



## **Roads to Community Living**

### **Employment Initiative**

### **REPORT**

**October 30, 2012 – June 30, 2013**

*“All means All”*

*Report submitted July 30, 2013*

*Revised September 3, 2013*

**Excerpt from [The Alderbrook 2007 Paper](#) by David Mank, Ph.D., Indiana University**

*“...All does mean all” and there is evidence to show that meaningful employment is a real possibility for every person with a developmental disability with very few exceptions; it is important to engage this discussion with individuals, families, practitioners, and policy makers, again and again, about the roots, the possibilities, and the realities of reaching this difficult, possible, and worthy goal... In continued pursuit of this, leadership discussions across roles and systems, and beyond developmental disabilities issues, are being organized to promote community participation and full employment from a broad community perspective.”*

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## 1.0 Executive Summary UPDATE

As part of the Roads to Community Living (RCL) Project, the Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (WISE) has been facilitating a collaborative pilot process with participating counties King, Kitsap and Pierce Counties to demonstrate a model pathway to employment for individuals leaving or who have left WA State Residential Habilitation Centers (RHCs) and who are enrolled in RCL. We are working with 16 specific individuals referred to us by the WA State Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) and acting as the lead with the individuals and their families, employment providers, residential providers, school staff if applicable, DDA case resource managers, RCL liaisons, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) counselors if applicable, and other community members, to build and facilitate a model process which results in a pathway to employment. The process is intended to help RCL participants explore interests and define desired employment leading to meaningful jobs in their communities.

Purpose of this report: To provide an update on the project activities, outcomes, strategies, lessons learned and recommendations during this time period. [To read the 2011-2012 initial report, please click here.](#)

During this period, two out of a potential five referrals were made to the project by DDA, bringing the total number to 16 as of May 2013.

Also during this period, we confirmed what we suspected – that we are able to perform good employment planning for these individuals as they move into the community, figure out communication and initial support strategies, and find them volunteer opportunities in the community, but fall short in actually getting them paid jobs. Two have just started the process. Two are still preparing for work. Two are in paid jobs (down from three in 2012). All of the other 10 are at least volunteering in unpaid positions performing a variety of job tasks suited to their interests, skills, abilities, and preferences. The majority is now ready for paid work and most of their support teams are reporting that they are “close” to attaining it.

When we discuss “All Means All” we are talking about individuals in this project. People familiar with their complex support needs and positive behavior support requirements are not surprised they are not working in paid jobs. We are facing a number of the most challenging barriers to employment many in the adult DD employment system have seen, which is requiring us to not only rethink our work, but also reach out and learn new skills to more effectively serve them. In fact, one of the national consultants hired to initially work with Employment Specialists in this project, Chris Simler of the Social Coaching Institute, was surprised by the severity of the challenges we are trying to figure out in this project.

One of the primary advances made in the last nine months has been the formation of a number of groups and cohorts learning about autism spectrum disorder, communication/behavior, and community employment. Several counties, DDA, RCL, and many independent agencies are investing in staff training and support. WISE has

hired a part time Masters level Behavior Analyst, who will work full time in the fall of 2013. If these and other entities continue to invest in training, skill-building, and mentorship in these critical areas over the next several years, we believe WA State will take a giant leap forward in serving people with the most significant barriers to employment. These tools and skillsets, once mastered, will serve people with less significant challenges as well, and, once businesses and employers start using them, will benefit people on all ends of the autism spectrum disorder, and others.

Most of the lessons learned during this period echo those found in the previous, more comprehensive June 2012 report cited above. A number of Systems Recommendations are listed in section 3.3 at the end of this report, and these echo the previous recommendations as well.

The Employment Specialists working in this project were recently surveyed regarding their thoughts on what it will take to get paid jobs. The summarized results are:

- Now that communication systems are in place, issues with challenging behaviors are reduced and we are getting close to finding paid jobs
- Keeping the support teams going with open communication and support/buy-in from residential agencies and families are extremely important
- We need to build stronger connections with the business community
- We need to find the right employers who are flexible initially with productivity and managers who are patient to allow time to learn and grow
- Finding the right environments and people who are consistent, which the person can learn to trust, is key
- We can't expect the person to adapt to the worksite, but accept who they are in the worksite and find coworkers who are open to learning ways to support the person to be successful
- Trust is important and to fade/develop natural supports will take time, and for some significant fading will probably not be an option
- We need to figure out the most complex tasks people are capable of to avoid underselling their skillsets

The next steps include continuing to work with the teams and county workgroups to better serve these individuals and connect to their communities and potential employers. We are looking forward to working with new people leaving the RHCs and moving into various communities across the state. We look forward to sharing this information with the counties these individuals will be moving to. And we look forward to people getting paid jobs in the community.

