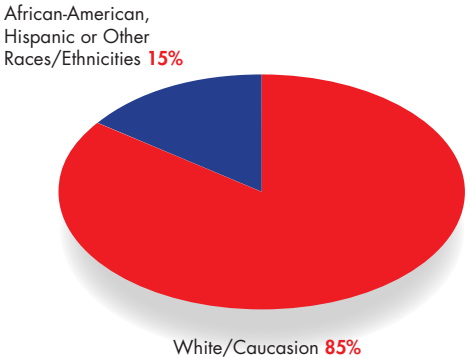
The expectations parents hold are one of the most prominent predictors of employment and postsecondary educational outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.[2] In the spring of 2014, we launched a statewide effort to understand (a) the employment expectations parents currently have for their sons and daughters of all ages with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD); (b) whether and how parents are preparing their sons and daughters for employment; (c) factors that make parents reluctant to pursue employment in the community; and (d) the resources, supports, and information parents would find most helpful in this area.

Whose voices were heard? We distributed surveys widely to ensure a diverse representation of voices of families in every county of our state was heard. At the time of this report, more than 1,000 Tennessee parents shared their voices in this project. These parents represent 80 of 95 Tennessee counties. Approximately 40% of families had children who were eligible for free or reduced-price meals at school.

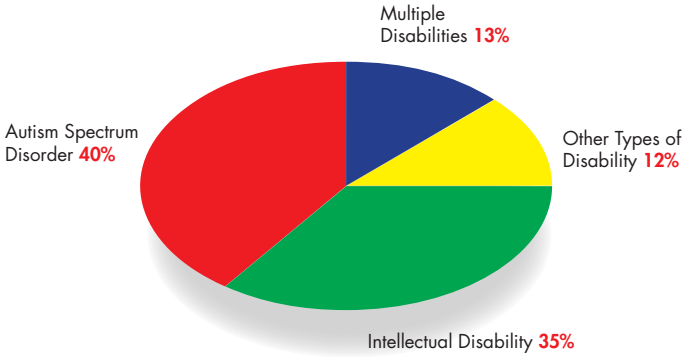
SURVEY PARTICIPANTS
(< 1000 PARENTS)



SURVEY PARTICIPANTS' RACE/ETHNICITY

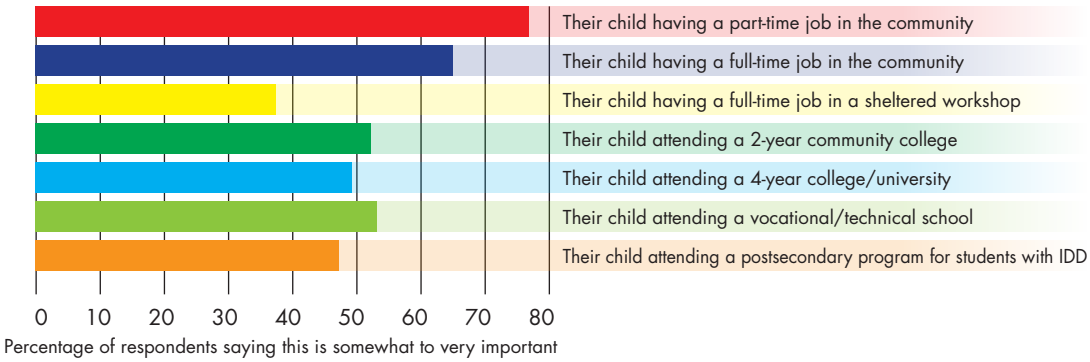


DISABILITY OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS' SON OR DAUGHTER



