

Florida Provider Network



University of South Florida, Division of Applied Research and Education Support
Funded by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council

Employment Event Set for August, 07

APSE Sets Date for 9th Annual Conference

Florida APSE has announced its 9th annual Florida APSE conference on employment, the premiere conference on employment in Florida, will take place in Orlando at the Hilton in the Walt Disney World Resort August 22-24, 2007. The conference provides the opportunity to network with colleagues, share information on an exciting number of topics, and learn new skills from both state and national leaders.

The conference theme is **Employment for all... JOIN THE REVOLUTION...NOW!** Not only will the conference provide the opportunity to develop knowledge relating to employment and community participation for people but you will have the opportunity to have an impact on the future of employment in the state. A few conference highlights:

- Numerous presentations relating to employment, entrepreneurship, community participation, self advocacy and best practices.
- Keynote speakers who will excite and challenge you.
- The annual "State of the State" presentation where you will hear the most up-to-date information from leaders of APD, VR, Mental Health and DOE.
- The annual Florida APSE "Power Hour" where you will have the opportunity to have input in the future direction of Florida APSE.

For additional information: please contact any APSE Board member or Mike Capps at (772) 221-4936 or mcapps@hpsfl.org or visit <http://www.flapse.org>.

Building New Leadership in Florida for Employment and Transition

Florida Provider Network Meets in Orlando



Pam Hinterlong (Vocational Rehabilitation) and J.B. Black (Agency for Persons with Disabilities) provide updates on state news and activities in supported employment.

On February 27, 2007, in Orlando, a group of supported employment stakeholders met for a one-day meeting as part of the Florida Provider Leadership Network (FPLN). The event was sponsored by the Supported, Competitive, Integrated Employment Training (SCIETT) Project, hosted by the Florida Center for Inclusive Communities and funded by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council. After participants introduced themselves, there was a discussion of the purpose of the FPLN. The network is a way for developing and supporting emerging leadership in supported employment in Florida. With the size of the state, and all of its complex problems and success, having a forum to share information and to forge bonds becomes critical.

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Join the Florida Provider Discussion Board on the Web:
<http://www.flsupportedemployment.com:8080/phpbb/>



Florida Provider Network Meeting...

The next presentation was by Dale DiLeo of TRN, Inc., who went over the online capabilities of the Florida Provider Network. This is a series of interactive communication systems, including live print and electronic resources, used to enhance information sharing, problem solving, and training development in supported employment for the project sites. Each site has its own web page with a list of regional contact people. As action plans for technical assistance evolve, these will be posted on the page as well.

This presentation was followed by state updates from Vocational Rehabilitation (Pam Hinterlong) and Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD). The project teams then provided updates of their activities. There are now six project sites participating in SCIETT (Pensacola, West Palm Beach, Panama City, Osceola County, Brevard County and Ft. Lauderdale). Each site provided an update of their activities, as follows:

OSCEOLA

Technical assistance (TA) has started with the Osceola ARC and it has been scheduled for the Ridge Area ARC. Osceola ARC reports that an individual was selected who was described as challenging to employ by the organization; however through discovery the staff members were able to analyze and understand the individual better. Primrose noted that the individual selected for the discovery process is currently in supported living and has her own apartment. Her support team felt that by having the opportunity of observing her at home (a more natural environment) they were able to see many skills they didn't know about before. Ridge Area ARC stated that the individual selected for discovery was under supported living but is moving back with family. The Ridge Area ARC will report after discovery has occurred.

Challenges: Some funders evaluate an individual as "too low functioning." Advanced job coaching is a training need.

PALM BEACH

This region reports that they are working using a very collaborative approach. There is a focus on transition efforts, with a regional Council on Transition for Youth and an annual STARS conference. There is also an emerging BLN. Having discovery training and assistance has helped a lot to change people's mindsets to understand that you need to know the person first before thinking about employment.

