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Workforce Development Supports for Individuals with Disabilities in the State of New Jersey: An Overview of Best Practices

Prepared for New Jersey Governor's Office

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Outline

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Research Questions

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New Jersey's System

Five Themes

1. Clarity and Transparency
2. Putting People First
3. Enhancing School-to-Work Transition
4. Engaging with Employers
5. Government as a Model Employer

Conclusion



Introduction

Where do individuals with disabilities stand?

- 2018-40% of working age adults with disabilities were employed nationally compared to 79% of individuals without disabilities.¹
- Higher levels of poverty.
- Underrepresented in the workforce.

Governor Murphy's Jobs NJ plan

- Foster a stronger and fairer economy.
- Focus on populations that face barriers to employment.

¹ The LEAD Center. (n.d.). *New Jersey DRIVE Data and Resources to Inspire a Vision of Employment*.
http://drivedisabilityemployment.org/new-jersey#quicktabs-states_big_screen=1



Research Questions

1. What is the current status of workforce development support for individuals with disabilities in New Jersey?
2. What are best practices (policies, programs, pilot programs) in other states?
3. Based on our findings, what initiatives could potentially be implemented in New Jersey?



Methods

Literature Review

- Ran from January-May 2020
- Communication with Governor's office and research group meetings.
- Conclusions drawn.

Interview Information

- Recommendations from the Governor's office and contacts from the Heldrich Center.
- Snowball sampling
- February-April 2020
- Government agencies, advocacy groups, nonprofits, and academic research institutions.



New Jersey's System

Department
of Human
Services

Division of
Disability
Services (DDS)

Division of
Developmental
Disabilities
(DDD)

Commission
for the Blind
and Visually
Impaired
(CBVI)

Department
of Labor and
Workforce
Development

Division of
Vocational
Rehabilitation
Services
(DVRS)



New Jersey's System

What does each agency do?

- DDD/DDS - support services
- DVRS - employment and vocational rehabilitation (VR) services
 - DDD provides follow-along services
- CBVI - comprehensive services for those who are blind or visually impaired

How many people receive services?

- DDD - 25k people eligible¹
- DDS - 15k requests for I & R services each year²
- DVRS - served 17k people in 2018³
- CBVI - served 3k individuals in 2016⁴

¹ Division of Developmental Disabilities. (n.d.). *About DDD*. <https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/home/about/>

² Division of Disability Services. (n.d.). *About DDS*. <https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dds/about/>

³ New Jersey Department of Labor. (2019). *State Rehabilitation Council Annual Report for FY 2019*. <https://careerconnections.nj.gov/careerconnections/document/plan/2019SRCAnnualReport.pdf>

⁴ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. (2017). *2016 State Rehabilitation Council Annual Report*. https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/cbvi/publications/srcar/2016_SRC_AR_Final.pdf



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Five Themes

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1. Clarity and Transparency

Administrative
complexity

Funding
structure

Outreach and
work
disincentives



1. Clarity and Transparency

How New Jersey is doing

- Administrative complexity
 - MOUs, WIOA State Plan, Task Force
- Funding structure
 - Medicaid fee-for-service
- Outreach and work disincentives
 - DB 101, NJWINS

Implementing best practices

- Service-delivery siloes
- Feedback from individuals with disabilities
- Sheltered work and clarity of objectives



2. Putting People First



Traditional VR vs.
Person-centered



Customized
employment
(CE)



Sheltered
work



2. Putting People First

How New Jersey is doing

- Employment First
- Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE)
- Feedback from individuals with disabilities

Implementing best practices

- When is customized employment (CE) appropriate
 - Certain criteria must be met
 - Not the right answer for all clients
- Can be more person-centered without doing CE for everyone



3. Enhancing the School-to-Work Transition

High school to work/college

Early Intervention



*Integrated
programs*



*Post-secondary
programs*



3. Enhancing the School-to-Work Transition

How New Jersey is doing

- Employment First
- Post-Secondary Programs
- Low connection rate
- WIOA
- Rutgers University

Implementing best practices

- Provide supports when necessary
 - Could be in the form of skills training
- Creates connections between schools and businesses
- Involves all major stakeholders
- Improve access



4. Engaging with Employers

Employers have preconceived notions about employees with disabilities that presents an additional hurdle when joining the workforce

Employers stand to benefit by hiring people with disabilities

Companies that were considered “champions” in disability inclusion achieved 28% higher revenue, double the net income, over a four-year period in comparison to companies that did not prioritize disability inclusion



4. Engaging with Employers

How New Jersey is Doing

- Work Opportunity Tax Credit
- In 2019, employers applied for 521 WOTC certifications for employees with disabilities

Implementing Best Practices

- Make it a company goal to increase workplace supports
- Work closely with local partners in the workplace, vocational rehabilitation and disability system



5. Government as a Model Employer

“State as Model Employers” or “SAME” policy

- State governments are major employers around the country and hold potential as major employers of people with disabilities



5. Government as a Model Employer

How New Jersey is Doing

- NJ Law Against Discrimination
- Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action
- Current hiring and retention policies

Implementing Best Practices

- Top-down leadership
- Targeted recruitment and hiring
- Strong retention policies
- Expansion of accessibility and inclusion



Conclusion

Actionable Steps

1. Clarity and Transparency
2. Putting People First
3. Enhancing School-to-Work Transition
4. Engaging with Employers
5. Government as a Model Employer



1. Clarity and Transparency

- Bring together various stakeholders to **improve the coordination and communication** within the system.
- Produce a **schematic or flowchart**
- Conduct more **robust outreach** to spell out the complexities of the system, particularly to improve the awareness of the benefits counseling



2. Putting People First

- Provide **training to staff**
- Incorporate **features of customized employment** into the regular VR services
- **Pilot a customized employment program** for a subset of VR clients
- **Evaluate the success of collaborations** between DVRS and DDD and DDS
- **Use data on employment outcomes** collected under WIOA to inform future initiatives.



3. Enhancing the School-to-Work Transition

- Arrange meetings with New Jersey **colleges and universities** to **improve access to postsecondary education**.
- Identify **obstacles causing low connection rate** for referral and attendance rates for individuals with disabilities in **pursuing post-secondary education** to improve access.
- **Improving interventions** in school to **encourage high expectations** for children with disabilities to break stigmas and pursue employment or higher education.



4. Engaging with Employers

- **Leverage the State's influence** by increasing **communication** with businesses in New Jersey
- **Designate** a staff person to be the **point of contact for businesses**
- The State can **highlight New Jersey companies** that have **successfully** implemented policies to hire more people with disabilities



5. Government as a Model Employer

- **New Jersey Civil Service Commission** can **collect and report** information about representation of people with disabilities in the state workforce
- The New Jersey Civil Service eligibility list can be **expanded to include preference for applicants with disabilities**
- **State agencies** can **create internship programs** specifically for people with disabilities



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Thank you!

