Pennsylvania has been a leader for decades in providing a variety of person-centered, community supports and services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Persons with intellectual disability (new terminology replacing mental retardation) have a sub-average intellectual function with an IQ 70-75 or below with onset by age 18, with Pennsylvania using age 21, and limitations in at least 2 functional levels including communication, self-care, academics, self-direction, home living, social skills, community use, health, safety leisure and/or work. The definition of developmental disabilities is onset before age 22 with substantial functional limitations in 3 or more major life areas such as receptive and expressive language, self-care, learning, self-direction, independent living, mobility and/or economic self-sufficiency. Developmental disabilities can include: autism, brain injury, cerebral palsy, and Fragile X Syndrome. Data and statistics as of June 30, 2013 regarding those currently served in Pennsylvania through the Department of Public Welfare’s Office of Developmental Programs which includes individuals living in the community with intellectual disability and Autism show:

- Total of 48,862 individuals in community services
- Ages 30-39: 7,312
- Ages 40-49: 7,101
- Ages 50-59: 6,931
- Ages 60-69: 3,831
- Ages 70-79: 1,365
- Ages 80+: 398

RCPA (Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association) members determined a need to address our best practices in vocational rehabilitation and employment options for the IDD population. RCPA members are interested in promoting “Best Practices” to align themselves with Pennsylvania’s emphasis on Employment First, and to ensure our compliance with the federal Olmstead Supreme Court Decision and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Recently several states have been investigated by the Federal Department of Justice (DOJ). Those states included:

- Rhode Island: DOJ investigation found this state in violation of ADA compliance to provide services, programs and activities in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of persons with disabilities. Thousands with IDD are serviced in segregated sheltered workshops and facility-based day programs although they are capable of and want to receive employment and day programs in the community. The formal report from DOJ to Rhode Island (1/6/14) indicates that “while sheltered workshops and facility-based day programs may be permissible placements for some individuals with IDD who make an informed choice to rely on them, the State of Rhode Island has unnecessarily and unjustifiably over-relied on such programs to the exclusion of integrated alternatives like supported employment and integrated day services.”

- North Carolina: In 2010 the Disability Rights Network of North Carolina filed a complaint with the US Department of Justice which resulted in a settlement agreement requiring funding for supported employment for individuals with mental illness. A new community-based initiative
includes the Community Activity and Employment Transitions program that is non-facility based and emphasizes community life and employment.

Currently the IDD services system in Pennsylvania provides person-centered planning based on the development of the annual Individual Support Plan (ISP) which is completed by the individual and a multi-disciplinary team organized by the Supports Coordinator and which may include family members as well as service staff. The ISP is based on individual needs, functional assessments, and personal choice. There are numerous options available regarding employment and vocational/prevocational training.

Pennsylvania’s Department of Public Welfare’s Office of Developmental Programs’ (ODP) mission is to provide individuals with intellectual disability, developmental disabilities and autism with services needed and the opportunity to make personal and informed choices about living and working in their communities. Services are funded by two federal Medical Assistance Home and Community Based Services Waivers and state funding options. Employment related services include a variety of options to assist the individual in job training, job placement and on-the-job training and follow-up. *(See Appendix A for List of ODP funded services and service definitions)*

Pennsylvania’s Department of Labor and Industries’ Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) provides vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities to assist them in preparing for and obtaining employment in their communities. Services provided to individuals include Supported Employment Programs offering job coaches to assist in the job search and on-the-job training. Funding is provided by both state and federal dollars. *(See Appendix B for List of OVR funded services and service definitions)*

As our systems look to the future it is imperative that policy makers and funders understand the varied functional levels and behavior needs of those individuals in service. With such a diverse population with intellectual and developmental limitations the system cannot function as a “One Size Fits All” or an “Everybody Can Work” system. Our system has been developed with an emphasis on personal choice, which is taken into consideration when developing the ISP and in the selection of supports and services; it must also be taken into consideration when developing vocational and employment goals.