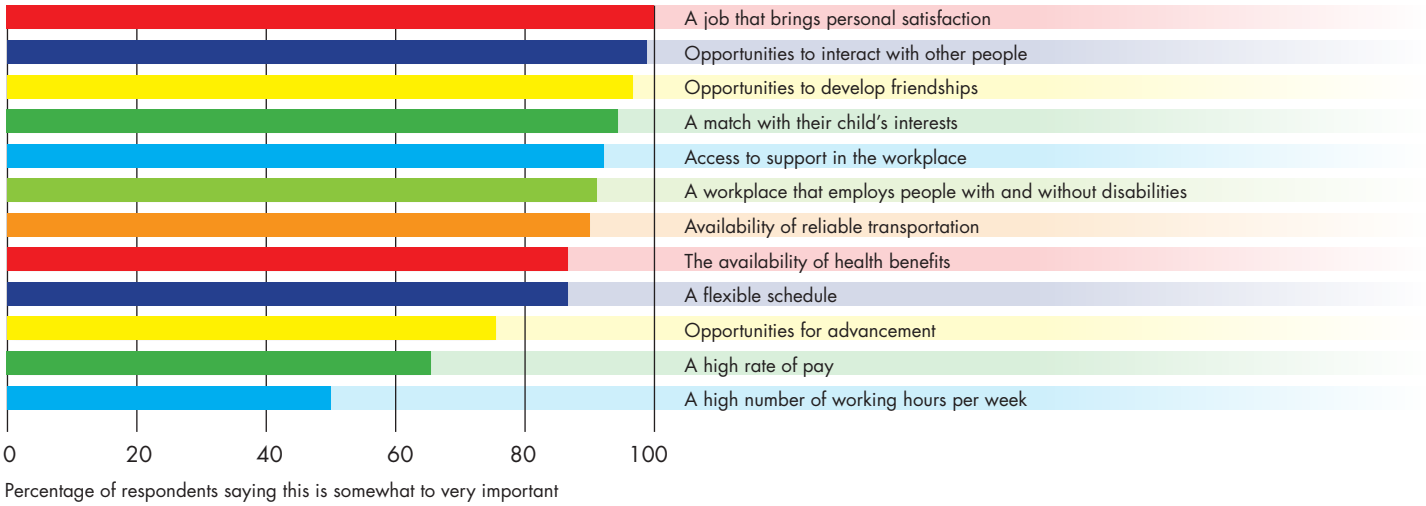
What did we learn?
Although families continue to join this study as we move toward our goal of 2,000 families, we highlight below some of the early findings from parents in this statewide study:

WE ASKED PARENTS TO THINK ABOUT THE FIRST TWO YEARS AFTER THEIR CHILD FINISHES HIGH SCHOOL AND RATE THE IMPORTANCE OF:



- When asked about which aspects of a job they consider most important for their son or daughter, more than half of the respondents considered the following features to be somewhat or very important (ranked from most to least important):

ASPECTS OF A JOB THEY CONSIDER MOST IMPORTANT FOR THEIR SON OR DAUGHTER
(RANKED FROM MOST TO LEAST IMPORTANT)



- Almost 60% of parents say they are not at all or only a little familiar with work, school, residential, and community activity options for their son or daughter after high school.
- More than 85% of parents say they are not at all or only a little familiar with Tennessee programs addressing vocational and work options or supports.
- Key areas in which parents say they want more training and resources include (ranked from most to least helpful):
    - Supporting strong transition planning (55%)
    - Advocating for high-quality school transition services (54%)
    - Teaching skills and attitudes that lead to employment (54%)
    - Understanding the impact of working on their son or daughter's benefits and/or health insurance (53%)
    - Connecting their son or daughter to a job in the community (52%)
    - Receiving support from vocational rehabilitation (52%)
    - Holding high employment expectations for their son or daughter (51%)
    - Selecting an agency provider who can assist with employment (51%)
    - Accessing Medicaid Waiver programs for long-term services and supports (51%)

Professional Development and Needs in Transition/Employment

Educators and rehabilitation staff have critical roles in preparing individuals with disabilities for career exploration and employment. These professionals must have access to the most current, promising practices for preparing people with disabilities for employment.

High school is a critical time during which educators must work to equip youth with disabilities with the skills, supports, experiences, and connections to adult services or programs that people with disabilities need to transition seamlessly to a good job or postsecondary training.[3] The extent to which secondary teachers have the training, resources, and expectations needed to prepare students with disabilities certainly shapes students' employment outcomes. We surveyed a cross-section of Tennessee educators about the content and strategies about which they most wanted to learn. We also asked about the biggest school- and family-related barriers to equipping student with intellectual and developmental disabilities to obtain integrated employment at competitive wages during or after high school.

Whose voices were heard? We distributed surveys at two statewide educational gatherings. We heard from 204 teachers in 2013 and 188 teachers in 2014.

