

Wisconsin Council on Children's Long-Term Supports

Date: January 15, 2014
To: Governor Scott Walker
From: DHS Council on Children with Long-Term Support Needs
Topic: Employment Roundtable-Preparing Youth with Disabilities to Work
Recommendations for Supporting Families to Achieve Positive Employment Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities

The Children's Council is very pleased to hear your interest and leadership for supporting competitive and integrated employment outcomes for people with disabilities. As members of the Council, we are committed to working with you and the Department of Health Services to come up with workable solutions that will empower and support families and individuals with disabilities.

How many people do you know whose early job opportunities were a result of their parents or other family member relationships within their community?

We believe that families are the lynch pin to achieving desirable outcomes for young adults with disabilities and are critical partners in the systems change process to improve employment outcomes. Values about work and contribution come from families. Family members play key roles in identifying, advocating and securing opportunities for their family members to participate in work and in navigate all the agencies and partners involved. Research shows that frequently jobs come from family relationships and connections and the responsibility for maintaining a job falls to parents.

Families who have access to three key strategies for support are better able to support their young adult with a disability to participate in meaningful ways within their community and work environments. These proven strategies for supporting families, 1. information and skill-building opportunities; 2. emotional supports and 3. needed goods and services, should be integral components of all new initiatives supporting people with disabilities.

The following recommendations are intended to advance your employment initiatives. These recommendations will support families to be as effective as they can in supporting young adults with disabilities to seek, secure and maintain employment.

- 1. Providing families access to timely, high quality information and supports about integrated and competitive employment by:**
 - a. Starting early and continuing often to help families shape a positive vision for the future and actualize that vision as partners and advocates with schools, Children's Long-Term Supports (CLTS), and their communities.
 - b. Ensuring that CLTS interactions between providers and families, as well as ongoing training for families focuses on vision setting, future possibilities

including employment, partnering with professionals, and maximizing school and community resources.

- c. Assuring families have access to information that is understandable, reliable and culturally appropriate by working with family organizations and advisory committees to develop and review all materials directed to families.
- d. Supporting opportunities for families to acquire skill and knowledge to be effective partners and advocate.

2. Increase access to emotional supports through family networks including adults who are successfully employed by:

- a. Supporting and encouraging family-to-family networks and connections to provide emotional supports, information and an expansive vision for the future.
- b. Providing learning opportunities to assure families focus on strengths, interests, possibilities and opportunities. These opportunities should include contact with families who have older children as well as adults with disabilities who are employed.
- c. Increasing access to one-to-one service coordination supports for families who are seeking assistance and those on the waiting list for CLTS.
- d. Research shows that

3. Rebalance the System to Provide *Equitable* Access for all Eligible Children with Disabilities by:

- a. Increasing funding to reduce and eventually eliminate waiting lists for access to the CLTS for all children waiting, regardless of diagnosis. Any new funding should reduce the inequity between children with different disabilities. This is best accomplished by eliminating waiting list which will assure that families have the best match to needed supports rather than having to choose the only open door, even when this does not meet their needs.

The Council recognizes the importance of specific implementation steps and measurable outcomes for these strategies; these will be developed as work moves forward. We appreciate your consideration of these recommendations and look forward to working with you in the future.

Thank you,
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