## 2.0 October 2012 - June 2013 Activities and Outcomes

### 2.1 Participants – Planning and Team building

We continued to work collaboratively with participating counties King, Kitsap, and Pierce to build teams of support around individuals, before leaving the RHCs if possible. Two new participants (of a potential five) were identified and referred to the project by DDA in

April and May, 2013. Both are currently residing in RHCs. One living at Fircrest is moving to Island County, and the other from Rainier School is moving to the community in Pierce County. Team building and initial planning is occurring for these two during June and July 2013. This includes person centered employment planning to determine their interests, preferences, and job goals and working with their networks/teams to identify interests/desires, strategies, and potential plans for employment. The teams are working to bring on board employment providers who will help them plan, develop, and secure employment. *New participants below are noted in italics. #13 and #16.* For both of these individuals, we are attempting to start the employment planning while they are still at the RHCs which could be very important as part of the overall process of transitioning to the community.

We continued to provide follow-up support to each of the other 14 participants and their action teams, according to need.

### **PARTICIPANT UPDATES – Table Updated as of August 2013**

Snapshot of Paid and Volunteer Jobs/Work Activities:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Employer/Job</b>	<b>Hours per month</b>	<b>Pay per month</b>	<b>Supported by</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Golf ball pickup and cleaning</b>	<b>8, started again 6/ 2013 after short delay</b>	<b>\$73.52</b>	<b>Trillium - Kitsap</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Golf ball pickup and cleaning</b>	<b>20, started 9/2013</b>	<b>\$183.80</b>	<b>Trillium - King</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Cleanup/Recycling</b>	<b>16, started 8/2013</b>	<b>\$147.04</b>	<b>PROVAIL - King</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Retail/stocking</b>	<b>16, started 7/2012</b>	<b>\$147.04</b>	<b>Vadis - Pierce</b>
<b>1</b>	Bagging, shredding	12		Vadis - Kitsap
<b>2</b>	Collating and janitorial	6 (increasing in September)		Vadis - Kitsap
<b>4</b>	Grounds maintenance, in job development/DVR process	52 (subminimum wage)	145.45	Holly Ridge - Kitsap
<b>5</b>	Nursery and general labor	6 (increasing in September)		Vadis - Kitsap
<b>6</b>	Cleaning	2-4		Trillium - Kitsap
<b>7</b>	Office tasks	4		Trillium - Kitsap
<b>10</b>	In Discovery now	N/A		HCC - King
<b>11</b>	Folding laundry	2-4		Trillium - King
<b>12</b>	In School	N/A		N/A

13	In Discovery now	N/A		Service Alternatives
15	Work at NW Fish Food Bank	8		ENSO - Pierce
16	Still at Rainier	N/A		N/A

***Kitsap County***

1- Supported by Vadis, he volunteers at Central Kitsap Food Bank doing jig counting and bagging and some shredding two days a week. He is enrolling in DVR services. Vadis is looking at developing jobs as a shredder/recycle transporter (utilizing a cart to dispose of items from one place to another). Vadis continues to be supported by Monica Meyer Consulting. To date the most successful tasks for him are transporting/relocating items while utilizing a cart and shredding. He uses both hands and works independently for increasing amounts of time. He has difficulty with motor planning and using/initiating communication. He continues to use a visual schedule and communication system, and has been initiating communication more frequently and consistently.

2 – Supported by Vadis, he volunteers at South Kitsap Helpline 1.5 hours per week, while Vadis continues to do job development. He loves to work. He likes to use some force and physical movement is important. Jobs like recycling are a good fit. He is also sifting, pruning plants, and is showing problem solving and critical thinking ability. He likes tasks that involved moving, noise, pushing and pulling. Vadis is currently looking into paid employment for janitorial and recycling positions. He continues to use a visual schedule and communication system. They are also pursuing oil filter crushing jobs right now at local oil change locations and dealerships.