What did we learn? We highlight below some of the most pressing needs for professional development and resources for educators in our state, as well as their views of barriers:

- Key areas in which educators say they want more training and resources include:
  - Conducting transition-related assessments (56%)
  - Learning about the adult service system (55%)
  - Building career awareness (53%)
  - Developing jobs that match student interests (45%)
  - Making accommodations on the job (44%)
  - Learning about accessing vocational rehabilitation (44%)
  - Working effectively with job coaches (43%)
  - Teaching social-related skills for the workplace (40%)
  - Learning about work incentives like Ticket to Work (40%)
- The most prominent school-related barriers were perceived to be:
  - Limited time to adequately address employment preparation
  - Difficulties addressing vocational training within current graduation requirements
  - Lack of adequate funding for employment programs
  - Limited availability of transportation to job sites
  - Need for more transition staff to provide this preparation
- The most prominent family-related barriers were perceived to be:
  - Limited parent support for employment
  - The paucity of accessible information about benefits and resources
  - Transportation challenges
  - Misunderstandings related to the impact of working on a child's benefits
  - Issues related to poverty

Early Work and Postsecondary Experiences of Young People with Disabilities

Very little is known about how the preparation special education students receive in high schools in Tennessee leads to successful employment and postsecondary educational outcomes after graduation. Up until now, there has not been strong Tennessee-specific data on these experiences and the outcome students have. The Measure Tennessee Longitudinal Data System (MeasureTN) holds great promise to help our state better understand where we are and where we ought to go. This shared, cross-agency data system can provide insight into (a) current transition planning and employment experiences for high school students with disabilities across the state; (b) employment and postsecondary education outcomes of these students in the early years after leaving high school; and (c) the various factors associated with better employment and adult outcomes. This information will also be critical to helping us evaluate the impact of our professional development and systems change efforts over the next four years and beyond.

Whose voices were heard? The MeasureTN data system includes information from the individualized education programs and transition plans of every high school student with intellectual and developmental disabilities who received special education services in the state.

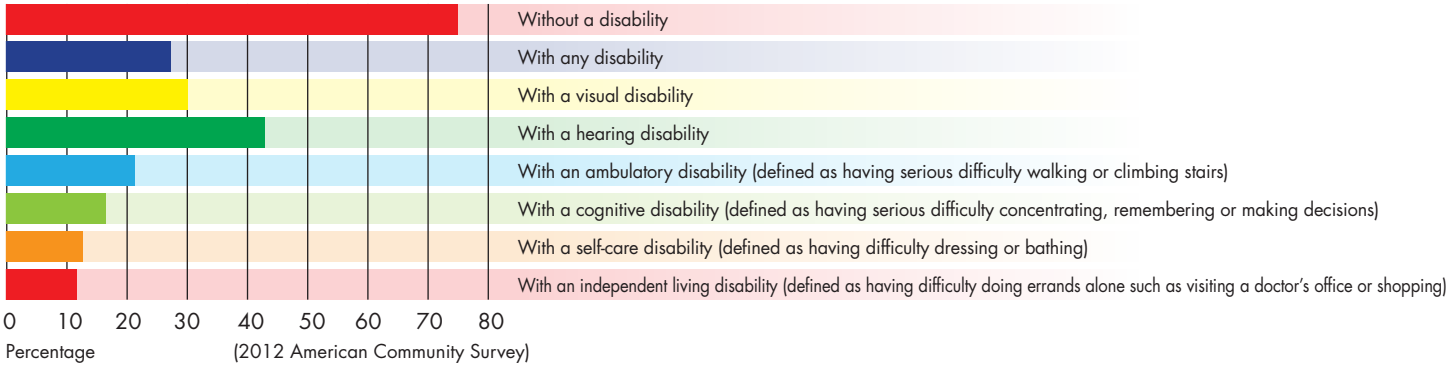
What did we learn? Integrated transition data from MeasureTN are just becoming available and deeper analyses will continue throughout the upcoming year.

