The field of intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) is at a crossroads. We know people with IDD want to work\(^1\) and employers want to hire;\(^2\) despite this, the percentage of individuals receiving supports to work in the community has declined.\(^3\) While state IDD agencies have been able to improve employment outcomes (Hall et al., 2007), more work is needed to develop and implement effective funding strategies to achieve long-term growth in integrated employment.

The State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) provides training and technical assistance to states on how to prioritize employment within the context of a robust community life. A state’s funding strategy is one part of systems change, and must:

» assume that with appropriate supports all working-age adults can become economically self-sufficient members of the workforce,
» invest in integrated employment,
» support community integration and self-determination, and
» reflect the reality that employment occurs within an individual’s life experiences (including family, day-time, home, and community supports).

States who engage with the SELN to address these goals in their funding strategy receive technical assistance to:

» make educated decisions from a wide range of possible payment amounts and systems,
» develop methodologies for funding each distinct phase of integrated employment service delivery,\(^4\)
» build employment pathways so that individuals can easily access employment services at any time,
» ensure that all supports and services are held accountable for promoting integrated employment,
» promote the delivery and widespread availability of high-quality supports, and
» ensure that changes to funding strategy are developed and evaluated on an ongoing basis within the context of all IDD systems changes.
The State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) is a cross-state cooperative venture of state intellectual and developmental disabilities that are committed to improving employment outcomes for adolescents and adults with developmental disabilities. SELN online discussions are chosen based on conversations with individual member states, as well as high profile and critical issues circulating around the country. Summary documents provide an overview of the sessions and highlight the resources available and knowledge required to achieve best practices.

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References


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