**Employment and Joint Initiatives**
The state’s systems including ODP, OVR and the PA Department of Education (PDE) are working more closely together to address the employment and vocational needs and services for individuals with disabilities. Examples of these initiatives include:

- OVR’s Early Reach Initiative which outreaches to schools to start the transition process for youth with disabilities beginning at age 14 to prepare them for a work life after high school.
- OVR and Berks’ Career and Technology Center Transition (BCTC) Initiative is a newly developed third-party agreement to provide transition services to OVR eligible youth who are enrolled in the training programs at BCTC and attend one of the 16 public schools in this area. It is focused on serving those with the most significant disabilities who are transitioning to work-based learning and eventually to competitive, community-integrated employment. During fiscal years 2014-2017 anticipated this project will serve 50-65 youth.
- Ticket to Work provided by federal Social Security Administration and implemented by OVR or an Employment Network is available to those ages 18-64 with disabilities and who receive Social Security Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income; Services may include training,
career counseling, vocational rehabilitation, job placement and ongoing support services to achieve a work goal (**) add to appendices

- “Hiring People with Disabilities” How-to-Guide is a joint effort with ODP and OVR including employment service providers and area businesses; This guide was developed based on experiences and advice from community employers that had successful experiences hiring persons with disabilities. (**add to Appendices)

- As the state increases its emphasis on employment for everyone, ODP has joined with the national initiative, State Employment Leadership Network (SELN). SELN endeavors to build cross-systems and cross-community supports to improve integrated employment outcomes and allow individuals with IDD to work toward economic self-sufficiency. This effort begins with transition age students and continues throughout adulthood. (See Appendix C for ODP’s SELN Final Report)

- ODP coordinated in 2013 a Future’s Planning cross-systems and stakeholders initiative. ODP’s Futures Planning website promotes transparency and encourages stakeholder engagement. Three teams participate in ODP’s Futures Planning process: the Extended Team, Core Team and ODP Team. View ODP’s Futures Planning website located on the: www.odpconsulting.net > ODP Futures Planning > ODP Futures Planning Resources for a description of these teams. http://www.odpconsulting.net/odp-futures-planning/#.Vje93E-FOpp

Recommendations included focusing on employment first initiatives and conducting a gap analysis with a cross-system team to determine what currently exists, what is working and what can be replicated

- ODP issued a Request for Information regarding Work Readiness Programs (Announcement #100-13) to gather information regarding successful planning and implementation to prepare transition age youth and adults with IDD to enter the competitive workforce.

- PDE’s Secondary Transition Guide on the PaTTAN website (www.pattan.net) provides transition age youth (14-21), parents and professionals with resources to assist students in the transition process from school to adult services and employment options.


Participants Disabilities Issues
As the IDD system looks at moving toward more integrated community employment goals for individuals with IDD it is imperative to understand the diverse range of disabilities and functioning level of those served by the provider system. Just the intellectual disability alone provides a wide range of cognitive understanding levels that require specialized understanding such as those deficits listed in the first paragraph of this document. Adding Autism Spectrum Disorder which may be a disability in itself or in addition to the ID creates additional daily living skills impairment. Many with IDD also have other physical and mental and behavioral health issues which complicate their development and often require intense supports and services. These issues needing specialized assistance and programming may include:

- Physical disabilities and health issues such as mobility limitations, diabetes, congenital heart disorder, non-ambulatory, non-verbal
- Sensory impairments such as vision and hearing
- Lack of social skills including sexual awareness and interactions with others
• Aggressive verbal and physical behaviors caused by mental or behavioral health issues such as depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, anxiety disorders, dementia, bipolar disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, PICA

**Barriers to Employment**
With the larger rural and suburban communities in Pennsylvania, there is a definite lack of transportation which can create issues related to persons working in the community. While many of the larger urban areas have public transportation options, many are not yet handicap accessible. The PA Transportation Alliance continues to advocate for resolution of this issue.

A prevalent barrier for many is the lack of formal preparation and training for competitive work. Often the school to work transition process does not occur in real work settings. The activities provided during the school programs may not be transferable to real jobs. An example is someone volunteers at the local animal shelter walking dogs, but this will not help them obtain a 16 to 30 hour per week paid position and those learned skills are not transferable to other types of employment options.