3 - Supported by Trillium, he is employed at a golf course collecting and washing stray golf balls on the driving range. Trillium worked with him and the employer to increase his hours and stamina. They are looking at other tasks he can perform, e.g. cleaning the parking lot and folding laundry. He is using an iPad with a series of “first/then” pictures to transition between tasks. He is working with consultant Corky Lynn on refining his communication system.

4 - Supported by Holly Ridge, they are job developing under DVR funding. Monica Meyer Consulting and Holly Ridge are assisting with social story/script for the job coach to use. He is volunteering at a church as a groundskeeper working in the flower beds, raking leaves, for 2 days a week at 1.5 hrs per shift. They are looking at him potentially working at Holly Ridge as a regular employee, or at a paint ball course which he would love. Cemeteries have not worked out so far. They might be looking into gold clubs as well.

5 - Supported by Vadis, has been volunteering for the Chamber of Commerce doing collating and is beginning to do some janitorial duties such as vacuuming and cleaning of bathrooms. Job development is continuing and he is in the process of being enrolled in DVR. Vadis is looking now at developing a job at a car wash and/or car detail shop, and at an electronics recycling business taking apart old computers. He absolutely loves restrooms and port-a-potties, so positions working in those areas are being sought as well. He needs a job using his mind and his reading skills to keep him from being bored while working.

6 – Supported by Trillium, she is volunteering at two sites and is doing very well. She is using her iPad, the First...Then app, and visual and audio cues. She is shredding, vacuuming, emptying recycle bins, and folding towels. It is a slow process introducing her to a new environment and people but showing her pictures in advance, talking her through it, and taking tours helps. She is getting to know her co-workers, they are assisting with giving her more work and she is letting them know when she is done for the day by handing them her empty recycle bin. She does best if she is allowed the time in the morning to put on her makeup, brush her hair, and get ready. Discovery is ongoing. Corky Lynn is working with her on communication. They are working on a video resume.

7 - Supported by Trillium, she is volunteering at South Kitsap Helpline, and she is now in job development. She has good gross motor skills and is definitely motivated to work, no sweeping or mopping though. She is using the First...Then app with an iPad, and responds well to audio cues. They continue to introduce new tasks and reduce the interaction/support to determine her independence. Trillium performs a 'check in' with staff at the beginning and end of shifts to reduce her perseverating on telling them about physical and non-work issues. Jennifer White is working with her on communication. They have started graphing her productivity data, and she loves looking at it, and trying to perform more productively to see the graph line go up!

### ***King County***

8 – **Now employed at golf course (see above).** He is communicating using the iPad. He continues to thrive in his new home. He is communicating using the iPad. Trillium is working with Acres to find another suitable worksite and say they might be 'pretty close'. The team worked together to get a small business tax break from WA Department of Revenue because he made so little on the janitorial job. He continues to thrive in his new home.

9 – **Now employed at a warehouse (see above).** They have requested training and TA about autism, productivity, and structuring the worksite from WISE which started in July and is ongoing.

10– He is working with Highline Community College (HCC). They are working on relationship building and discovery in the community. Outings and time spent in various locations in the community has continued to be over two hours in length, which is a great improvement. HCC is committed to figuring this out one step at a time. The team met in March and several ideas for potential job sites and ideas were discussed, as well as the need for a functional communication system, and to find a consistent place he can go and engage in a work task. Monica Meyer told his support staff that she had a work station set up for him years ago at a sheltered workshop and he engaged fully in the tasks for short periods of time.

11 – She is working with Trillium. She is folding towels and putting them in a basket which she really enjoys and finds satisfying. They believe this could lead to a job at a hotel, retirement home, or possibly a Laundromat. She is also transitioning to a new job coach which takes some time. They might be looking into a visit to the Reptile Man in Monroe to get his ideas re: employment and her love of snakes. She is also seeing

Corky Lynn for a communication device/iPad consultation, to figure out a better way for her to communicate. Her job coach at Trillium is also changing.

