



# State Employment Leadership Network

## SELN Findings and Observations Report 2020 State Strategic Employment Assessment

Connecticut Department of Developmental Services

February 2021

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### Process for development of the report

State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) team reviewed:

- Connecticut core team meetings to review the state strategic employment assessment and discuss the current system structure (June – September 2020)
- State policy documents and resource materials (including the 2019 Reimagining Employment and Day statewide forums)
- Feedback and discussion with additional groups: service provider organizations, families, self-advocates, case managers, interagency staff and partners

### SELN Project Team

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### Introduction

The SELN is a membership-based network of state intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) agencies committed to making changes in their respective service systems. The SELN is an active and engaged learning community where members meet to connect, collaborate, and share information and lessons learned across state lines and system boundaries.

Participating state agencies build cross-community support for pressing employment-related issues and policies at state and federal levels. States commit to work together and engage in a series of activities to analyze key elements in their systems to improve the integrated employment outcomes for their citizens with IDD. States receive customized technical assistance to meet the unique needs of their state based on the current system of supports and goals for improvement. Emphasis is placed on member states building the capacity to improve and expand the employment infrastructure.

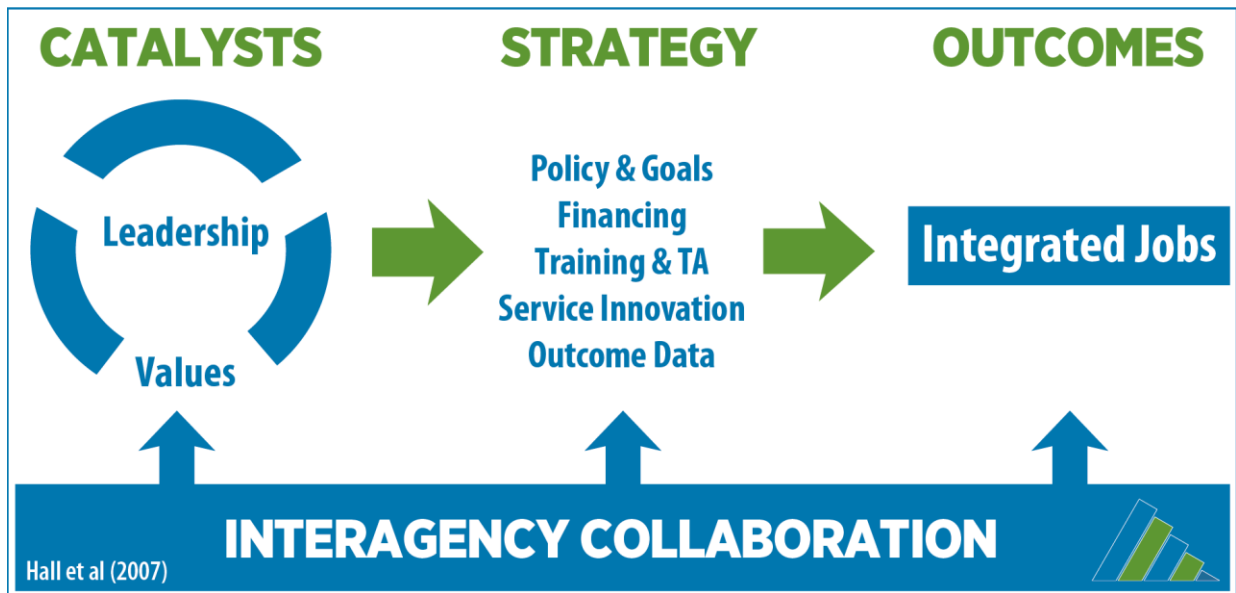
The SELN project team guides member states through a detailed process to both assist the SELN project team with learning about the state system and to assist the state member with organizing and planning for future system changes needed to increase opportunities for those seeking competitive integrated employment and greater community inclusion.

To aid Connecticut in the prioritizing and decision-making process, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) completed the SELN State Strategic Employment Full Assessment describing the state's infrastructure. DDS also invited partners to participate in feedback sessions through in-person focus

groups to gather input on current perceptions and experiences. Information gathered throughout the process contributed to this Findings and Observations report prepared by SELN staff.

### Organizing the Report

This report identifies the seven key elements, as depicted below in the Higher Performing Framework, that are essential to improving and achieving success as a system in supporting people to become employed in community jobs.



The report summarizes the results of the entire review process as “Key Findings” and suggests opportunities for improvement in “Potential Focus Areas.” The state agency and other partners may use the report as the basis for the development of a work plan detailing the outcomes, activities to achieve set goals, and strategies to pursue in the months and years ahead.

