

RAMSEY COUNTY DISABILITY SERVICE TEAM: EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

December 2010; updated February 2011

Ramsey County has consistently been a leader in efforts to support individuals with disabilities to live in the community. A basic element of living in the community is being able to contribute to one's own self-sufficiency that is, being employed at a competitive wage.

Ramsey County has been a member of the Minnesota Employment First Coalition (the Coalition) since its inception in 2007. In the document – The Minnesota Employment First Summit: A Consensus Report¹, the Coalition published its vision and recommendations for advancing the employment rate of individuals with disabilities. Its vision is “to make employment the first priority and preferred outcome of people with disabilities.” For the Coalition, this means:

- Expecting, encouraging, providing, creating and rewarding integrated employment in the workforce;
- Employment at minimum or competitive wages and benefits;
- Employment as the first and preferred outcome for working-age youth and adults with disabilities;
- Employment for individuals with disabilities includes those with complex and significant disabilities.

In addition, the Coalition has defined “employment in the workforce” as follows:

- Where employees with disabilities are included on the payroll of a competitive business or industry (unless self-employed);
- Where the assigned employment tasks offer at least minimum or prevailing wages and benefits; and
- Offers opportunities for integration and interactions with co-workers without disabilities, with customers and/or the general public.

At the First Annual Disability and Employment Conference in 2009, the Minnesota Employment Policy Initiative established the goal “to double the employment rate of Minnesotans with disabilities by year 2015.” The current employment rate is 22%².

RAMSEY COUNTY EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

The Initial Phase: 2008-2010

The Ramsey County Disability Services Team has undertaken an Employment Initiative that reflects and operationalizes the Coalition's mission. The first step was the development of a logic model for its Employment Initiative (Appendix A).

Examples of activities related to the action steps outlined in the logic model include:

- *Changing case management practice:* offering employment-focused trainings for case managers; participation in external conferences and activities sponsored by the MN Employment Training and Technical Assistance Center (MNTAT); circulation of an e-newsletter highlighting success stories and resources.
- *Providing training and technical assistance:* served as a lead organization for a “Community Action Team” (CAT) that received over 52 hours of training and technical assistance from nationally recognized trainers and consultants through MNTAT; partnership with metro counties, Pathways to Employment and a provider to develop and train on a tool-kit to guide job development with 19 organizations.
- *Communicating with stakeholders:* Convened a planning committee to host a local Employment First Summit with a diverse group of community stakeholders; ongoing collaboration with numerous partners including contracted providers, Citizens Advisory Council, MN APSE and the Coalition.
- *Changing public policy:* Instituted internal policy changes, partnership with the Coalition to convene a “mini-summit” specific to policy issues; collaboration with the Minnesota Employment Policy Initiative (MEPI); representation on DHS workgroups.

In addition, it has created a baseline of data that describes the current employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities receiving employment services. This was done by having agencies providing employment services to Ramsey County individuals with disabilities submit individual-specific information about employment, average hourly wage per week and average number of hours worked per week for each individual twice a year since 2008. Reporting periods are typically April and October of each year.

Agencies that are providing employment services do so under a service type - day training and habilitation (DT&H), pre-vocational and supported employment (SE) services. Currently, there are 20 agencies with contracts with Ramsey County to provide employment services. The agencies provide employment services to approximately 1,400 Ramsey County individuals with disabilities using the following funding streams:

- Home and community-based waivers – Developmental Disability (DD) , Community Alternatives for Disabled Individuals (CADI), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI);
- CCSA (Children and Community Services Act).

The Ramsey County Research and Evaluation Unit analyzes the data and prepares a report that summarizes the data by:

- Number of individuals with disabilities participating in employment services
- Number of individuals with disabilities in employment type (individual, work crew or in-facility)
- Average hourly wage per week
- Average number of hours worked per week

- Type of payroll agent – employer or provider.

Regardless of reporting period, the data consistently show:

- Individuals with disabilities in individual employment have a higher average hourly wage and work, on average, more hours per week than their counterparts on work crews or in in-facility employment. Illustration 1 shows an example of this.

ILLUSTRATION 1:

Comparison of Wage and Hours Worked by Employment Type in October 2010

Employment Type	Average Hourly Wage/Week	Average Number of Hours Worked/Week
Individual	\$8.43	16.9
Work Crew	\$6.00	9.5
In-Facility	\$3.91	5.0

- The hourly wage for individuals with disabilities in individual employment tends to be at or above minimum wage. For example, 205 of the 213 individuals with disabilities in individual employment were reported to have an hourly wage of \$5.25 or higher.
- Of the individuals with disabilities who are individually employed, the employer is the payroll agent 94% of the time.
- A smaller percentage of individuals with disabilities receiving employment services are working in individual employment as compared those in either work crews or in-facility employment. Illustration 2 shows an example of this.

ILLUSTRATION 2:

Percentage of Individuals with Disabilities by Employment Type in October 2010

Employment Type	Percent of Individuals with Disabilities
Individual	14%
Work Crew	28%
In-Facility	41%

Second Phase: 2011-2015

Ramsey County believes that individual employment must be the first priority and preferred outcome for individuals with disabilities receiving employment services. Thus, it has established the benchmark – to double the percentage of individuals with disabilities in individual employment receiving employment services by 2015. This means that by 2015, 30% of the Ramsey County individuals with

disabilities who are receiving employment services from agencies will

- Have jobs that have them as employees on the payroll of their respective employer;
- Are receiving at least the current minimum wage.