12 - He successfully moved back to Kent, is back in the Kent School District, and is "doing wonderfully" according to team members. His team decided to let him settle, and did not want to gather to discuss employment services until after the 2012-2013 school year ended. He has one year left in school, and they feel the focus of that year should be on employment. They have requested a team meeting/planning session in the fall of 2013.

### **Island County**

*13 – He is currently living in Whidbey Island. He has an employment service provider, IES, who served him before he went into Fircrest, and is willing to re-establish the relationship. Tim Corey was contracted to start the vocational planning with the family and provider, but S was not present.*

### **Pierce County**

14 – She is working at Marshalls four hours a week, and she still needs full support by Vadis. Her 'behavioral' difficulties are decreasing and she is able to switch tasks more smoothly. Her coworkers enjoy her and it is a good site for her!

15 – He is working with ENSO, is volunteering at a food bank one day a week, works 1.5 hours per day, and is doing well. They also meet with him another day in the month to do some job exploration. He's riding the shuttle independently and meets his job coach at the worksite and they travel out from there. The businesses in the area are few, and the job coach doesn't feel she'll be able to find a paying job by June. Introducing new locations and environments to GB needs to be done in a way that he is open to the change. They will be coordinating with his residential staff to help them with introducing/exploring sites that aren't in his current volunteer area.

16 – Currently lives at Rainier School, and is moving soon. Planning has started, subcontracted with Tim Corey, and they have chosen an employment service provider. Tim met with Rainier staff and got good information and initial recommendations for the plan. He is having difficulty getting the family to respond to take the next steps/finish the initial planning

## **2.2 County Workgroups**

In participating counties, we continued to meet regularly, once every quarter or two depending on the schedules and needs of the teams. We continued to work on systems issues, problem-solve individual cases, and collaborate on job development for individuals. We supported each county to carry out goals as defined by the workgroups.

### **Kitsap County**

The team is comprised of representatives from Kitsap County Developmental Disabilities (DD), RCL, the State Operated Living Alternative (SOLA) residential agency, Trillium, Holly Ridge, and Vadis (all three of these are employment



agencies), DVR, Monica Meyer Consulting (autism spectrum expert), and WISE. During this period we discussed and brainstormed about each of the seven individuals in the project re: communication, job development, networking, problem-solving, and various potential community connector activities (see below). The goals for the group this year are to continue work at the individual level, get participants into DVR job development services, and for people still in RHCs, providers would like to get in early and see from RHC staff what is working/has worked for individuals when in the RHC re: communication, community activities, and work. They would like to figure out how to better overlap services and not lose information about what has worked, has not worked, and why. This group would still like to meet every six months to: 1) discuss what training and TA needs providers have and want in order to better serve people and 2) share with each other success stories, strategies, tips and tricks, assessments/tools that have worked, how they were used and applied, and lessons learned. Providers would come with more formally and deliberately planned presentations to share. WISE will help arrange this.

### **King County**

The team is comprised of representatives from King County Developmental Disabilities Division (DDD), WA State DDA Region 2, PROVAIL (an employment agency), Aacres (a residential agency), the King County Parent Coalition/Arc of King County, RCL, and WISE. During this period, the group discussed the individuals in the project and their progress, brainstormed ways to support finding participants jobs and connections, and worked with one participant and his employment agency to meet with his legislator in Olympia and ask her for assistance networking with local businesses. This coming year the group's goals are to: 1) share what is working and support what is happening on the individual level, 2) work with the employment specialists as a group to network, collaborate, strategize, and receive training and TA to get people jobs, 3) work with current hiring initiatives we know of e.g. Microsoft and City of Seattle, 4) host and engage employment agency leaders and DDA Region 2 CRMs in this effort, and 5) try to work with people before they leave the RHC, specifically at Fircrest, perhaps using King County DDD funding.

### **Pierce County**

The team is comprised of representatives from Highline Community College, Trillium, Vadis, ENRICH, and CenterForce (all employment agencies), DVR, the Pierce County Parent Coalition (PC2), Clover Park School District, and WISE. The group decided to focus all its energy during this period on a Community Connecting event in March 2013 (see below). It has also defined its goals for this coming year as: 1) host a similar and better attended event this coming year, 2) resume brainstorming as a group around RCL participants, people who are hard to serve, youth, and the "unserved," and 3) help individuals and families increase their expectation of working, clarify and understand what they want, and support them to demand jobs and support.