The SELN team will conduct follow-up meetings with DDD to identify priority outcomes and develop effective implementation strategies on the state’s selected areas of focus. It is important for state leadership to respond through action and implementation of a work plan that includes measurable system improvements over time, communicated regularly to the field, and with consistent stakeholder involvement and feedback.

# Executive Summary

## Key Themes

1. Connecticut has made a significant investment in offering a full array of service types however, these investments have resulted in layering over traditional, segregated services rather than reforming service options. This has led to the expectation that when an individual exits high school they will receive full-time weekday services.
2. DDS has invested in many employment-related positions across the central office, regional offices, case management, and self-advocates which provides an opportunity for a coordinated strategy.
3. Connecticut has been a leader in testing outcome-based funding models for employment supports.
4. Shifting emphasis and investment from group jobs to individual jobs remains a challenge.
5. Stakeholders report inconsistent and, at times, confusing communication about Department priorities and emphasis on employment first. This is reflected, in part, in the need for clear standards and goals in service planning, data reporting, and quality management processes.
6. Interagency coordination and development of shared goals and processes with key partners including the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and Department of Education (DOE) would help clarify communication about process and priorities.

## Priority Action Items

### Priority Action Items

1. Communication and outreach should include the development of clear system-level goals for the expansion and improvement of employment outcomes that can be used to guide regional and provider level goals. These communication strategies must include plain language reference materials for individuals and family members.
2. Establish an employment planning council that brings together key DDS personnel that are accountable for employment development, messaging, and outcome monitoring.
3. Conduct a thorough analysis of all employment and day services including definitions, funding, and utilization.
4. Coordinate the service definitions review with a utilization review and update of Individual Supported Employment (ISE) incentive payments.
5. Develop a more comprehensive and coordinated infrastructure for capacity building, including an ongoing investment in training and technical assistance across multiple stakeholders.
6. Work with BRS and DOE to establish a collaborative understanding of each other's system demands, policies, and procedures when addressing employment first objectives.
7. Develop a process map and guidance for individuals, families, and case managers that address movement between DOE, BRS, and DDS services.
8. Establish more robust strategies for collecting and transparently reporting employment outcome data.
9. Establish guidance for the Quality Service Review (QSR) process to review employment outcomes and services and set quality improvement goals and reasonable measures and accountability targets.



## Elements

- I. Leadership. *Clear and unambiguous commitment to employment in individual community jobs, from top leadership through all levels in the system. Local and state-level administrators are identifiable as champions for employment.*

### A. Key Findings

1. In the last couple of years, DDS has recognized the need to establish a stronger position on integrated employment for those working in the system, and those seeking services/supports. DDS' establishment of a dedicated division for employment and day services along with hiring staff, signaled a move to create the needed system change structure. These efforts are recognized and appreciated by many, also reflecting the continued work needed to resolve past issues and establish new and clearly delineated employment expectations. Stakeholders also described DDS flexibility in supporting development initiatives as a strength that can support the development of capacity for employment supports at the provider level.
2. Discussions highlighted concerns or differences in understanding about:
  - a. The budgeting and financing of services
  - b. The individual planning process and how employment is emphasized as a priority outcome
  - c. The consistency of Connecticut's message about being an employment first state
  - d. Whether someone will gain or lose if they prioritize community-based employment
  - e. The relative ease of entering a facility-based day support option versus community-based options
  - f. The influence of access to transportation services and whether they are guaranteed as part of the service
  - g. A continuing perception that people are "safe" in facility-based supports
  - h. The need to recognize the impact of work on the family structure and how to engage and support families in the employment process
3. There is a substantial investment in staff roles that include employment as a priority including central office, regional employment coordinators, transition case managers, and self-advocates. Because of the varied supervisory structures for these positions these roles don't currently have a clear place where they come together for planning and coordination purposes.
4. Based on conversations with stakeholders it may be useful to clarify the role of the Director of Employment and Day Services, and the position's relationship to regional employment leads. Some stakeholders indicated an expectation that the position would focus on employer outreach and relationship development.
5. Self-advocate coordinators provide a strong resource for messaging and outreach but report that they currently have very few requests for training about employment.
6. Stakeholder groups described varied understanding and communication about DDS priorities and expectations regarding work. For example, some stakeholders described clear messaging that Connecticut does not support sheltered work, while others described the use of sheltered work and day services and that it is routinely described as "work" in planning conversations. Some stakeholders indicated that group supported employment was emphasized during service

planning. Finally, some respondents indicated there was not a clear message from the department about promoting employment as a priority outcome.