Planning for work should begin in school by age 14 as required by federal IDEA law. This needs to include real work experience while in high school, development of a social network with references to help establish a resume to be used as a marketing tool for potential employers. Students need to be provided a variety of opportunities for unpaid and volunteering to develop soft skills, work skills to ultimately generate specific employment goals and choices. Having paid work experiences is a positive for these students. Schools need to provide a work readiness program to offer these experiences.

Additional barriers to employment is the limited understanding of families and community agencies regarding the impact of earning wages on the individuals Social Security disability benefits. Families and individuals need accurate and complete information to support going to work. Work Incentive Counseling is an invaluable service for those interested in working or currently working and need to know how their benefits such as healthcare will be impacted by work. This is an important service to those ages 14-64 who receive Social Security Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income.

**Types of Employment Services, Individuals Served and Success Stories (only use # not agency name)**
RCPA requested information from members providing employment and vocational services. Ten responses were received with all providing supported employment options and eight providing facility-based work center options.

**Agency #1** provides “Supported Employment” services which includes job development, job coaches for individualized job-site training support, on-going support for job retention, transportation training and connection for provision of assistive technology. This agency is also developing Customized Employment services including Discovery assistance. Pre-employment activities may include Community Based Work Assessments conducted with employers in the community, job seeking and interview skill training, and resume development. Job coaching includes job-site instruction, coordination of vocational and educational services and other job-related assistance such as advocacy for reasonable accommodations.

Follow-Along-Services may be provided for at least 12 months after the individual starts their community employment. These services assist with conflicts with co-workers or supervisors, assessing production deficiencies and providing possible solution, and assisting with reporting earnings to Social Security Administration.
Work Incentive Counseling assists individuals and their families in understanding the impact of earning wages on their Supplemental Security Income and/or Social Security Disability Insurance.

This agency may begin working with youth ages 16 or older as well as adults with disabilities. Community based work assessments are used to provide an opportunity for the individual to explore their own skills and interests within the context of a real job setting in the community. Using OVR’s guidelines for these assessments the intent is to determine the individual’s employment preferences and abilities using community based sites and based on the individual’s needs.

During the 2012-13 fiscal year this agency initiated employment services to 980 new customers with 459 being placed in jobs. These individuals earned an average monthly wage of $896. On average it took 139 days from initial date of service until the first placement. Employment examples for individuals included: Home Health Aide, machine operator, bagger, laundry attendant, and cook.

**Agency #2** provides Supported Employment services with referrals received from ODP and OVR. Services are funded by ODP for individuals funded in the waivers and by base funding. OVR funds Community Based Work Assessment and job placement.

Currently this agency is providing services to 23 individuals who are actively seeking employment in the near future. Community employers include restaurants, hotels, fast food, state university, retail stores and grocery stores. Jobs for these individuals include food preparation, janitorial, outdoor maintenance, lobby attendant, parking area attending, housekeeping and mail delivery. Many individuals served by this agency’s employment program have achieved long-term employment of 10 years or move with the same employer.

The severe and prevalent barrier facing many of the individuals referred to this agency is a lack of formal preparation and training for competitive work. This is often the lack of skills set and experiences needed for today’s job market. Often the transition experiences during school years do not occur in real work settings and the activities engaged in are not transferable to real jobs. These skill sets need to include social interactions and interpersonal situations in today’s competitive work settings.

This agency is currently developing a job readiness program to address some of these unmet needs. This will involve active participation and specialized counsel of education institutions and employers. Necessary components include a meaningful and functional assessment of the individual’s needs and abilities.

**Agency #3** provides a variety of employment and vocational training options daily to over 300 individuals with intellectual disability. Services include pre-vocational facility based employment; industry based transition training employment, supported competitive employment and customized employment. These services include an intensive support program, work activities center (WAC), training program and job coaching all providing a supportive and structured environment as well as taking the time needed to work on skills and work characteristics necessary to obtain and maintain competitive employment. Annually about 30 individuals are placed into competitive employment.