## 2.3 County Community Connector Activities

To the degree identified by the county teams, we identified strategies to develop and secure “community connectors” in local communities who could help to identify potential job leads, make introductions to people/places in the community, and to work with local businesses. We attempted to facilitate the design and implementation of a plan in each county to develop community connections and identify specific community members/leaders and/or organizations who would agree to partner with each county to carry out the plan.

### **Kitsap County**

The team initially decided that it would focus its community connecting efforts on the Port Orchard community. We were planning on gathering the Employment Specialists in the project, developing group marketing materials for businesses encouraging them to hire people, and were going to create a list of targeted businesses in Port Orchard to approach and network with. Discussing this in detail, we decided to focus on the “faith community” in Port Orchard since they are extremely well-connected, influential, readily identifiable and approachable there. We planned to approach and tell them about what our participants had to offer the community. However, during the last meeting of this group to plan next steps, they decided not to pursue this strategy of connecting with influential community connectors, and instead just work individually on their participants and connect with communities that way. In effect, the community connecting effort fell apart. There are no current plans to revive this or start another community connecting strategy at this point.

### **King County**

The team decided to focus on one individual connecting to his WA State Legislator as a community connector. With the King County Parent Coalition’s and WISE’s support, the employment specialist working with this individual set up a meeting in Olympia to meet with her. With one on one support, he introduced himself, presented his portfolio, and enlisted her help to connect with businesses in their community of Shoreline. This led to a few new connections and ideas for the job developer. The group now plans on trying to use the natural connections that are available in the staff at the DDA Region 2 office in Seattle, and host an event with them, the employment specialists in the project and their agency leaders, and the participants to showcase the individual job seekers, present what type of jobs they are looking for, and seek connections and leads to potential employers. In effect they feel DDA Case Resource Managers (CRMs) are natural connectors.

### **Pierce County**

The team hosted a community event to connect RCL job seekers and youth with disabilities to the service system and potentially to people, activities, and organizations in the community in March 2013. The event was designed to be fun, inspiring, creative, and reach out to people with a strong need and desire to become better connected to their communities. They did not want this to be a typical vendor fair, but an inspiring and hopeful event, and a way to reach out to

the community in a different way. The group met six times planning the event, and once with the Pierce County Transition breakfast group to gather partners. Pierce County Parks and Recreation, Pierce Transit, Children's Museum, Papa John's Pizza, and many small businesses contributed to the event.

The There is Hope – Come Get Connected! event was held Saturday, March 2, 2013 at the Sprinker Parks and Recreation facility in Tacoma. We only had about 10 families show up, but all participants agreed it was a wonderful event, and a great collaborative experience they wish to turn into an annual event. The planning group agreed the students they wished to reach are notoriously difficult to contact and engage. A flier and registration were created and spread widely throughout all school districts and special education director offices and teachers, the PC2 and other agency mailing lists, contact with families with children with disabilities at Joint Base Lewis McChord, and other outlets. Many businesses throughout the county donated door prizes and discounted pizza and drinks. The planning group and five self-advocate volunteers hosted the event.

Online Registration:

<http://events.constantcontact.com/register/event?llr=6ajwdndab&oeidk=a07e6xftpuz1d0fb72bb>.

Flier: [http://gowise.blob.core.windows.net/media/Default/Documents/pdfs for news items/Pierce CC Event FLIER.pdf](http://gowise.blob.core.windows.net/media/Default/Documents/pdfs_for_news_items/Pierce%20CC%20Event%20FLIER.pdf)

Participants experienced developing a Portrait of Competence which included an interview with a volunteer and a written profile of their likes and preferences, a photo of them in a competence setting (using a large assortment of items brought to the event and available onsite), and then a Resources interview in which volunteers assisted them to find places and people in their community that they could connect to around similar interests, using laptops and iPads to find these resources. They left with a plan and contact information to become better connected.

PC2 had a parent area set up to discuss resources with family members. We had a giant Transition Timeline printed and on the wall. There were tables hosted by the Children's Museum, Pierce County Transit, DVR. and a County benefits planner was available to discuss work and benefits. We had a self-advocate speaker and a video presentation by Pierce County Transit. There was also a large amount of food, drink, and door prizes. The entire space was decorated in a Mardi Gras style with flowers in donated vases and colorful beads. It was a festive event, and the group was disappointed with the low turnout, but feels the time, effort, and especially the collaboration were well worth it.