7. Implementation of a shift toward stronger employment outcomes and a decrease in utilizing non-work options has varied greatly by region and provider organization. It was reported that providers are aware of the expectation to improve employment outcomes however, maintaining the status quo appears to be reinforced through historical culture and compliance focus.

#### Key Employment Champions Include

- Self-advocates and self-advocate coordinators
- Case managers
- Job development leadership network (JDLN) and its role in forging a relationship with businesses
- DDS' new Employment and Day Services Division, the Contract division, and self-determination directors
- Several family advocacy groups
- DD Council and recent furthering of customized employment related activities
- PRAT (Planning Resource Authorization Team) – authorizes service funding
- Assistant Regional Directors (ARD) are resource administrators who reinforce DDS directives and provide materials

## B. Potential Focus Areas

1. Establish an employment planning group or council that brings together key DDS personnel that are accountable for employment development and communication together.
2. Review and consider alternative supervisory and reporting structures for staff positions that focus on employment and establish clear accountabilities.
3. Engage regional offices in the development of more consistent operational procedures and practices across the state and identify expected outcomes.
4. Determine where the system is breaking down, then clarify how each contributor and level of the system has a role in improving integrated employment outcomes across Connecticut. Start internally, analyzing all the levels and positions centrally and regionally, then expand external outside of DDS to establish complementary relationships with partner organizations. For instance, analyze the expectations for case managers and providers on identifying services and authorizations, identifying who is or should be driving the discussion with individuals and other team members (e.g., case managers, provider staff) or how that action is shared.
5. Review and analyze the communication practices to identify needed improvements. Seek to strengthen the understanding of all contributors on their role. Provide specific learning opportunities when a new policy or program is established.

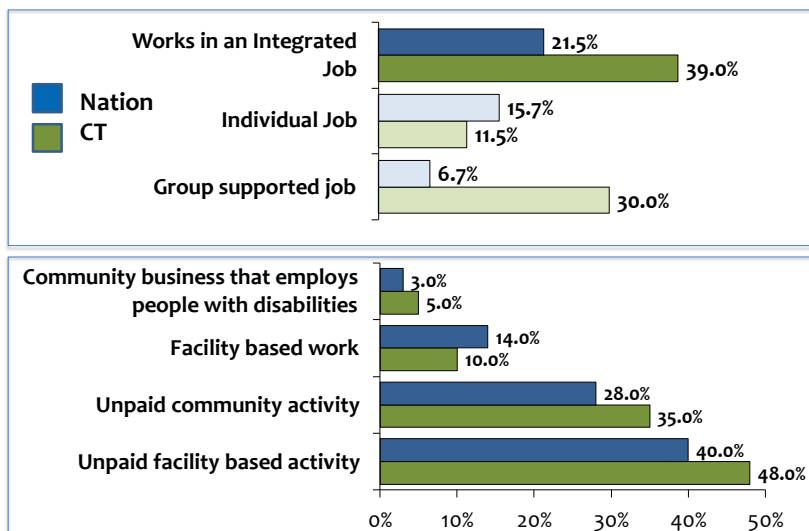
**Strategic Goals and Operating Policies.** *Employment is identified as the preferred outcome in state developmental disabilities policy and is supported by program goals and operating practices that are clearly designed to achieve that objective.*

## A. Key Findings

1. Communication channels and dissemination of information are central to keeping all parties in sync. Considerable feedback was shared on the ineffectiveness of current practices. Throughout discussions, opposite views were expressed, both internally and externally, on whether employment is a priority, what employment first means in Connecticut, who is accountable for achieving better outcomes, and what the consequences are when that does not happen.
2. Additionally, there were discussions about the differing perceptions between employment and other day options. This includes, perceptions of where people are “safe” and how heavily weighted that factor should be in planning decisions. It also involves where is it easier to get

transportation services, the importance of the social aspect for individuals in group settings, and questioning whether the job market is really welcoming. Other misperceptions include whether services offer flexible schedules similar to what people without disabilities might need, and reasonable expectations of families.

3. National Core Indicator data indicate that Connecticut supports a diverse array of day outcomes. For some years the state has reported a high percent in integrated employment, although that is influenced by a historically high level of participation in small group supported jobs. DDS data suggest that participation in group supported employment has been declining, in part because of the steep increase in the minimum wage in recent years. Connecticut lags behind the nation in participation in individual competitive integrated jobs despite the investment in incentive payments. The number participating in facility-based work is below the national average, and the number participating in unpaid community activity is higher than the national average, suggesting progress toward the principles in the Home and Community Based (HCB) Settings rule. At the same time, participation in an unpaid facility-based activity is higher than the national average.