Individuals serviced with intellectual and developmental disabilities include those with mild, moderate and severe cognitive functioning levels with many also having additional complications such as Autism, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, traumatic brain injuries, attention disorders, dementia, sensory impairments, seizure disorders, and post traumatic stress disorder. In addition many also have
physical and health issues such as congenital heart disorder, diabetes, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy and spina bifida. As many of these individuals have co-occurring or multiple diagnosis which create health, behavioral, and psycho-social stressors, these issues often impeded the vocational process leading to competitive employment.

Associated behavioral, medical and/or physical limitations include: Comprehension, limited ability to follow instructions or do independent problem solving, physical and motor skill limitations, aggressiveness, lack of emotional control, grooming and hygiene issues, inappropriate sexual expression, self-stimulation behaviors, lack of coping skills (expressed as biting, yelling, self-injurious behaviors, running, screaming, crying), medical conditions that affect continence, difficulty with social boundaries, destruction of personal or private property, drug and alcohol abuse, need for regular and periodic medical leave of absence, criminal records from poor decision making.

Methods and tools utilized to assess individual needs include: Becker Work Adjustment Profile for initial intake and evaluation, Reading Free Interest Inventory, Wide Range Achievement Test, Situational Work Assessments, Lifetime medical History, Worker Characteristic Baseline, community Based Work Assessment, trial work periods and quarterly collaborative meetings with all team members.

This agency offers numerous examples of success stories:

- While working in a facility based program, Robert expressed a strong desire to work in a competitive job. Through the assistance of the Vocational Training Facility staff, he obtained funding for Customized Employment and is now working 2 days a week at a Salvation Army near his home and attends the vocational training program 3 days each week.

- Brian has overcome numerous challenges while at the work activity center (WAC) which has successfully lead to his placement at a local college dining service through the Transitional Training program.

- Hope was hired by a local retail store after working with the WAC’s job coaching services. This transition took 2 years. She now lives near her employer which greatly affected her ability to be hired and work various shifts. Currently she is receiving minimal agency support to help her maintain her current position.

- Nicole transferred from the WAC to a transitional training program at an order fulfillment center. Her parents provide her transportation to and from her daily program because her waiver funded transportation did not allow her to get to this offsite location at the scheduled work times.

- Shawn was initially placed at a retail store using the agency’s transitional training program. However due to attendance issues and lack of appropriate personal hygiene he returned to the WAC where he worked with staff to improve these issues. He is still working on building his skills and with staff support has progressed with his abilities on the job at the WAC.

**Agency #4** provides employment, prevocational and vocational services to 175 individuals serving 8 counties. These options include supported employment, prevocational services, transitional work, community-based work assessments, vocational evaluations and Fairweather Lodge program. Fairweather Lodges promote independent community living, employment and healthy lifestyle for mental health recovery.

The Youth Transitional Juvenile Justice Pre-Vocational Partnership for adjudicated youth with Individual Education Plans have the opportunity to attend the prevocational facility program, along with their
instructors, for a community based work experience. Money earned is paid towards their fines. This program currently serves 18 students.

The functional levels and behaviors of individuals services include those with intellectual disability with IQs from 35-70, behaviors such as bi-polar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, brain injury, Attention Deficit Hyper Activity disorder, mild schizophrenia, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Some of the barriers to competitive employment for these individuals include literacy and numeracy, rural transportation issues, aging, health and medical issues and inadequate family and community supports.

This agency uses a variety of assessments to determine the individual’s needs and progress toward community employment. These include:

- Service Action Plan with employment strategies, goals, action plan and timeline
- Observational skill assessment and training tool for independent living and vocational skills
- Reading-free Vocational Interest inventory
- Educational Assessment for Math and Reading
- Ansel-Casey Life Skills Assessment to determine multi-skill levels
- Job Search Attitude Inventory to provide a quick assessment of how motivated the person is in seeking employment
- Choices which is an assessment to learn more about person’s strengths and identify interests, values and abilities
- Mobility/Transportation Inventory
- Vocational Interests based on various professions and workplace descriptions
- Community-based Work Assessment

