

State Employment Leadership Network

For State Developmental Disability Agencies

The State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) is a cross-state cooperative venture of state MR/DD agencies that are committed to improving employment outcomes for adolescents and adults with developmental disabilities. The SELN helps states enhance their capacity to develop, implement, and support effective integrated employment initiatives designed to improve employment outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities. Network membership promotes new connections within and across states to establish effective collaborative relationships among states, learn from the experiences of other service systems, share costs, use data and maximize resources. SELN is managed by the participating states through a project steering committee to ensure it remains fully responsive to the states' needs.

“In the last six months, SELN has helped Oregon by strengthening our employment discussions, saving staff time and energy, giving essential “just in time” information, and supporting our state’s plan for change.”

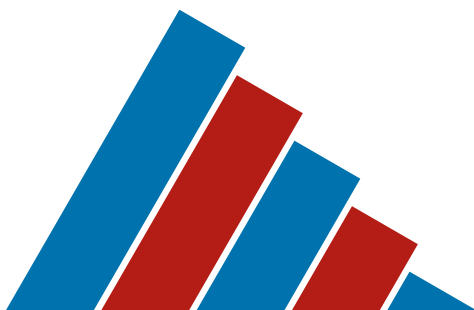
—Molly Holsapple, Oregon

What does this mean for people?

Decades of research have demonstrated the economic and social value of employment for adults with substantial, lifelong cognitive and developmental disabilities. Being employed on a full- or part-time basis not only enhances an individual’s sense of self-worth and improves his or her economic well-being,

but also frequently reduces service costs—sometimes dramatically. Employment also establishes essential community connections that allow

the individual to function as a contributing, valued member of the community. However, although the positive outcomes of integrated employment are clear, the movement away from traditional segregated day program services has been slow in many states.



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If your state is looking for a way to improve employment outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities, you should consider the opportunities and benefits of joining the NASDDDS-ICI State Employment Leadership Network.

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SELN is a joint program of the Institute for Community Inclusion and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services.

www.SELN.org

SELN member states:

- ❖ Participate in a self-assessment process designed by NASDDDS and ICI project staff to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their existing employment support infrastructures and develop related system improvement strategies.
- ❖ Participate in on-site visits with SELN project staff to review/discuss their state self-assessment and desired future.
- ❖ Receive two site visit reports prepared by members of the SELN project team. These reports (a) outline the team's principal findings and observations and (b) provide a brief overview of the state's DD service delivery system and policy making environment.
- ❖ Receive assistance in developing a state Employment Workplan that lays out short-term objectives and action steps aimed at placing the state on a pathway to achieving its near-term system improvement goals. This plan identifies the types of outside assistance that may be required.
- ❖ Gain access to a pool of peer-to-peer consultants and trainers drawn both from Network states and external sources developed by ICI and NASDDDS.
- ❖ Receive assistance, if necessary, from ICI in developing a data tracking system that will help the state monitor its progress and fine-tune system improvement strategies over time.
- ❖ Receive assistance in identifying and selecting outside consultants to help the state to translate desired changes in employment policies and practices into specific operational strategies.
- ❖ Participate in monthly Network steering committee calls to manage project business and also share experiences among the participating states.
- ❖ Participate in an annual Network survey to identify and prioritize cross-cutting issues that will be the focus of Network attention during the upcoming year.
- ❖ Benefit from issue papers and data notes on key topics of common concern to network states.
- ❖ Have access to regularly scheduled Network events featuring leading experts on organizing, financing, and delivering employment supports to individuals with disabilities.

“West Virginia saw the opportunity with SELN to re-focus our efforts to promote integrated employment for the individuals we serve. The SELN activities have given us the jump-start we needed to identify the reasons behind our low employment numbers and begin to create a plan to increase them.”

—Frank Kirkland, West Virginia

“Washington State is committed to employment because it is good public policy and enables people to achieve the six benefits: health and safety, power and choice, status and respect, relationships, integration and competence. We participate in SELN to help us achieve our goal of full employment by influencing national policy and sharing good ideas.”

—Linda Rolfe, Washington State