National Core Indicators 2017-2018

4. These data may reflect the variability in stakeholder understanding of DDS priorities. There has been meaningful progress in critical areas including community life engagement and reduction in facility-based work but transitioning from an emphasis on group supported jobs to individual jobs remains a challenge.
5. While there has been a decline in group supported employment there has not been a clear shift to individual jobs. Many understood that DDS would like to decrease the reliance on group supported jobs but recognized there is not an incentive in the current system for this to happen. It is dependent on pressure from the individual/family/case manager, but systems-level strategies are absent; efforts also vary greatly by region and by provider organization.
6. It was clear there is a lack of understanding and consistency on how the Level of Need Assessment (LON) is being used in the individual planning process, how it relates to staff ratios, and how services are funded. This leads to wide variations across the state in the use of the LON score and resulting services and outcomes.
  - a. It is to be completed before the initial plan and updated annually or more often as needed to reflect significant changes in the person's life or to identify and document concerns or issues that may pose a health and safety risk to the individual.
  - b. The process of assigning a numerical value to the LON results has led to confusion in individual planning and the determination of what services and funding should be utilized.

- c. Questions emerged about whether a high or low LON score is more beneficial if seeking competitive integrated employment, how DDS acknowledges that providers rely on group supports for steady income, whether the score is manipulated to generate more income, and what specific assumptions about staffing ratio are made across the different LON scores.

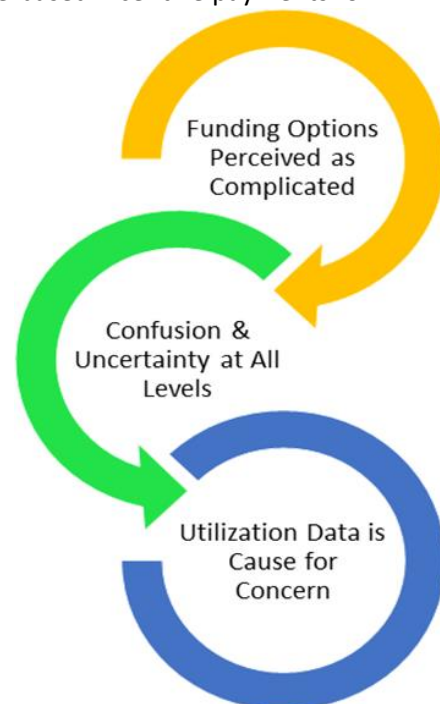
## B. Potential Focus Areas

1. Review and simplify key DDS operational processes for establishing and implementing employment and day services ensuring the following are clearly outlined: expected outcomes, quality oversight responsibilities, and who is accountable.
2. Develop clear system and provider level goals and measures for movement from group supported jobs to individual employment. The QSR process is one strategy for communicating these goals and supporting the development of strategy.
3. Conduct a review of service definitions with a goal of clarifying the goal, parameters, and quality indicators, including addressing stakeholder confusion about the array of services.
4. Engage individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the development of “plain language” reference materials regarding the value of employment.
5. Review the Level of Need (LON) tool and implementation for revisions to more effectively reflect support needed for employment and “wrap around” services.

## II. Financing and Contracting Methods. *The outcome of employment in integrated community jobs is emphasized and supported through the state’s resource allocation formulas, reimbursement methods, and rate-setting practices.*

### A. Key Findings

1. DDS has been a leader in developing alternative funding models for employment. Over the last five years, DDS has made several changes to the service rates and funding methodology including a rate increase and implementation of outcome-based incentive payments for individual competitive integrated employment. The strategy of blending fee for service with outcome payments is unique to Connecticut. Stakeholders also indicated that DDS was generous in authorizing ISE hours when needed, although accomplishing rapid changes to authorizations could be slow and cumbersome.
2. While addressing funding issues is a core element in a higher-performing system, consistent feedback indicated Connecticut’s current funding options are perceived as complicated. There are confusion and uncertainty in all levels of the system and across a variety of roles, as well as concern for some stakeholders about collecting and reporting data on work outcomes. Agencies that understand the funding system are maximizing usage, but most are not. This utilization data has been concerning and was recognized throughout our discussions, including the amount of unused funds for employment services.
  - a. Maximum annualized hours for individual supported employment are reported to be ‘generous’ but are not being utilized well.