Other Data Addressing Employment-Related Outcomes

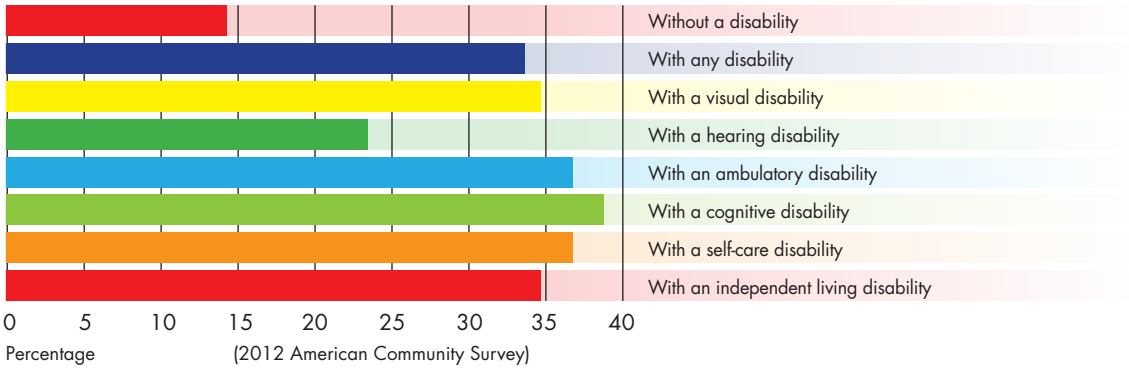
A variety of other data sources speak to the employment services, supports, and outcomes of people in our state. Below are selected findings:

- According to the 2012 American Community Survey[4]:

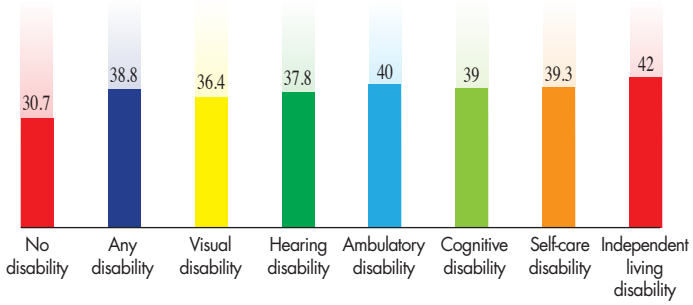
EMPLOYMENT RATE FOR TENNESSEANS (AGES 21 TO 64)



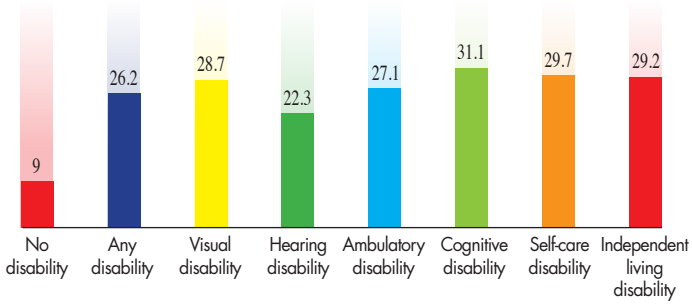
POVERTY RATES FOR TENNESSEANS (AGES 21 TO 64)



PERCENTAGE OF WORKING-AGE TENNESSEANS WITH ONLY A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR EQUIVALENT



PERCENTAGE OF (21-64) WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR EQUIVALENT



- The rate of integrated employment for Tennesseans with serious mental illness across systems is very low[5]:
  - Approximately 275,000 adults in Tennessee met the diagnostic criteria of having a serious mental illness in 2011-2012.
  - The estimated rate of employment for individuals with SMI is less than 15%, meaning approximately 233,750 adult Tennesseans with serious mental illness are NOT currently in the workforce, with only 7,260 working full-time.

- According to the National Survey of State Intellectual and Developmental Disability Agencies' Day and Employment Services in 2011:[6]
  - A total of 6,466 Tennessee adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities were served.
  - Among these individuals, just 1,149 (18%) were served in integrated employment.
- Drawing upon the Rehabilitation Services Administration 911 (RSA-911) for 2013:[7]
  - Vocational Rehabilitation served 3,314 Tennesseans with disabilities, and 3,201 of those people had significant disabilities
  - 1,966 of those VR cases were closed with employment
  - 1,348 of those cases were closed with no employment
  - The average weekly hours worked for those employed was 28.1
  - The average hourly wage was $9.78
- Data from the Tennessee Department of Education's Annual Performance Report on students with individualized education plans reveal:[8]
  - 73% of students with IEPs graduated with a regular diploma in spring 2012
  - 3.47% of students with IEPs dropped out during the 2012-2013 school year
  - Within one year of leaving school:
    - 18.3% of students with IEPs were enrolled in higher education
    - 52.3% were enrolled in higher education or competitively employed
    - 66.1% were enrolled in higher education or other postsecondary education or training or competitively employed or in some other employment
    - 33.9% were unengaged

Also, the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center is collaborating with the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and The Arc Tennessee on the National Data Measurement Project: National Core Indicators. The project is currently measuring the performance of departments of intellectual and developmental disabilities in providing services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in 39 states.