Discovery sessions have been scheduled with the Palm Beach School District; the first two are to occur in Pahokee, FL. The Palm Beach area has also been focusing on self-employment; one of the directors of the ARC of Palm Beach provided the start up funding for one of the people that this entity serves so this person could start their own business. The Palm Beach team is planning to meet so they can plan how to sustain the ongoing initiatives.

Challenges: Trying to get support coordinators involved. There were two individuals referred to a sheltered workshop; however the ARC of Palm Beach was able to obtain a job for one of these individuals. Although VR has gone through a lot of staff turnover, the new VR counselors have knowledge about discovery. Traditional vocational evaluations need to change especially because not all of the individuals respond to paper and pencil types of testing. There is a general lack of knowledge about available resources for people with disabilities.

BREVARD

This region reports that they would like technical assistance to start discovery for two students. They are looking to bring discovery to the school system, to start "planting the seeds" so they can change the mindsets. A question was raised concerning release forms and what information can be shared for discovery. Other regions said they would share their forms and Dale stated if sent to him, he would post them on the web so that they can be downloaded.

Project Search is an initiative in which high school classes are held at businesses, and there are eight locations so far. This has served as a bridge to get people job internships. The BLN website is working on having job postings and resumes; they also plan to have a list of businesses that have employed people with disabilities or have been approached by the BLN in the past. They are also looking at County governments as potential employers.

Challenges: Having support coordinators more informed and better trained. Financial incentives. Hold support coordinators accountable for moving people to a less restrictive environment.

PENSACOLA

Challenges: A problem has been implementation due to lack of funding; two people have started the discovery process however they are waiting for the funding for supports. Transportation and personal care are also difficult. Lack of expertise of job coaches

BROWARD

This region reports that they are currently getting people and companies acquainted with the discovery process.

PANAMA CITY

A training session in this region is scheduled for March 13th -15th on "Discovering the Personal Genius."

The meeting concluded with some brainstorming of recommendations, topics in which more information and training are needed, and the setting of the follow-up FPLN meetings.

On-the-Job Support Comes in All Shapes and Sizes

By David Hagner & Dale DiLeo

Employees receive different types of support and assistance from different sources. Support is an expansive concept, and is important at work at different times for different reasons. In a particular situation, support may or may not be related to an individual's disability, and may or may not be perceived as above and beyond the support that other employees receive.

Types of Support

An important distinction can be made between instrumental support and expressive or affective support. Instrumental support is aimed at solving a specific problem or achieving a specific result. A baker may need the assistance of a coworker to pour a large container of batter because it "takes more than two hands." Or an office clerk may go to a supervisor for clarification of a new procedure.

Instrumental support may extend beyond work itself to other areas as well. Employees help each get back and forth to work, find apartments, get by until payday with a loan, and in countless other ways.

But instrumental support is not where job support ends. Because workplaces have people, and people have ups and downs, evolving relationships, emotions, personal crises, and the like, affective support is also needed. When someone is depressed, worried, or anxious, coworkers may express comfort, concern, tell a joke, or offer advice. Affective support may simply express solidarity, caring or group cohesion. Not only does this help productivity, it strengthens the human aspect of a workplace.

Another important distinction can be made between routine and episodic support. Routine support needs occur predictably and relatively often, such as help in stacking heavy boxes at the end of each shift. Episodic support is needed less regularly or relatively infrequently, such as help loading boxes onto a truck for a special shipment.

Sources of Support

Still another way of viewing support is to understand the source. Support can be personal or organizational, and can come from within the setting or from an external source.

Internal Support

Individual coworkers and supervisors with a work setting, as they go about the business of being together through each work day, provide personal support. Some companies, and especially many larger organizations, also sponsor their own programs of employee support. With adequate support, companies can increase the work performance of employees. Some of the more common organizational supports are:

- Employee assistance programs
- Skill development workshops
- Wellness programs
- Employee recognition programs
- Mentorship programs
- Company parties and picnics
- Sponsorship of bowling and other sports leagues
- Retirement and outplacement counseling

External Support

Families and friends support employees from outside the workplace by helping with getting ready for work, with transportation, and by listening to an employee about the events of the day. Vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs also fall into the external-organizational category, as do a number of types of consulting firms, especially human resource development consultants, and labor unions.