- b. The allocation of hours for employment support was described as budgeted on an annual basis, providing flexibility for providers to meet individual needs.
  - c. Providers report that obtaining pay stubs to support billing for incentive payments is problematic.
  - d. The rate structure appears to support group day services and is easier for providers to rely on/steady income.
  - e. There is acknowledgement that rates impact influence providers' financial viability and whether they can continue to offer certain services.
  - f. Individual Supported Employment has separate funding for transportation; Group Supported Employment has overhead for transportation costs.
  - g. The funding methodology includes requirements for staffing based on individuals' needs. For group services, the ratio expectation is 1:4.
  - h. DDS currently manages three HCBS Medicaid waivers: Employment and Day Support (day/respite), Individual and Family Support (everything but group homes), and Comprehensive (all services and group homes). While the waiver utilization caps were recently updated, there is an opportunity to advance employment aims by assuring consistency in service definitions and funding methodology across the three programs.
  - i. Some stakeholders indicated the process of changing service authorization can be slow if a person's job situation changes.
3. The group spent a portion of one discussion learning more about DDS' funding structure – one of the only gross funded agencies in the country. Gross funding is significant because DDS receives 100% of available funds and then bills the federal government to recapture 50% of the costs (which then goes to the general fund and are not designated for DDS). This affords the state some flexibilities with access to the funds upfront, and how they are used, including how to maximize the available structure for more individualized employment supports or a shift away from a typical group or facility-based structure. DDS and providers engage in a cost-settlement process to assure actual costs are aligned with what providers were paid; overpayment can trigger funds being recouped. Rates are not unified across providers and this variation can be complicated to manage. There is a possible move to direct billing slated for the future. The complicated funding structure has a strong influence on whether and how providers can build new business models including a stronger focus on competitive integrated employment.

## B. Potential Focus Areas

- 1. Conduct a systematic review of utilization of the ISE incentive payments. The existing system is creative and unique but continues to be viewed as difficult to manage. Consider modifications or rule changes to increase utilization and simplify administration.
- 2. Analyze what makes the options successful for certain providers to determine if any of the lessons learned could improve access by a wider range of providers as model approaches.

## III. Training and Technical Assistance. *Investment in the development and maintenance of a strong, competent workforce. Skill-building emphasizes an expectation for employment across job coaches and developers, supervisors, key employment staff, support coordinators, job seekers including young adults who are still in school, and families.*

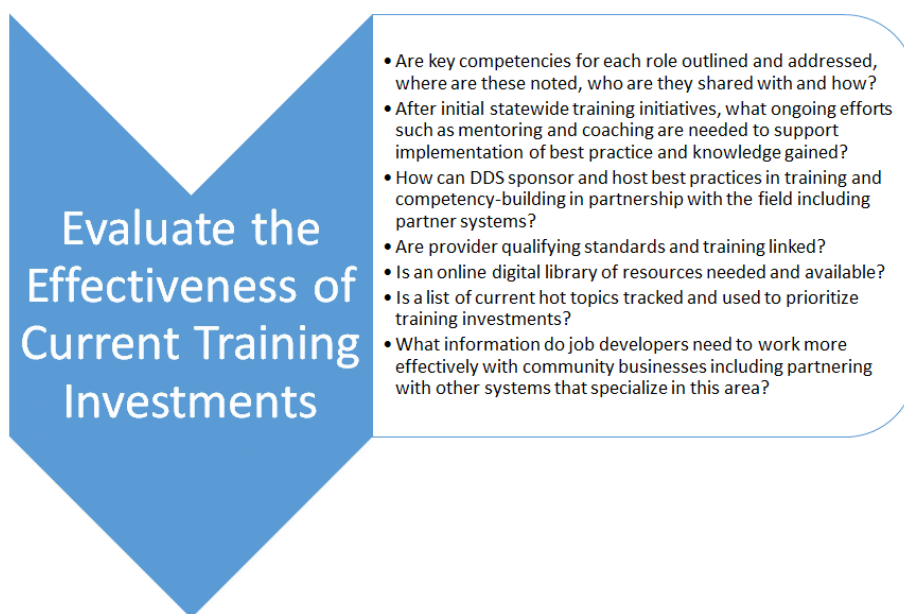
### A. Key Findings

- 1. DDS has long recognized the need for training and assistance to make a shift from the historically group- and center-based culture in Connecticut.

2. Several groups talked about the need for ongoing training rather than one-time or single events. This includes technical aspects of service options and service delivery, as well as nurturing valued roles and opportunities for individuals versus being a safety net and providing for their every need. It also was not clear who is responsible for evaluating whether quality supports are occurring and if that feedback was available, how it would be shared with service provider organizations to evaluate whether their current competency development efforts were effective.
3. DDS' Division of Employment and Day Services has hosted well-attended provider meetings every two weeks since the summer of 2020. Providing this avenue for open discussion signals a strong willingness on the part of the state to work in partnership with provider agencies. The meetings provide regular and ongoing discussions with an opportunity for all providers to learn about innovative practices, common struggles, a channel for communicating state-level announcements, and responses to questions as a group.
4. A lack of an accessible ongoing investment in and infrastructure for capacity-building makes it difficult to sustain a common understanding of best practices in employment. Investments in APSE training and the DD Council support for customized employment training from Marc Gold and Associates do provide a base for further development, but it was not clear in conversation that the knowledge was being implemented and some stakeholders questioned the effectiveness of limited training events.
5. A plan to establish coaching or mentoring supports would enhance current training investments and provide a pathway for problem-solving with individuals who are having difficulty accomplishing their employment goals.
6. It should be noted that the 2019 training provided by Marc Gold and Associates on customized employment was well-received, but the implementation of new practices was impacted by the pandemic. Many shared an interest in getting this back on track as quickly as possible.