VKC faculty, staff, and students will analyze data collected through The Arc Tennessee's People Talking to People project. The project will survey more than 400 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and responses will provide a "snapshot" of how well Tennessee is performing relative to other states in areas like employment, community inclusion, choice, rights, health and safety.
From the questions on employment we will be able to determine whether people are working, how many hours per week, what they are being paid and in what settings they are working.

Additional Data Needed To Fully Understand Employment-Related Outcomes

Looking forward, we need continued investment to strengthen the quality and reach of data collected by state agencies related to the employment of people with disabilities. In addition, it is essential that greater integration of our state data systems be vigorously pursued. For example, while Department of Education, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and Tennessee Higher Education Commission data are now incorporated in Measure Tennessee Longitudinal Data System (MeasureTN), other important data are not yet included. In the past year, DIDD, DHS/VR and DCS have all signed on to participate in the MeasureTN project. Through this participation, we will begin to see the longitudinal impact of these state programs. We also need a stronger understanding of the factors that lead businesses to hire people with disabilities, or make them reluctant to do so.

Dr. Erik Carter, associate professor of Special Education, Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, compiled this data section.
1. Carter, E. W., Swedeen, B., Cooney, M., Walter, M. J., & Moss, C. K. (2012). "I don't have to do this by myself?": Parent-led community conversations to promote inclusion. Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 37, 9-23.; Trainor, A. A., Carter, E. W., Swedeen, B., & Pickett, K. (2012). Community conversations: An approach for expanding and

connecting opportunities for employment for adolescents with disabilities. Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals, 35, 49-59.
2.Carter, E. W., Austin, D., & Trainor, A. A. (2012). Predictors of postschool employment outcomes for young adults with severe disabilities. Journal of Disability Policy Studies, 23, 50-63.; Doren, B., Gau, J. M., & Lindstrom, L. (2012). The relationship between parent expectations and post-school outcomes of adolescents with disabilities. Exceptional Children, 79, 7-23.
3.Hughes, C., & Carter, E. W. (2012). The new transition handbook: Strategies secondary school teachers use that work. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.; Test, D. W., Fowler, C. H., Richter, S. M., White, J., Mazzotti, V., Walker, A. R., . . . Kortering, L. (2009). Evidence-based practices in secondary transition. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 32, 115–128.
4.Erickson, W., Lee, C., & von Schrader, S. (2014). 2012 disability status report: Tennessee. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute.
5. (Dartmouth 2012, US Census 2012, Tennessee Uniformed Reporting Tables 2013)
6. Butterworth, J., Hall, A.C., Smith, F. A., Migliore, A., Winsor, J., Domin, D., & Sulewski, J. (2013). StateData: The national report on employment services and outcomes. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.
7. Butterworth, J., Hall, A.C., Smith, F. A., Migliore, A., Winsor, J., Domin, D., & Sulewski, J. (2013). StateData: The national report on employment services and outcomes. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.
8. Tennessee Department of Education Part B 2012 SPP/APR Response Table. http://www.state.tn.us/education/student_support/special_ed/osepresponsetbl.pdf

APPENDIX D

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

These barriers were identified during Community Conversations, Parent Coalition meetings, TennesseeWorks Partnership meetings and other sources.