See 2.3 Pierce County (above) to read the group's plans for 2013-2014.

## 2.4 Statewide Steering Committee

During this timeframe, we convened the Steering Committee once to review the project, share what we are learning, and solicit recommendations for sustainability, moving forward with individuals toward employment, and looking at further needs for systems change. The committee is comprised of representative leaders from the Kitsap, King, Pierce, and Snohomish County DD programs, DDA, RCL, DDA Region 2, Trillium and Vadis (employment agencies), and WISE.

We reviewed the project and participants. They identified the Success Factors to be: **teams, communication, and training**. The committee recognized the fact that progress is slow given the fact that the challenges to employment for these individuals is great, and that the current skill set of Employment Specialists is not in general sufficient to serve and support them effectively. They have a collective belief, however, that these skillsets can be acquired and look forward to supporting this, and achieving better results this next year.

We asked an employment agency leader why one individual has been successful in her paid job. She credited the following: 1) they had a great relationship with the business who was willing to try it out, 2) they trained the new employee's coworkers about what to expect and how to work with her, 3) the coworkers started learning sign language together, 4) they worked on consistency and would not give up, and 5) they kept working on coworker training over time.

The group then discussed their ideas on how to achieve success moving forward:

### Teams:

- Continue working on teams of employment agencies, residential agencies, families, and other cross-connections and support, which is critical given the significant challenges these individuals face
- We need to do more work on employment-preparation with families, residential, and schools, to support the process
- Invite other community members into planning process
- Involve employers and coworkers in team planning
- Use RCL funding with people before leaving RHCs. Early TA and vendor selection will allow us to see the environments they are coming from and figure out employment in other ways, e.g. potentially people working off campus before moving, or performing work assessments on campus

### Communication

- Create a matrix with skills, snapshots, where people live, what they are looking for, and blast it out to all groups, parent groups, and other networks. Invite all into job development/connection-making and share it across the project
- Stories are powerful – share them, show one or many teams' cross-silo collaboration, working together, the struggle, lessons, ideas, successes... Use LiveInclusive.org more...

- Networking is key to finding the right employers. We must figure out how to engage well-connected community members and employers who'd be willing to help, take a risk, figure it out, and hire

#### Training:

- Good matches are important – customized employment training is needed
- Need to have TA in place for people experiencing autism especially to ensure there is a destination, routine, and predictability – people need training and mentorship on this
- Training needs to be consistent throughout services and staff, employment and residential, and must include mentorship/Technical Assistance rather than just training – one on one work on how to implement ...need to support autism and employment training and Behavior training/TA for individuals
- Training and TA for community connecting – e.g. setting up meetings with legislators, how to identify and approach community connector types, etc., is needed
- Training technology for people with high support and structure requirements, including those who experience autism spectrum disorder, is needed
- Corporate and small business development training is needed - HOW TO present the business case

#### Potential System Changes to look at:

- The employment agencies strongly voiced their belief that offering agencies an incentive for placing RCL participants would have a huge impact. They suggested \$1-3,000 per job. (Note: DDA has since questioned this request – after reviewing the data, they found that agencies are not using the current dollars of support available to them now - why is that?)
- Examine the school to work model including blending of DDA/county, RCL, RHC, DVR, and other funding – how could that work?
- Examine the C3 project in King/Snohomish county, which is funded by the counties, and allows paid staff time for different agencies to meet, brainstorm, and collaborate about getting jobs for people they are having difficulty placing. Figure out how to either replicate or join the project.
- Engage Employment Specialists and agencies in training on how to support individuals experiencing Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Figure out how to streamline communication system consultation, technical assistance, and implementation for those who need such systems to communicate as a first step toward employment.
- Involve Employment Specialists and agencies in the various iPad and app cohorts forming around the state if applicable to their location/county.
- Market and broadcast with agencies and their counties the ability to set up Individualized Technical Assistance (ITA) to directly address the unique and specific needs individuals have to progress on their pathways to employment.