## B. Potential Focus Areas

1. Develop a more systemic and comprehensive coordinated infrastructure for capacity building, including an ongoing investment in training and technical assistance that incorporates the needs of multiple stakeholders including individuals (training and peer supports), families, providers, and case managers. Investigate a shared investment with BRS, Education, and the DD Council as partners to emphasize shared goals and provider qualifications.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of current training investments by asking targeted questions.



## IV. Interagency Collaboration. *Building relationships with advocates, families, businesses, civic groups, key state and local agency partners (vocational rehabilitation (VR), education, mental health, state Medicaid agency), and removing barriers to employment supports.*

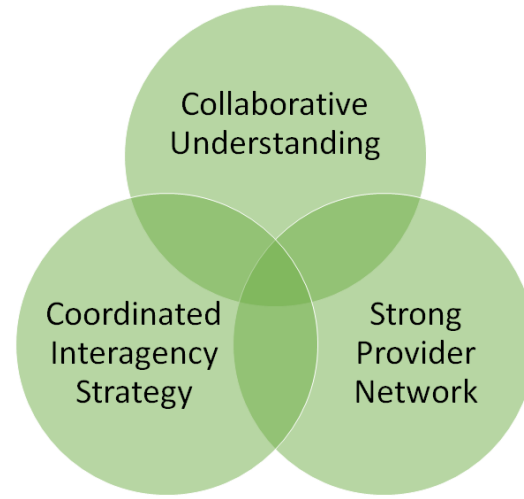
### A. Key Findings

1. DDS' level of engagement with local school systems varies widely across the state. Lack of information from the school system and transition programs for some families is of concern. In the past, DDS case managers were assigned to individuals earlier in the transition process.
2. Currently, respondents indicated that engagement doesn't happen until the last year of school services, and sometimes only a few months before school exit.
3. There is inconsistency across the state about the flow of referrals to and from the BRS system and when individuals move between systems. Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) data suggest that individuals with an intellectual disability represent a slightly smaller percentage of the overall BRS caseload compared to the nation. In the program year ending June 2019, individuals with an ID were 7.4% of the closures in Connecticut, and 9.4% of total closures for the nation. Determine if there is an alignment of provider qualifying standards between DDS and BRS.
4. There was evidence that stakeholders, including family members, do not have a clear understanding of how to access and use BRS services. Frequently the need to obtain a "denial letter" was mentioned as required before accessing HCB waiver services through DDS. Once that occurs, often a family no longer supports pursuing employment goals which undermine the entire process in the first place.

5. There was a discussion of the need to coordinate how services are defined and streamline across the various service systems including DDS, DOE, and BRS. DDS does share a list of graduating students with BRS in the summer before school exit, providing an opportunity to build additional collaborative strategy and messaging, though some concerns were expressed that too many individuals are identified as not wanting to work.
6. Family members and other stakeholders described receiving varied information during the transition process from schools, BRS, and DDS personnel about whether employment was possible.
7. An existing interagency, integrated resource team structure may provide a platform for addressing the process and management of services from multiple agencies. Connecticut has had a relationship with the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) for technical support for interagency transition efforts.

## B. Potential Focus Areas

1. Work with BRS and DOE to establish a collaborative understanding of each other's system demands, policies and procedures when addressing employment first objectives.
  - a. Develop a process map and guidance for individuals, families, and case managers that addresses movement between DOE, BRS, and DDS services.
  - b. Review and establish common understanding or definitions for employment outcomes and eligibility determination.
2. Develop a coordinated interagency strategy for implementation of Section 511 career counseling, including refinement of the career counseling curriculum to ensure consistent messaging and the opportunity for follow-up by DDS case managers. Coordinate implementation of Section 511 guidelines for transition age young adults with DDS transition case managers.
3. Engage in a joint initiative with BRS to strengthen the provider network and expand the number of shared employment support providers. Address the need to increase the number of providers, improve the competencies of provider organizations, and align provider qualifying standards and payment methodologies.



