Employment First Task Force Meeting: Workgroup Updates

# Transportation Workgroup Update (Lauren Pearcy & Seth Pedigo)

* The workgroup continues to expand; most recently by adding James Brown, TN Dept. of Transportation and the Nashville Mayor’s Advisory for People with Disabilities and Ryan Jolly with Vocational Rehabilitation. Other members include Lauren Pearcy, TN Council on Developmental Disabilities; Cassie Belter, Individual Placement and Support (IPS) employment program for people with behavioral health diagnoses; Carrie Brna, TennCare Long Term Services and Supports and Billy Higgins, WeGo (Nashville Metro Transit Authority).
* Accomplishments to date: recent federal funding distributed by Metro Nashville (WeGo), for “mobility enhanced” transportation in Middle TN reached several HCBS providers (aka, organizations that support peole with intellectual and developmental disabilities) that had never applied before. Those same providers participated in a webinar hosted by this workgroup in advance of the grant funding announcement.

# Policy Workgroup Update (Elise McMillan & Wanda Willis)

* The Policy Workgroup is working with Cara Kumari and Seth Pedigo, the Task Force and TennesseeWorks to develop this year’s Expect Employment Report to the Governor. The report will be presented for the first time to Gov. Bill Lee this fall. Presentation time and location are still being planned. This year’s report will have an emphasis on employment in Tennessee’s rural counties.
* The Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities has convened and will continue to convene and facilitate a monthly Employment Roundtable that bolsters cross-agency communication and collaboration across nine state agencies that serve people with disabilities and the Tennessee Developmental Disabilities Network. Most recently the group had a presentation from the Department of Labor Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP and commonly known as Food Stamps) Employment and Training Program. The group will be working to share this important resource to job seekers who may qualify.
* Efforts to educate on Supported Decision Making (SDM) continue. Highlights include dozens of trainings to stakeholders including educators, MCOs, VR, families and self-advocates. This week (Mon-Wed) the Council, The Arc TN, and Disability Rights TN were in Washington DC at the national Supported Decision-Making Symposium talking about Tennessee’s experience wih SDM. See the Council’s policy newsletter for a summary and a copy of the presenation. Contact [lauren.j.pearcy@tn.gov](mailto:lauren.j.pearcy@tn.gov) to subscribe to the newsletter.

The Tennessee Alliance for Inclusive Higher Education continues work to broaden funding opportunities and financial assistance for students in higher education. The five inclusive higher education programs in the Alliance, Next Steps at Vanderbilt, IDEAL at Lipscomb University, EDGE at Union University, Tiger Life at the University of Memphis, and FUTURE at the University of Tennessee Knoxville, are always looking for internship and employment opportunities for their students and graduates. ETSU will launch a program this fall. To connect with any of the programs, go to the Alliance website, tnihealliance.org, for contact information for each of the programs. To be added to the meeting notices for the Alliance, contact Laurie Fleming at [laurie.fleming@vumc.org](mailto:laurie.fleming@vumc.org). The University of Memphis Tiger Life Program is hosting the next meeting Friday, and attendance by Zoom is also available.

* This group will follow legislation that was introduced earlier this year (SB1343/HB1038) State as a Model Employer. The bill would launch a program in state government to model practices for recruiting, hiring, retaining people with disabilities as government employees.

# Communications Workgroup Update (Rachael Jenkins & Krystyne Brown)

* Next meeting scheduled for June 18th via Zoom
* During this meeting, we will spend some time planning group’s long-term goals and ways to collectively develop effective and cohesive messaging
* Developing initial plans for NDEAM/Hire My Strengths
* Employment First Task Force Report to the Governor Plans