The Disability Services Team will continue to require that agencies providing employment services for Ramsey County individuals with disabilities to submit individual-specific information about employment, wages, and hours worked a year. Based on this information, the Disability Service Team will provide reports documenting process toward attainment of its goal.

Other proposed plan activities towards reaching this goal over the next five years include the following:

- Disseminate the Ramsey County Employment First Summit Summary Report and execute action steps that align with the recommendations from the report
- Convene another summit to promote accountability and document progress towards becoming an Employment First community
- Continue to work with MNTAT and other partners to offer training on innovative practices such as Discovery and Customized Employment to Ramsey County stakeholders.
- Partner with educators to explore ways to increase employment outcomes for students in transition
- Explore strategies to identify individuals with disabilities who are in individual employment but are NOT receiving employment services from the traditional employment service providers or with no employment-related support services.
- Emphasize the importance of work for any individual receiving a home and community based waiver, with particular focus on those receiving a CADI, TBI or CAC waiver.

¹ www.mnapse.org

² First Annual Disability and Employment Conference: Conference Proceedings. December 2009.
<http://www.mntat.org/docs/Final2009ConferenceProceedings.pdf>

APPENDIX A: Employment Initiative: Logic Model

BELIEFS AND ASSUMPTIONS	STAKEHOLDERS	2011/2012 ACTION STEPS (what we need to do)	SHORT TERM/INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES (From the outset, how will we know we are moving toward our long-term outcomes?)	LONG TERM OUTCOMES (What is the change we ultimately want to see?)
<p>We believe working fundamental to adulthood. All individuals deserve to work, to have discretionary incomes, and to contribute to costs. Work is social capital. It is how we get our worth, self-esteem, our voice. It gives us choice. It is an expectation for working age adults.</p> <p>We believe all people have equal value: persons with disabilities and people without disabilities</p> <p>We believe Ramsey County is whole and all people are enriched when all residents, including people with disabilities, are a part of the regular workforce.</p> <p>We believe individuals with significant disabilities can be supported to work if they have a good plan, supportive employer and access to appropriate ongoing supports.</p> <p>We believe individuals deserve the right to informed choice when choosing work. Informed choice includes receiving complete information about choices & availability of employment options. Individuals need employment experiences to be able to make informed choice.</p>	<p>Individuals & their families</p> <p>Advocates</p> <p>Employers/Business Community</p> <p>Schools</p> <p>Service Providers</p> <p>Case Managers</p> <p>Service Team</p> <p>Ramsey County Government</p> <p>Citizens of Ramsey County</p> <p>Policy Makers</p> <p>Pathways to Employment</p> <p>Vocational Rehabilitation</p> <p>DHS</p>	<p>Case Management Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Training on customized employment practices and trends related to employment for people with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> Develop and implement pilot projects <input type="checkbox"/> Support people and families to develop an employment plan 	<p>People experience informed choice about work.</p> <p>The number of graduates choosing employment increases.</p> <p>The number of people employed increases.</p> <p>Employment is regarded as an outcome and part of life, not a service.</p>	<p>Individuals with disabilities are integrated in the community in typical employment and other areas of life.</p> <p>As persons reach working age they expect to be employed in their communities.</p> <p>Individuals, with their employers, build and nurture relationships and utilize their networks to provide the typical support a worker needs.</p> <p>The entire work community is enriched by the inclusion of individuals with disabilities.</p> <p>Federal, state and local policy support and incent employment for all people.</p>
		<p>Community Partnerships & Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Build opportunities for increasing training and technical assistance for all stakeholders, including people, families and schools. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant projects • Partner with Technical Assistance entity • Partner with MN Employment 1st Coalition • Ramsey County Community Action Team <input type="checkbox"/> Partner with state & local government to be a model employer <input type="checkbox"/> Project Search <input type="checkbox"/> Host another summit to build a community of practice around employment 	<p>Section: staff are educated and proficient in employment planning.</p> <p>Section: has ongoing training programs.</p> <p>Section: has policies that support & incent employment including annual employment goals for each student in transition and working age adult.</p>	
		<p>Communication Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Present employment initiative overview, data summary and local summit findings to internal & external stakeholders 	<p>Providers: have an infrastructure for services that are grounded in customized employment practice.</p> <p>Providers: routinely access training and technical assistance.</p>	
		<p>Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Build upon and expand data collection <input type="checkbox"/> Track benchmarks <input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate ISP data into data collection efforts 	<p>System: Includes a strong and consistent community of practice that includes all stakeholders.</p> <p>System: Payment structure is person centered and supports employment.</p> <p>System: State policy supports and incents employment.</p>	
		<p>Public Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in stakeholder groups whose focus is to increase employment outcomes. <input type="checkbox"/> Partnerships with MN Employment First Coalition, Pathways to Employment, APSE, Metros Counties, DHS, and DEED <input type="checkbox"/> Review and implement recommendations from MN Employment and 	<p>Ramsey County and other businesses: are model employers who value and seek out people with disabilities.</p> <p>All stakeholders: take risks to advance full integration/employment.</p>	

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