Employees with disabilities, like others, need and receive both instrumental and expressive support from coworkers and supervisors, from companies, and from outside organizations. Some workers with disabilities need intensive or specialized support some of the time, including external support services from a human service agency.

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Download a Report on the TRANSPORTATION FORUMS held around the state by APD to seek input on how transportation impacts people with disabilities achieving community employment:
http://apd.myflorida.com/customers/employment/docs/transportation_forum_report.pdf

On-the-Job Support

In any satisfactory employment situation, most support will be internal. It only appears that people with disabilities need a lot of external support if we are used to the support coming from an external agency source. If someone is sad, we may think they need to talk to a counselor. If someone forgets what to do, we may think they need a retraining program, a more structured environment, or some other special procedure. In our own lives, we handle most sadness or forgetting without professionals, and we know how to handle a situation where a coworker of ours is sad or forgets what to do.

When people with disabilities receive on-the-job support we may think that something special is going on. To the participants in the setting, giving and receiving support is something they may not even be very conscious of. As one coworker put it, "We don't do anything special -- we just give whatever help is needed."

If the employer has been involved in employee training, and working relationships have developed on the job, ongoing support will not be a separate issue. People who know each other and depend on each other will support each other. One study of supportive coworkers found that support provided to employees with severe disabilities by their coworkers included:

- Help managing time, including pacing one's work and knowing when it's time to finish one task and start another;
- Feedback on performance and reassurance that the employee is doing a good job;
- Attending to the impact of personal problems or life crises on work performance and helping the employee work through a "bad day;"
- Explanations and assistance dealing with personnel, workplace layout, or other changes at the site;
- Modifying or shifting work tasks to find the best match with the employee's interests and abilities.

Coworkers do not view support of this nature as burdensome or especially different from the support they give to anyone else. And they do not view support as a one-way street. Supported employees are in turn a source of support for their coworkers.

Sometimes We Just Need to Get Out of the Way

When effective supports are available at a worksite, the best "service" an employment consultant can provide is to let them happen and not get in the way. Other times support systems within the worksite will not develop spontaneously but will need to be partly "engineered"

or facilitated by a support consultant. Other support resources may need to be adapted or supplemented. And some individuals do present emotional, physical, intellectual, or behavioral challenges that call for specialized expertise or skill which must either be taught to internal support persons or be provided externally, by agency staff. When support is provided externally we speak of providing support services.

When support is simply available at the worksite with no particular assistance from outside we speak of it as natural support. When some effort has to be put into developing or accommodating internal support resources to suit someone's needs, we sometimes refer to facilitating natural supports.

Both companies and employment support agencies can make a range of support options available as needed by the employee and the setting. Current federal supported employment regulations require that a source of ongoing, or extended support for a prospective supported employee be identified. Extended support usually involves agency staff contacts at the job site with supported employees related to maintaining the job at least twice per month, with allowance for exceptions regarding location and numbers of contacts depending on individual circumstances.

But the source of support does not necessarily have to be a traditional disability organization. And ongoing support partnerships can be maintained without a formal arrangement or official designation as "supported employment." According to federal regulations, support may be provided from a variety of different sources, includes agency staff "as well as other qualified individuals, including coworkers, through natural supports." The frequency and type of support beyond the minimum twice monthly contact should be dictated solely by the needs of the individual and the setting.

Keeping in Touch

It is possible for an employment consultant to remain aware of a supported employee's progress and be alert to problems when they arise in an informal, unobtrusive way by simply maintaining contact with the employee and/or contact with a supervisor or one or more coworkers. In this role, the consultant is not the provider of support but acts in a background or back-up capacity. We might say that in these situations the consultant supports not the employee but the relationship between the employee and employer.

David Hagner is the Rehabilitation Projects director at University of New Hampshire's Institute on Disability. Dale DiLeo is a disability consultant and author of the new book, *Raymonds Room*. For more information: <http://www.raymondsroom.com>.