This agency has seen a drastic decrease in state funding for community employment services which has led to using existing staff to support part-time Supported Employment Services. They do have success stories to share for those with significant disabilities and barriers to employment:

- Rose receives Home and Community Habilitation and Pre-vocational services from this provider. Since 2012 she has been volunteering at a local hospital and is a proficient worker and well respected by her co-workers and supervisors.
- Robert began working at the agency’s packaging and distribution industry in 2012 and has made significant improvements and created a strong work ethic for himself, including being named the 2013 Employee of the Year. He then left the facility to seek community employment and to move into his own apartment.
- Janelle began working in the agency’s packaging center in 2011 and after overcoming many obstacles she established a positive work ethic for herself. She has moved on to community employment.
- John and Ken participated in the pre-vocational program for many years and have both transitioned to community employment and part-time jobs at a local retail store.

Types of community employment for these individuals include staking supplies and sign holder at a local pizza shop, truck stop cashier, department store cart handlers, hospital maintenance worker, and distribution plant worker.

Agency #5 provides services in 2 rural counties to over 90 individuals in their employment and vocational programs. These programs include pre-vocational and sheltered employment, home and community habilitation therapeutic activities, life skills training, work study for students and mobile
work force. Currently under development are an “Art” as a vocational program and an Adult Training Facility. Individuals served include those with intellectual and developmental disabilities and/or mental health issues.

Services are provided to those with varying functioning levels from nonverbal, non-ambulatory, severely disabled to the college educated mental health consumer. The Adult Training Facility program is being developed for those not capable of advancement vocationally.

While this agency’s Supportive Employment Program has been greatly reduced due to systems funding changes over the past few years, they do have numerous success stories when this service was offered. Over 20 individuals, who have been placed in competitive employment in the manufacturing and service industries have worked in these positions for years with some having over 25 years on their jobs.

Through this program’s vocational training program they have 3 individuals earning over $17 per hour working through the agency’s janitorial service contract with an area business.

Agency #6 currently provides pre-vocational and supported employment services to over 200 individuals in a rural county. Those served include persons with intellectual disability, developmental disabilities, mental health, emotional and physical disabilities.

The Supported Employment services assist individuals in finding work and provide the necessary support to maintain that employment. In 2013 eight individuals were placed in competitive employment in jobs ranging from human services to dietary to housekeeping. This agency has a contract with PennDOT Photo Driver’s License Centers at six sites and employ’s 16 individuals with disabilities to perform some of the license center duties.

Transition Plus program provides opportunities for transitional age school students with disabilities to try out jobs in their community. Students are paired with a job shadow mentor and given work experience outside the classroom. Hands-on experiences include tasks such as stocking shelves, changing oil on vehicles, working with pre-school children and being a restaurant hostess.

The vocational center program provides the opportunity for those with severe disabilities, who cannot work competitively, to have the opportunity to earn wages and receive training to improved work related skills. Center work experiences include performing work in an industrial setting and also in a Café setting. Vocational evaluation services are offered through a series of interviews, standardized tests, work samples and work experiences.

Agency #7 provides employment and prevocational services in seven counties. These services include supported and supportive employment, community-based career assessments, and customized employment through discovery. Prevocational sites included work center employment, work activity center, handicapped employment, job readiness courses, and a tiered structure looking at volunteering, work module and mobile workforce opportunities.

Individuals services include those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental illness, physical disabilities, head injuries, hearing and vision loss. Many have multiple disabilities.

Vocational evaluations and assessments include Self-Directed Vocational Interest Inventory by SAGE, Valpar, Becker and Wide Ranging Interest Test.
This agency has found that locating their prevocational and supported/supportive employment programs in the same physical location has encouraged individuals to realize community employment is a viable option. They have the opportunity to develop relations with employment staff while yet in their comfortable pre-vocation environment which increases their level of trust in considering employment. Successes include securing state competitive supported employment grants which assisted in securing over 1,000 jobs for people with disabilities in their communities. During 2013 this agency assisted 30 individuals obtain competitive employment. These jobs are at retail stores, state government offices, rehabilitation/medical facilities and distribution industries.