V. **Services and Service Innovations.** *Service definitions and support strategies are structured and aligned to facilitate the delivery of employment supports to all individuals with developmental disabilities regardless of the intensity of their needs. Non-work supports encourage individuals to become involved in typical adult life activities, building employment skills, and community service and volunteering opportunities.*

## A. Key Findings

1. Several stakeholders expressed concern about a reliance on day services over employment that ensures individuals receive 30 hours of support Monday through Friday. As funding is restricted for typical day services to guide more people toward employment, providers must consider new approaches and service offerings. Since the start of the pandemic, families are looking for

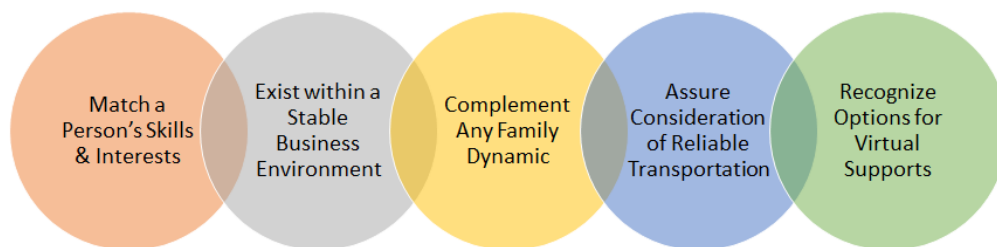
different ways to support their family member with IDD (e.g., self-direction) especially when there are fewer or limited providers available to offer services.

2. Some participants felt DDS has been clear that employment is the expected outcome, but that there are not enough competent providers available to individuals, families, and case managers when someone wants to work. This causes all parties to defer to the 'guaranteed' option of a day service. From there, individuals often fall into routines and either do not want to leave, or the conversation of the day service is not conveyed as a steppingstone to community-based and individualized options. Also, it was reported that the push to get some individuals employed leads to incorrect job matches and those employment situations do not last.
3. Various groups discussed 'transitional services' which cover a wide range of activities toward being ready to work. A name change to 'employment transition services' is being considered and should include clearly defining what services are available, what key billable activities can be used and how, conditions to be met before accessing facility-based services, age limits for service services, and provider qualifications to assure high-quality outcomes.
4. Transportation options are recognized as one of the key factors in individuals' employment success. Many groups commented on the need for flexible and reliable transportation solutions particularly for jobs that take place outside typical day shifts/day program hours.
5. Families expressed frustration that although options to support their sons and daughters to pursue employment and other community life supports were available, they were led to believe the only "real available services" options defaulted to providers who offered facility-based services.
6. Activities and support defined in approved waiver service types leads to confusion at the provider level about which services to offer individuals and what is the intended outcome. For example, when are "blended services" versus "day habilitation services" appropriate?
7. Service availability and assistance related to building economic self-sufficiency, asset management, and benefits management are inconsistent and limited across the state.
8. Continue development of Project Search to include capacity for serving individuals transitioning from high school.

## B. Potential Focus Areas

1. Conduct a thorough analysis on all employment and day services, how they are defined, what is non/billable, what is non/allowable, any time limits, what the expected outcome is of each service, and funding options. Simplify activities/service components for each service type

### Jobs Need To:



- offered; avoid overlap in service definitions and expected outcomes. A service redesign initiative to include revising funding methodologies is a frequent activity in SELN member states.
2. Job development activities must be clarified across a variety of roles including case managers, providers' direct support staff, and families/personal networks. Jobs need to:
    - a. Match a person's skills and interests,
    - b. Exist within a stable business environment including possible natural supports,
    - c. Complement any family dynamic while still help the individual to achieve employment goals,
    - d. Assure reliable transportation is considered at the very beginning and not after a potential job match is made,
    - e. Recognize the current environment using online/virtual supports, and how employment goals can be addressed through different approaches. Seek innovative examples from providers, families, and local school districts to share through marketing efforts.