# Mental Health Workgroup Update (Mark Liverman)

* **A review of the workgroup goals and how they align with current activities was discussed.**
  + *Increase access to IPS Supported Employment* – 7 additional positions are funded and can potentially serve 140 more people
    - Two Employment Specialists (ES) on Healthy Transitions teams
    - One ES added at Frontier through SunTrust Lighting the Way grant
    - Two ESs from Juvenile Justice grants funded through DMHSAS
    - One ES from Community Programs for Outreach and Intervention with Youth and Young Adults at Clinical High Risk for Psychosis (CHR-P) housed at CMI in Memphis
    - One ES added Helen Ross McNabb Center, Chattanooga First Episode Psychosis Initiative team
  + *Increase access to competitive integrated employment for those individuals who do not have access to an IPS program* –
    - One of the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP) goals this year is to help American Job Centers (AJCs) in their work supporting all people in their search for work, including those with disabilities.
    - As proponents of IPS continue to increase, new advocates are being creating each time education about IPS occurs.
    - The work of each member of the Task Force is to educate people about the abilities of people with disabilities, helping them to find competitive integrated work.
    - How else can this goal be accomplished:
      * Increase quality and quantity of data collection from current providers.
      * Use the systems in place to improve access to IPS and supported employment. Those systems include: Disability Pathfinder, ensuring WIOA staff have accurate information about supported employment programs in the state, create interactive methods to obtain info on DMHSAS and VR websites.
      * Ensure established social media mediums have information about how to access IPS or create Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts to share information about IPS.
      * Use established 800 numbers to share information about supported employment or create numbers for people to easily find information about IPS.
    - Workgroup members were asked to bring to the next meeting, at least one idea of how to access supported employment. These ideas will be summarized into one document for the purpose of sharing with those who are looking for supported employment.
* *Increase access to employment for individuals who have a dual diagnosis (behavioral health diagnosis and intellectual developmental disability)*
  + The workgroup members emphasized the importance of focusing on both populations, those with primarily a mental health diagnosis and those with dual diagnosis as previously defined.
  + It is at times difficult to determine who the best provider and funding source should be.
  + A TennCare staff member commented that ECF Choices providers are approved to serve dual diagnosis populations.
  + The workgroup emphasized the importance of having more pilots to serve the dually diagnosed and from that experience learn the billing methods.
* **EFSLMP – VQ updates** 
  + Doug Crandell, the subject matter expert (SEM) for the grant will visit in June and August – June 13th & 14th and August 15th & 16th
  + During the last monthly call, the future vision and things we need to “stop doing” were discussed
* **Dual diagnosis pilot update** 
  + Frontier staff provided an update about clients served, placement rates, place of employment, etc.
    - Five people currently working, and one may be moving away from the area of service
    - One is employed at Food City, will successfully close with VR in two weeks
    - Some of the places where job contacts have happened include: Food City, Dominos, Popeye’s, area motels, hospitality venues, NCG
    - Job coaches are still involved, but the needs for interventions have lessened. Job development, job carving, and job coaching remain the significant difference for serving this population.
    - When this pilot began, Frontier targeted clients who had attempted employment previously, but had not been successful or clients who had not been employed at all. Much of the time spent when services begin, is helping clients decide on an employment goal.
    - Cristi Blalock will present at this year’s Mega Conference about what Frontier has learned with using IPS to support clients with a dual diagnosis.
* **Updates from TennCare** 
  + Conversation, collaboration, and steps are currently happening toward discovering methods to use Medicaid in TN for IPS supported employment.
  + Supported Employment is a billable service through Medicaid, but currently no agency in TN is using this option.

# Employers and Providers Workgroup Update (Pam Hollingsworth)

* Announcement of Seth Pedigo-Tammy LaPoint O’Brien and Michael Barbour spoke highly of Seth and what he will bring to the table.
* Strategic Plan Review
  + Make Tennessee state government a model employer of people with disabilities
    - John Camperlino spoke about ECF services and how they are increasing # of people obtaining employment. Over 50 ECF members employed since December for a statewide of 23-27% ECF members employed. ECF is using Exploration and Discovery services to familiarize members with employment.
    - State government as a model employer – The group believe we are moving forward with this by offering paid internships to gain experience. We also heard some success stories from hiring state departments including Department of Transportation, Department of Treasury, DIDD, DHS and ECD.
    - Michael Barbour spoke about the recent Employment Gathering he and Kelly Risener, IOI, worked on together. Many employers met with people who are interested in employment to work on interview skills, resume building, communicating employability skills and networking/building employer relationships. Michael also reported 18% DIDD stateewide people employed. This is an increase
  + Increase # of employers
    - Tammy LaPoint Obrien spoke of 2 car dealerships in Lebanon that worked with TRC Smyrna to set up tours and opportunities to interview (detailers and lube positions) 1 dealer hired. The other dealer provided 4 trainings on disability awareness/support.
    - TRC changes – more like a college campus providing classes, electives, specialized training in landscaping/pharmacy techs and partnering with CVS.
    - Amazon in Chattanooga is a tour site so people can register for a tour and have a better understanding of Amazon jobs. <https://www.aboutamazon.com/amazon-fulfillment-center-tours?utm_source=pd&utm_medium=fb&utm_campaign=fctours&utm_term=eb_insideamazon&utm_content=CHA1>
    - Recognition to employers – Vanderbilt Children’s had a hiring fair – hired 1. Next Steps – 2 students gained employment on the retail side of the Country Music Hall of Fame.