**Agency #8** provides services in a large urban and suburban county. It offers five separate vocational program areas with differing levels of service: Pre-vocational/Facility-Based, Pre-Vocational/Community-Based, Seniors, and three Adult Training Facilities. There are currently over 150 individuals served by this agency in their vocational programs.

The functional levels of the individuals served vary from mild to moderate intellectual disability, Autism, or Dual Diagnosis with Mental Health issues. They can be verbal, nonverbal, hearing impaired, visually impaired and/or physically disabled. These issues often lead to behaviors that affect job performance and may include Pica, physical and/or verbal aggressiveness, repetitive behaviors, obsessive compulsiveness, anger management, yelling, swearing, repetitive behaviors that affect work flow, inability to independently stay on task, and/or elopement risk.

Connecting Abilities Developing Sills is a specialized Adult Training Facility program currently serving 20 persons with 1:1 and 1:3 staffing ratios. This programs offers opportunities to participate in social/community based activities, volunteer work, skill building activities, pre-vocational training and paid employment. These opportunities are provided by the providers businesses which include shredding services, lawn care, catering, janitorial and interoffice mail delivery.

**Agency #9** provides prevocational and vocational services which are both facility-based and community-based. These include traditional job placement and customized employment. They also provide Work Incentives Planning and Assistance services in 30 counties which is funded by the Social Security Administration.

Formal assessment tools as well as job shadowing and community based work assessments are used to aid the individual with their career planning.

**Agency #10** offers services to individuals with middle to moderate levels of intellectual disability as well as Autism, Asperger’s and behavioral issues. These include those with verbal and physical issues, perception and social delays. Services include Supported Employment which consists of job find, job support and transitional services. Their work center’s prevocational jobs include light assembly, light assembly of tools, including packaging and labeling. Their job simulated system called PAES breaks down the different models needed to teach and develop employment skills.

Individual’s job-ready skills are assessed using Individual Functional assessment tools, observation, progress notes, supervisor reports, case notes and employee evaluations. These tools assist in determining any need for job accommodations, adaptive equipment, assistive technology, touch screen computers, and applications for hygiene.
One of their success stories is a lady in her 40’s that started at their pre-vocational services, moved to the supportive employment and then to competitive community employment at a book store in her local mall. She is working successfully.

Provider Agencies Community Economic Impact
Pennsylvania’s numerous employment, prevocational and vocational rehabilitation providers provide thousands of jobs to those with and without disabilities living in our local communities. They are important employers who provide a valuable service to those needing assistance with skill development to determine their future endeavors. Their existence greatly impacts their local economies. These agencies provide support to the business community, offer employees that are assisted by job coaches to learn their new jobs and in their pre-vocational training programs offer services that support local, regional, and national businesses.

Examples include:

- **Agency #1**: Currently employs 76 individuals and spent during 2013 over $2.8 million on staff salaries, taxes and fringe benefits. At the same time they assisted 980 individuals with disabilities to prepare for community employment.
- **Agency #2**: Services assisted 23 individuals with disabilities to find competitive community employment
- **Agency #3**: Currently employs’ 55 full time staff and 285 trainees to prepare for employment options. Staff wages are approximately $2 million and trainee wages are approximately $800,000 annually. Contracts with local and national businesses to provide the work experiences in the prevocational program exceed $1 million annually.
- **Agency #4**: Employs 109 staff at a cost of $3.5 million, serves 228 individuals with disabilities and has placed 8 into competitive employment in 2013. This provider’s pre-vocational/sheltered workshops and industry division support 68 regional and national businesses. This agency has also been responsible for bringing a production component of a plastics extrusion company’s business back to the US from China. They also brought business back to the region from a western state. On multiple occasions new business owners with new patents have contacted the provider and worked with them to create their packaging including connecting them with other companies to provide the supplies needed. This provider is a major employer and community business partner in the 8 counties it serves.
- **Agency #5**: Employs a staff of 25 fulltime and 7 part-time serving over 110 individuals with an annual payroll of over $1 million
- **Agency #6**: Employs 31 full time and 5 part-time staff earning over $1.2 million plus program participants who earned over $398,000 in 2013.
- **Agency #7**: Employs 52 staff with primary role in supported employment or prevocational services. Wages and benefits for these staff is over $1.6 million and serves 396 individuals.
- **Agency #8**: Employs 56 staff in their vocational services at an annual cost of over $1.5 million

