

IL DSP Workforce Initiative
Steering/Advisory Committee Meeting
October 25, 2004

Summary of the Initiative:

The Illinois Comprehensive Workforce Development Initiative (shortened to DSP Workforce Initiative) is an initiative to increase the recruitment and retention of direct support professionals (DSPs) throughout Illinois. This initiative is supported by the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities (ICDD) with funding for the next 3 years. The University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration (UofMN-ICI) is the lead bringing their knowledge, expertise, and resources in this area. They are collaborating with the Institute on Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois at Chicago (IDHD at UIC) to ensure the initiative makes a specific impact on the unique system within Illinois. Over the 3 year period, UofMN will slowly phase out of the project and IDHD at UIC will take on a larger role. Also, the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) in Cambridge, MA is consulting. The initiative is using a three-pronged approach to create systemic change throughout Illinois that will increase recruitment and retention of DSPs.

First, a *Steering/Advisory Committee (SAC)* has been created to effect systemic change in Illinois regarding workforce issues. This group is charged with the creation of a Workforce Plan which will be the guiding vision for a statewide systemic impact in Illinois. This group consists of Policymakers, Advocacy Organizations, Trade Associations, and Council Members. Also, one representative from each employer agency is welcome to participate in the SAC Meetings.

Second, *14 employer organizations and 4 alternates* were selected to be part of the initiative. The employer organizations all provide some type of services for people with developmental disabilities in a community setting and employ DSPs. The benefits of participating in this project include the following:

- An opportunity to shape and participate in a statewide plan to address direct support workforce issues in Illinois.
- A chance to hear and share information about working intervention strategies to improve recruitment and retention of direct support professionals.
- A chance to participate in training that teaches intervention strategies for improving recruitment and retention outcomes as well as how to train other organizations and families on these issues and their solutions.
- Access to project products and tools such as the realistic job preview video, marketing toolkit, and on-line training for direct support professionals and frontline supervisors.
- Also, the 14 employer organizations (excluding alternates) will receive technical assistance to overcome barriers to recruitment and retention.

Third, *10 individuals and/or families* who direct their own support staff will be selected for the initiative. They will receive training specific to their needs and perspectives. They will receive the same benefits from the project as well as the technical assistance from project staff. We are currently looking for individuals with developmental disabilities and/or families who hire and fire their own direct care workers. We project to have this group selected by January 2005.

MEETING NOTES:

The Steering Committee focus is systemic change through the Workforce Development Plan for Illinois. People on the Steering Committee should be a conduit of information about the initiative and be invested in making systemic change through policy analysis.

Definition of Direct Support Professional (created by DSPs)-- The direct support professional assists the participant to lead a self-directed life and contribute to his/her community and encourages attitudes and behaviors that enhance inclusion in his/her community.

*Note: DSPs are expected to do a lot more than just personal care. There is often a disconnect between the expectations placed on DSPs and the support given to them to achieve these expectations with success.

Check out the website: www.ildspinitiative.com

Best practices for other states were described by Marianne Taylor from HSRI and Amy Hewitt from UofMN-ICI. Look at the website for links to some of the descriptions from specific states. Especially look at the Kansas Workforce Plan as an example.

Workforce Development Plan:

The majority of the meeting was spend talking about the development of the Workforce Plan that will be the guiding vision to create systemic change within Illinois. It is critical that all perspectives and voices are incorporated into this plan so that we can all be reaching toward the same vision.

What is the purpose of this Workforce Development Plan? (Responses from the group)

- To reduce turnover
- To retain a quality workforce
- To improve community access for people who are supported
- To create a stronger DSP workforce
- To get better service and higher customer satisfaction
- To raise the bar on how we define quality

What is needed to accomplish the purpose? (Responses from the group)

- To make sure all the stakeholders are involved in the creation of the plan
- To make sure that key stakeholders see and hear the Workforce Development Plan such as DSPs, funders of services, the Governor, etc.

Strategies of Interest were discussed in depth and will be broken down into major topics for next time.

An orientation and training meeting was held the two days following the SAC Meeting to welcome the newly selected employer organization and orient everyone to the project. This orientation and training was open to all members of the Stakeholders Advisory Committee. In the future, there will be monthly training events for the selected employer

organizations. Also, one representative from each employer organization is welcome to attend the SAC meetings.

Next SAC Meeting will be January 20th in Chicago.

Mark your calendars and reply via the website if you able to attend or not.