# Individuals and Families Workgroup Update (Carrie Guiden & Janet Shouse)

* **March**
  + Memphis – Used Pathfinder to share resources for a variety of summer camps available to children and adults with IDD in West TN; also looked at day camps and Pre-ETS “camps”; DDH wrap up, legislative update and reviewed the Governor’s State-of-the-State address
  + Nashville - Jama Mohamed, FVTN Youth Program Coordinator shared information about Thirdspace – a program to support a more inclusive world for people with special healthcare needs, chronic illnesses and disabilities; DDH Wrap-up, reviewd fGovernor Lee’s State-of-the-State (budget priorities) and State legislative update
* **April** 
  + Memphis – ECF CHOICES Member Advocates from BlueCare and Amerigroup attended to answer questions about the program and to share updates with family members
* **May**
  + Memphis – Chris Meyers shared information on a program/app in development that would assist families in connecting with local community resources; open discussion among families regarding VR, education and Pre-Employment Transition Services
  + Nashville – Disability Rights TN new programs – Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (guest speaker – Jeff Vaden, Financial Rights Advocate) and TennCare LTSS Information Program (guest speaker – April Mohamed and Courtney Marshall, Benefits Support Specialists); legislative wrap-up
* **Other:**
  + Tennessee Disability MegaConference, May 23-24th – family/self-advocate sessions included several on supported decision making, financial planning, self-determination and self-direction, assistive technology, IPS model for employment, TN diploma options, and more
* Individual consultations with Disability Pathfinder at MegaConference
* Disability Pathfinder’s Community Outreach forum in Paris, TN on May 30th featuring the DD Network Partners, The Arc TN, STEP, and the AAAD
* **Rise to Work Blog** 
  + February 21: [Partners in Policymaking Leadership Institute Offers Advocacy, Networking; Data Shows Impact](http://www.tennesseeworks.org/partners-in-policymaking-leadership-institute-offers-advocacy-networking-data-shows-impact/)
  + March 5: [Accounting Firm EY Recruits, Invests in Workers with Autism](http://www.tennesseeworks.org/accounting-firm-ey-recruits-invests-in-workers-with-autism/)
  + March 19: [Why It’s Important to Know How to Read Legislation](http://www.tennesseeworks.org/why-its-important-to-know-how-to-read-legislation/)
  + April 2: [New DIDD Commissioner Brings a Parent’s Passion to His Role](http://www.tennesseeworks.org/new-didd-commissioner-brings-a-parents-passion-to-his-role/)
  + April 16:  [New Provider Merakey Offers Supports with Holistic Health Focus](http://www.tennesseeworks.org/new-provider-merakey-offers-supports-with-holistic-health-focus/)
  + May 7:  [How Siblings Can Support Individuals with Disabilities in Employment](http://www.tennesseeworks.org/how-siblings-can-support-individuals-with-disabilities-in-employment/)
  + May 21: [Tennessee Autism Council’s Report Outlines Many Challenges Ahead](http://www.tennesseeworks.org/tennessee-autism-councils-report-outlines-many-challenges-ahead/)
  + June 4: [DIDD, The Arc Inviting Families in 15 Rural Counties to Local Forums](http://www.tennesseeworks.org/didd-the-arc-inviting-families-in-15-rural-counties-to-local-forums/)
  + Top Blogs:
    - New Provider Merakey Offers Supports with Holistic Health Focus (506 pageviews)
    - Accounting Firm EY Recruits, Invests in Workers with Autism (385 pageviews)
    - What is an Occupational Diploma? (321 pageviews)

# Data Workgroup Update (Erik Carter & Jessica Awsumb) **UPDATES**

* We have hosted 9 community conversations in Bristol, Geeneville, Rhea, Maryville, Roane Sequatchie, Houston, Germantown, and Bedford.
* Transition Tennessee’s Pre-ETS Blueprint has been launch and currently includes the first two courses for providers of Pre-ETS: The Power of Early Work Experiences and An Overview of WIOA and Pre-ETS. We are currently working on three additional courses: Connecting with Employers and Families, Work-Based Learning, and Instruction in Self-Advocacy. We have 5 more courses planned as well as the Student Blueprint.
* The TennesseeWorks “By The Numbers” page (<http://www.tennesseeworks.org/data-dashboard/>) has been updated to reflect employment numbers on DRIVE (Data and Resources to Inspire a Vision of Employment). In addition, we have added the Statewide Employment Goal document. We continue to welcome suggestions for additions and revisions to this dashboard.