Potential New Service Options and Best Practice Opportunities
Many in the disabilities advocacy community are beginning to question the issue of individuals working long term in “sheltered workshops” and also making “subminimum wages”. RCPA has asked its vocational and employment services members to provide suggestions for other service options specifically for those that are severely involved and not capable of being hired in competitive employment positions in their community. Understandably, these providers are concerned that not
having a “workshop” to provide daily activities, interactions with peers, and many not providing transportation, means tens of thousands of individuals only options will be sitting at home all day.

In order to accomplish new services and system changes it is necessary for the funding streams to adequately fund services. Efforts need to be added that change the public’s awareness and perception regarding employing those with extensive behavioral, physical or intellectual issues.

Suggestions for options and best practices include:

- Flexible options for waiver funding to allow for successful transition to competitive employment
- Development of alternative models of transitional employment to encourage individuals to test their ability to work in the community; this may include working for several months in a community job and then trying another job on a trial basis; When the first job is exited then another person can have the opportunity to work in that position
- When individuals move from the prevocational facility to community employment it may result in the loss of lifelong friendships; Socialization opportunities need to be developed to allow continued interaction with these peers and to learn to make new friends; These can include job clubs or social clubs
- Since many workshop programs provide transportation to and from the facility and offer a daily venue, there may be a role for these programs to serve those not capable of employment by offering day programs at the same location, but that are focused on socialization skills, community activities and community volunteering
- Provide opportunities for progressive training on a job
- Offer job readiness classes which combine classroom based soft skills trainings
- Offer job shadowing and options such as internships and transitional models
- Provide consumer tours of local businesses and job partnering with local businesses
- Encourage community employers to have mentors or buddy systems to assist individuals with their transition
- Need to educate community employers regarding bullying in the workplace and how to support these individuals
- Increase the amount of time individuals have job coaches available to increase success rates

Choice Is An Important Option
It must be remembered that “personal choice” is an option for all citizens, regardless of functioning level. For many with disabilities the fear of losing their current Social Security and health care benefits may be a reason that some do not select to choose employment options. This can be addressed by learning more about impacts to these government benefits.

Providers have noted that many times family members, despite counseling, refuse to support the person in seeking community employment. This may be due to the fear of losing benefits or the fear of harm to their child/family member when working in the community. Also, those living in suburban or rural areas that do not have access to public transportation often value the provider’s transportation which allows their family member to attend a daily program and where the family feels the individual is in a safe environment.
Training Suggestions
Employment and vocational providers have shared a variety of suggestions regarding training topics for staff. These include:

- Overview of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Community Integrated Employment
- Social Security Work Incentives and Ticket to Work
- Workplace Accommodations
- Job Development
- Transition from School to Work
- Disability Awareness and How to Accommodate Specific Disabilities on the Job
- State and Federal Disability Legislation
- Assistive Devices and Technology
- Development of Job Readiness Programs
- Soft Skill Training
- Customized Employment: How to Provide in Today’s Economy
- How to Implement PA’s Office of Developmental Programs’ Employment First Initiative
- Service Definitions and Desired Outcomes for Each
- How to Develop an Outcome Action Plan
- How to Develop an Employment Action Plan
- How to Develop Transition Steps to Community Employment (Managing Benefits, Accessing Transportation, Self-Advocacy, Living Independently)
- Supporting Persons with IDD in the Workplace
- Bullying and Social Pressures
- Work Etiquette; Hygiene and Dress Code
- Communication Skills in the Workplace
- Building Community partnerships
- Training Employers and Their Employees Regarding Disabilities and Dealing with Behaviors

(Voc Rehab Best Practices Draft December 2015)