- Utilize and partner with technology companies and employers to figure out real jobs and the assistive technology people needed to perform them.
- Provide training and technical assistance to agencies re: how to work with employers to allow training and implementation of structured work environments in their places of business as the first step in employment of individuals with the need for such structure.
- Find and tell/share more stories of individuals achieving employment and how they achieved it. Celebrate and broadcast success.

## 2.5 Engaging Autism and Communication Experts

Recognizing that almost 90% of the individuals in this project experience autism spectrum disorder, we realized we must engage with autism experts to begin to figure out the critical question of how to make employment work. In March 2013, with assistance and support from the Washington Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) and the WA Autism Advisory Committee (WAAC), a committee of autism, communication, and intellectual/developmental disability (I/DD) experts formed an Employment Subcommittee of the WAAC to specifically look at the issue of employment for adult Washingtonians experiencing autism, facilitated by WISE.

We recognized that most of the autism expertise and funding is currently focused on children in the educational system, and the autism community in general is very interested in learning more about adult employment. Employment Specialists in WA State, and specifically those in the RCL project, are quite skilled at finding and supporting employment for adults experiencing I/DD and other disabilities, but in general do not have the specialized skills needed to serve people experiencing severe autism well. They are likewise very interested in trying to figure this out.

Given this interest and need, the RCL project funded, and WiSe hosted, a full day of training with national Autism and Employment experts the Social Coaching Institute on April 18 for the employment specialists in the RCLE project and others. In conjunction with other newly formed and allied county-funded groups interested in this topic, the RCL employment specialists are also taking part in a monthly webinar series with James Emmett of the Social Coaching Institute for the next 10 months to learn as much as possible about this topic. This series is being funded by several counties, sponsored by O'Neill and Associates, and hosted by WISE on our Webex webinar platform.

The WAAC Employment Subcommittee mentioned above is comprised of autism and communication experts and I/DD experts with an interest in figuring out statewide training and capacity issues. We are busy discussing and beginning to design a potential training pilot project for employment specialists in select counties (TBD). WISE has hosted two official conference calls, and numerous side conversations and subcommittee meetings have occurred. Staff from the UW Autism Center joined RCL employment specialists at the April 18 training for a question and answer session. WISE and Monica Meyer Consulting has worked with the autism experts on the committee to teach them about the I/DD adult employment system. The group is currently working on 1) clarifying the data of the number of job seekers with autism in potential participating counties and the employment agencies needing training, 2) developing Standards of

Practice (SOP) to ground the work, and 3) designing a cross-systems training pilot project for employment specialists to learn about autism support strategies. A meeting of the SOP subcommittee and Pilot Project development subcommittee is scheduled at the UW Autism Center in August 2013. The whole group will convene by phone again in August to discuss progress on the SOP and pilot project proposal, tentatively targeted at King, Pierce, Snohomish, Kitsap, and Clark Counties.

The current WAAC Employment Subcommittee includes representatives from the DDC, DDA, RCL, Monica Meyer Consulting, WISE, the Department of Health, the UW Autism Center, Children's Hospital Autism Center, WA Autism Alliance and Advocacy, Autism Outreach, and WA State DVR. We are open to, and seeking, additional partners.

## 2.6 Dissemination

WiSe will be sharing/disseminating information learned through the project and providing support to other interested Washington State counties. To accomplish this, we are:

- 1) Developing content for and beginning to promote the Live Inclusive Website to include lessons, stories, and resources from this project and other RCL initiatives as an ongoing resource for sharing information, produced two videos about participants and their pathways to employment, and
- 2) Once the final report is complete, we will be conducting a dissemination activity about the project to date, most likely as a webinar in the fall of 2013. DDA has requested we present the report to the County Association to prepare them for the potential that individuals who might be moving into their communities will want paid jobs, and that a process and resources are available to support this.
- 3) The project hired Grier Jewell in May-July 2103 to produce two videos about participants to show the stories of their search for employment. As of July both were still unemployed, but in August, both got paid jobs, and the videographer is going to update the videos with this information, bringing both videos to a close with the news that they achieved their goals. These stories will be added to the Live Inclusive website Stories section and shared on the WiSe FaceBook page and Twitter feed.