1. Lack of Coordination Among State Agencies
    - No current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) exists that adequately aligns goals, priorities and resources among key state agencies.
    - Service systems are complex to navigate; no clear road map to identify and access service appropriate to the individual (applicable to individuals with disabilities, families, educators, businesses and community members)
    - Disconnect of service delivery systems across the lifespan (DOE, VR, DIDD, etc.)
2. Lack of Adequate Funding
    - Insufficient funding to provide services needed (job coaching, job developers, individualized supports, customized employment, follow-along supports on the job)
    - Waiting lists (DIDD, VR), Order of Selection barriers (VR)
    - Inadequate compensation for professional service delivery personnel (applicable to service delivery systems, educators and providers)
3. Inadequacies in Service Delivery
    - Inconsistency among service delivery systems
    - Inefficiency among service delivery systems
    - Difficulty in accessing services by individuals, families, businesses, educators and community members
    - Lack of clarity of requirements, policies, procedures within various service delivery systems
    - Lack of flexibility in various service delivery systems
    - Lack of access to assistive devices and rehabilitative technology for individuals
4. Insufficient Opportunities for Professional Development for Service Delivery Personnel
    - Person-centered training is not required for all professional service delivery personnel across key state agencies
    - No specific minimum requirements for transition planning currently exist for service delivery systems
    - Current professional development for service delivery personnel (educators, job coaches, etc.) specific to individualized employment skills and matching with potential job opportunities is inadequate.
5. Insufficient Resources for Training and Education Leading to Employment
    - Lack of options for skills training (applicable to both individuals and service delivery personnel)
    - Limited postsecondary educational opportunities (i.e. vocational/technical schools, college-based programs for students with intellectual disabilities) for individuals that lead to employment
6. Current Cultural Mindset
    - Low expectations of persons with disabilities and their contribution to workforce (applicable to individuals, families, educators, providers, businesses and community members)
    - Fear of loss of benefits, such as Social Security benefits, health care (applicable to individuals, families and providers)
    - Safety concerns (applicable to individuals, families, educators, businesses and community members)
    - Fear of costs of accommodations, possible liability, legal issues (applicable to businesses)
7. Inadequacies in Transportation Services for Employment Purposes
    - Limited transportation options in some areas of the state
    - Services provided by community action agencies, which prioritize transportation to medical appointments, can be unreliable
    - Geographic restrictions, service hours, eligibility processes and fixed routes may rule out many job opportunities
    - Costs may be too high for a regular commute for individuals living near or below the poverty line
8. Lack of recognized diploma in place of the standard high school diploma for students with disabilities
    - Many businesses refuse to consider any applicant who does not have a high school diploma
    - A significant number of students with disabilities do not graduate with a standard diploma

APPENDIX E

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER FORUMS ON WAIVER RENEWALS

One of the primary sources of job development and employment services for Tennesseans with intellectual disabilities is through the Medicaid waiver programs, funded by TennCare and administered by the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. In 2014, Tennessee will renew these waivers, per federal requirements with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

In preparation for this process, TennCare and DIDD launched a process to analyze the programs as they exist today and identify areas for improvement to be included in the renewal applications. In an effort to broaden opportunities for input and to gather ideas directly from individuals with disabilities and their family members, TennCare and DIDD jointly hosted regional community meetings. The state received valuable feedback, including affirmation of how important employment services are to the individuals with disabilities who are enrolled in these programs.

A summary of those meetings is included below. A full report detailing the meetings and feedback, including methodology of the analysis, is documented in the Stakeholder Forum Summary. (Available at http://tn.gov/tenncare/forms/ID_DDStakeholderInputSummary.pdf).

Whose voices were heard? Six community meetings were held across Tennessee early in 2014. Two sessions were held in each of the three regions served by the DIDD Regional Offices. In each location, one session was held for individuals with disabilities and family members (including conservators, etc.). These sessions included those receiving services and those on the waiting list for services. Another session was held for home - and community-based services (HCBS) providers and disability advocates. The sessions had a PowerPoint presentation providing an overview of 1915c waivers and the waiver renewal process, followed by discussion circles focused around these questions:

1. What are the kinds of HCBS that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities need most?
2. If a person with intellectual or developmental disabilities lives at home with their family, what are the kinds of supports that family caregivers need?
3. What are the ways that HCBS for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can be improved?
4. What are ways to provide HCBS to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities more cost effectively so that more people who need services and supports can receive them?

What did we learn? The community meetings yielded data from 58 individuals with disabilities, family members and conservators (33 receiving waiver services and 25 waiting to receive waiver services) who provided a total of 332 responses, and 133 providers and 23 advocates who contributed 964 responses, including rankings of the most referred responses to each question. Thus, a total of 1,296 responses from 214 respondents were collected and analyzed. For both individuals/family groups, employment and day services are a key priority, with employment outranking day services among the needs identified by providers as well as individuals receiving waiver services.

We recognize that the number of respondents in each of the individuals and family groups is small in comparison to the total number of waiver participants and the total number of individuals waiting for services. We further acknowledge that those who opted to participate in the stakeholder forums are not necessarily representative of the perspectives of the group as a whole. However, the input they provided is incredibly valuable in terms of helping to elucidate the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families and to guide future program design.

With valuable stakeholder input gathered, TennCare and DIDD have developed a concept paper (available at http://www.tn.gov/tenncare/forms/ConceptPaper.pdf) regarding how these insights will be used to inform the renewal of the Arlington and Statewide Waivers, as well as how they might inform new program models for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The concept paper includes an emphasis on employment services in future programs serving people with disabilities in Tennessee.