**CURRENT DATA COLLECTION EFFORTS**

* We concluded data collection of the statewide needs assessment addressing employment and pre-Employment Transition Services (pre-ETS) for young people with disabilities (ages 14-22). We have completed data collection for nearly 1,000 providers of Pre-ETS and educators and over 300 parents. Topics addressed include: views related to Pre-ETS, local employment outcomes for youth with disabilities, local employment barriers, local collaborations, and personal demographics. We are in the process of producing more formal articles to document the results of the assessments.
* We continue to develop ways to track the reach of transition-related professional development efforts across the state, as well as the extent to which that training is leading to changes in actual practices.
* As an ongoing effort, we are collecting video/stories/examples of Pre-ETS in the classroom and community. If you know of anyone that we should connect with, please share their contact information with us.

**DATA-BASED PUBLICATIONS FROM THIS PARTNERSHIP**

* All of these papers have been crafted as part of the work we have all done on the TennesseeWorks Partnership. You can download the article by clicking on the included links.
  + [Family perspectives on the appeals of and alternatives to sheltered employment for individuals with severe disabilities](https://www.dropbox.com/s/r8pjnue3pzwm6f4/2018%20Carter%20Bendetson%20Guiden%20RPSD.pdf?dl=0). *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*
  + [Community conversations on inclusive higher education for students with intellectual disability.](https://www.dropbox.com/s/52xzoeucwjgapmd/IN%20PRESS%20Bumble%20Carter%20Bethune%20Day%20McMillan%20CDTEI.pdf?dl=0) *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals.*
  + [Community conversations on integrated employment: Individualization and impact.](https://www.dropbox.com/s/hcehughcl8cgzon/2018%20Bumble%20Carter%20McMillan%20Bethune%20Manikas%20JDPS.pdf?dl=0)  *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*.
  + [The TennesseeWorks Partnership: Elevating employment outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.](https://www.dropbox.com/s/2yjd8orb5h6msbj/2017%20Carter%20McMillan%20Wills%20TennesseeWorks%20Partnership%20JVR.pdf?dl=0) *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*.
  + [Parent perspectives on integrated employment for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.](https://www.dropbox.com/s/0yd5vhmxqewlyi2/IN%20PRESS%20Gilson%20Carter%20Bumble%20McMillan%20RPSD.pdf?dl=0) *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*
  + [Using community conversations to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities in rural and urban communities.](https://www.dropbox.com/s/33f1aaa1unustt0/2017%20Bumble%20Carter%20McMillan%20Manikas%20JVR.pdf?dl=0) *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*.
  + [The promise and possibilities of community conversations: Expanding employment opportunities for people with disabilities.](https://www.dropbox.com/s/739ksnl9yhgr8zi/2018%20Carter%20Bumble%20JDPS.pdf?dl=0) *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*.
  + [Informing and equipping parents of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.](https://www.dropbox.com/s/wb3gfxj65pvyg0h/2017%20Gilson%20Bethune%20Carter%20McMillan%20IDD.pdf?dl=0) *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*.
  + [The voices of parents: Post–high school expectations, priorities, and concerns for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities.](https://www.dropbox.com/s/wu6infa7xsjy0w7/2016%20Blustein%20Carter%20McMillan%20JSE.pdf?dl=0)*The Journal of Special Education.*
  + [Engaging communities in identifying local strategies for expanding integrated employment during and after high school.](https://www.dropbox.com/s/pdby2zmojp3knqx/2016%20Carter%20Blustein%20Bumble%20McMillan%20Harvey%20Henderson%20AJIDD.pdf?dl=0)*American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.*
  + [School-business partnerships and students with intellectual and developmental disabilities: Listening to employers.](https://www.dropbox.com/s/9y3ngk1fmn1gd3m/Valentini%20Carter%20Bumble%20Hill%20-%20Employer%20Interviews%20Revisions%2010%2018%202017%5B1%5D.docx?dl=0) *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation.*
  + [Supporting strong transitions for students with autism spectrum disorder.](https://www.dropbox.com/s/qrng6qwy8v01xsc/IN%20PRESS%20Autism%20and%20Transition%20Chapter.docx?dl=0) In Gelbar, N. (Ed.), *Adolescents with autism spectrum disorder.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

**RECURRING REMINDER**

* All of the reports and papers emerging from this work are freely available to our members; some are posted on the TennesseeWorks website and some are copyrighted and need to be sent individually. These are your data. If there are any ways we can support agencies and other partners in answering important questions through strong research or data analyses, we would love to talk more about possibilities. Likewise, if agencies and other partners are pursuing grant applications, we would love to support this work by providing relevant research, helping with evaluation, or other avenues of support.