## 3.0 Analysis

### 3.1 Strategies/Lessons Learned

The primary strategies that were identified at the end of last year and reinforced in this current period are:

- We need to collaborate better as a series of interconnecting and overlapping systems and plan whole days and lives, not discrete and separate services and activities with no cross-communication. For example, Trillium Employment Services in Kitsap instituted a check-in with SOLA residential staff before and after a participant's work shift, which gave everyone a sense of daily continuity
- Start planning and relationship-building early before the person leaves the RHC. If the referral is made in time, an employment agency can take

advantage of the structure of the RHC to set up work trials on site and in the community, e.g. Kitsap County DD hired employment specialists to work with individuals at the Frances Haddon Morgan Center before it closed and many had very positive work experiences there and in the surrounding community

- Set expectations high regardless of the significance of the barriers to employment
- Engage specialized expertise especially around autism, developing communication systems, setting up predictable and consistent schedules and activities, and structuring supports and environments to promote successful and positive experiences. Vadis was successful in placing and supporting one person by doing this not only with their staff but with coworkers at the worksite as well
- We must give the person a voice and choice in the process – a man in King County who is now using an iPad to communicate is thriving and close to getting a second job (he lost his first), even though before he moved many thought he would be a danger to himself and others in the community
- We need to continue to figure out how to connect with our communities and community connectors in new and better ways – we are still not good at this, and need to continue to work with local teams to figure this out. We must continue to try different ways of reaching out and engaging well-connected community members and making offers to them re: how we can be of assistance to their community-building and connecting efforts.
- We need to build trust with the individuals we serve. They need to know that they can trust us to listen to them and adapt to THEM, not require that they adapt to us
- We were told by all stakeholders that we must be patient and not stuck on artificial deadlines. It takes time to make a major change – we need to allow time to have and build these relationships, prepare for community life, and a job, etc. “It takes a lot of time to put together a pretty complex human situation,” is how one stakeholder described it. Respect and consistency for the individual and each other are vital –we all need to slow down, listen, and figure out what works, as well as keep moving forward and not lose momentum.
- RCL enhancements, such as training, technical assistance, and assistance communicating and collaborating, is not enough incentive. Employment providers need a financial reason to focus on and prioritize these individuals. Many have stated this emphatically throughout this project.
- We need to develop additional specialized capacity and expertise within employment agencies or Counties to develop employment opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities. We need to become more skilled, creative, and try things “outside the box” to figure out employment for these individuals.



### 3.2 Systems Recommendations

- Continue to allow the County DD system to fund Discovery under County Service Authorizations (CSA) before DVR is engaged. Approach DVR when the person is job-ready
- Continue to figure out communication systems so that individuals can make choices and self-direct services
- Allow DD system and DVR funding concurrently as long as the services are separate and distinct, in order to let the person continue, for example, in a volunteer job at the same time as their employment specialist is performing job development
- Strategize braiding and blending of services, find new resources, and rethink the employment service model to take advantage of all resources available
- Shift our message to employers from asking, “How can the employer help the job seeker?” to “How can the job seeker become a valuable business asset/resource to the business?” approaching them not with a need, but with an offer
- Invest in training, mentorship, developing cohorts and communities of practice over time in regard to serving people with the most significant challenges to employment, including autism spectrum disorder and challenging positive behavior support requirements.
- Develop more formalized collaborative opportunities/models between employment and residential providers to help individuals develop skills, engage in volunteer opportunities, network and build community relationships that may lead to employment.

### 3.3 Next Steps

- Engage in autism spectrum disorder training
- Work with Employment Specialists and teams to figure out employment for those they are working with
- Continue to add new participants to the project before they leave the RHCs to do planning, develop teams of support, and choose employment agencies
- Get communication systems set up for all participants according to their preferences and needs
- Disseminate information to other counties
- Broadcast the Live Inclusive website and use it as a rallying place/tool for those seeking information and inspiration. Make it a true networking tool. Celebrate success and what we are learning there.
- Re-engage and expand the Steering Committee to again review the progress of the report and figure out how to move it forward – what resources are needed? What expertise are we missing? What can we do to get people jobs?
- Continue to work with county workgroups and form new ones in support of the individual job seekers in their counties.

- Engage the RHC community and discuss with them how to get the process moving earlier, while people are still at the RHCs.
- Use our statewide network to find new leads for individual job seekers.
- **Reach 75% employment for the original participants in the project by June 2014!**