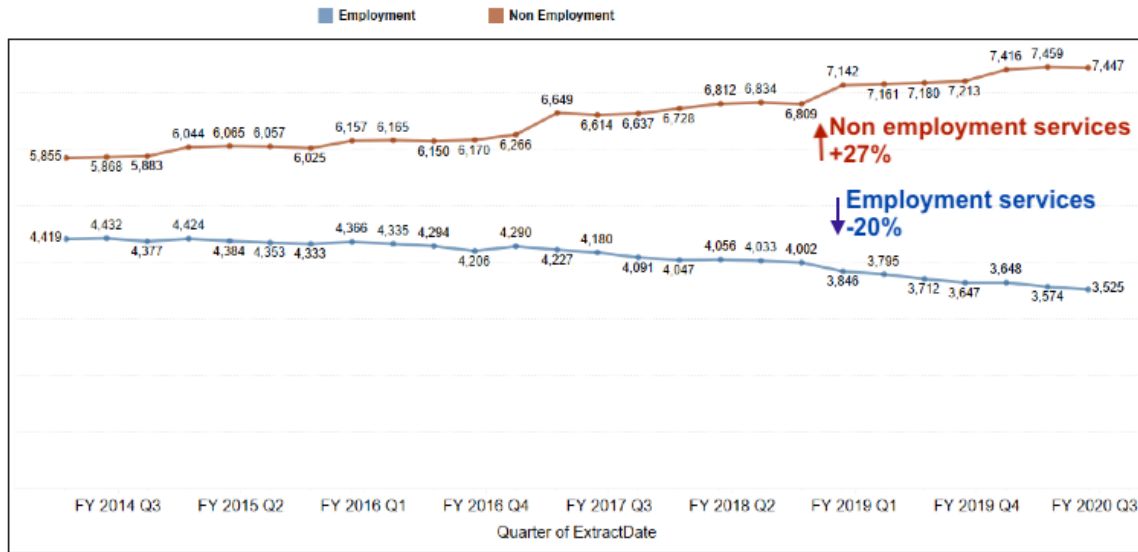
VI. **Employment Performance Measurement, Quality Assurance and Program Oversight.** *Comprehensive data systems are used to measure progress, benchmark performance, and document outcomes. Information is gathered on key indicators across employment and other related systems and is used to evaluate and track results, inform policy, and improve provider contracts and service agreements. Data are shared with other state agencies to report results and improve quality.*

A. **Key Findings**

1. Connecticut maintains core data on employment participation. Recent data show a widening gap between employment and day services, with non-employment trending upward as more people move to day support options (DSO).

## Day Programs - Comparison of Employment vs Non Employment Programs by Fiscal Year and quarter

FY2014 Q3 to FY2020 Q3



NOTE: Employment Programs consist of the following program types: Individuals Supported Employment, Competitive Employment, and Group Supported Employment. Non-Employment Programs consist of the following program types: Pre-Vocational, Day Service Options, Individualized Day (all types), Small Enterprise, Senior Supports, and Transitional Services.

The data does not include Other placement types not included in the descriptions above. These are primary day placements and do not include the non primary day program information. Prior to the March 2019 MIR Group Supported Employment (GSE) was categorized as Non-Employment.

2. Respondents noted that reporting detailed employment outcomes including wages and hours worked statewide at the individual level is more difficult. DDS is close to finalizing data sharing capacity with the Department of Labor (DOL) using quarterly wage data that could provide a rough measure of income and employment status.
3. The Planning Resources Accounting Team (PRAT) authorizes services and plays a role in the funding and programs are used. PRATs also may question the LON scoring and whether individuals are moving toward (new) goals such as community-based employment. Questions arose regarding whether this was happening consistently and how the PRATs' role can be improved to further assist with quality management expectations.
4. Connecticut's QSR process provides an opportunity to review and discuss employment outcomes at a provider level and establish quality improvement targets. Employment is reported to not be a common focus area for the QSR reviews.

### B. Potential Focus Areas

1. Establish a commitment to the collection and use of employment outcome data to drive decision-making. This will also enhance DDS' options in alternative payment methods (APMs) in the future by providing the needed metrics for those kinds of efforts. Other SELN member states have good examples in play now that could be further studied with DDS to illustrate how those APMs will be used.
2. Initiate a thorough review of the current data management system capacity aimed at determining the future strategy toward employment and community engagement outcomes. The SELN team has assisted other states through this process which considers the:
  - a. Needed collection frequency (e.g., bi-annually, monthly, etc.)
  - b. Development process to communicate outcome priorities
  - c. Public reporting of employment participation and outcomes at the state, provider, and regional levels.

3. Establish guidance in the QSR process for reviewing employment outcomes and service and setting quality improvement goals and action plans for employment, as appropriate. The guidance should establish benchmark expectations and identify key data elements for review.
4. Expand the capacity for data sharing agreements with other systems such as BRS, Labor, and Medicaid to understand outcomes, who is seeking what supports, service utilization, and quality management.
5. Finalize data sharing with DOL and cross-reference findings with DDS case and service data.



**State Employment  
Leadership Network**

The SELN is a place for states to connect, collaborate, and create cross-community support regarding pressing employment-related issues at state and federal levels for individuals with developmental disabilities.

The SELN was launched in 2006 as a joint program of the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services and the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston.



**www.selnhub.org**