



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health & Human Services
Department of Developmental Services
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January 9, 2015

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Commissioner

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The Honorable Stanley Rosenberg, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 333
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Brian S. Dempsey, Chair
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Michael Barrett, Senate Chair
Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities
State House, Room 213A
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Kay Khan, House Chair
Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities
State House, Room 146
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairs:

In accordance with the provisions of line item 5920-2026 of Chapter 165 of the Acts of 2014, I am submitting the enclosed Progress Report on Pilot Project Funding for the Department of Developmental Services Employment Services.

Please feel free to contact me should you need additional information.

Sincerely,


Elin M. Howe
Commissioner

**Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services
Employment First Initiative: Progress Report on Pilot Project Funding
December 2014**

Line Item 5920-2026 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 General Appropriation Act requires:

"For the operation of a pilot program to support individuals with disabilities transitioning from employment services offered at sheltered workshops to community-based employment or day support program services as part of the Commonwealth's employment first initiative; provided that the department may establish public/private partnerships with employers and non-profit organizations offering employment, job training, therapeutic day programs recreational and other community-based day support services to individuals with disabilities; provided further, that such partnerships shall encourage the highest level of independence among individuals with disabilities as well as offering personalized day program planning and options to maximize community involvement and participation; and provided further, that the department shall issues report, not later than December 31st, 2014, to the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means and the Joint Committee on Children, Families and persons with Disabilities regarding the effectiveness of the pilot program and recommendations to improve or expand the program as applicable."

In accordance with the mandate stipulated above, the Department of Developmental Services is submitting this progress report on the \$1 million dollars in pilot program funding that was provided in FY '15 in support of the Commonwealth's Employment First Initiative. More information about the goals and plans in the Department's Employment First Initiative can be found in the *"Blueprint for Success: Employing Individuals with Disabilities with Intellectual Disabilities in Massachusetts."* In addition, a Blueprint Progress Report: *"Creating Conditions for Success"* was completed in October 2014 and is included for additional information on accomplishments and initiatives that support implementation of the Department's Employment First initiative.

The pilot program funding was allocated to three large community rehabilitation provider agencies, all of whom provide services to different numbers of individuals, and were at different stages of service transformation and development as part of their plan to phase out the delivery of sheltered workshop services and expand integrated community employment opportunities and meaningful, inclusive community experiences through Community Based Day Support Programs. The three provider agencies include: American Training, Inc. in Lawrence, MA; Lifeworks Employment Services in Norwood, MA; and Triangle, Inc. in Malden, MA.

All three agencies have made significant progress over the past six months in decreasing the number of individuals in sheltered workshop services, expanding service options, and assisting many individuals to transition to new employment and/or community based day support program services. One agency successfully closed their sheltered workshop program (American Training), a second is scheduled to close as of January 31st, 2015 (Triangle Inc.), and the third, Lifeworks Employment Services, is projected to end their sheltered workshop program as of June 30th, 2015.

Major highlights and accomplishments for each of the provider agencies are described below:

American Training, Inc.: Funding allocation of \$453,513

- They successfully closed their workshop program in July 2014. At the end of last fiscal year there were 165 people participating in sheltered workshop services on a part or full-time basis. With this infusion of pilot funding they were able to successfully support all of these individuals to transition to different employment and/or community based day support services early in the new fiscal year. They had been engaged in planning with individuals and their

families/guardians for some time and had developed their community based day supports program, Options, several years ago, which made this transition much easier for all involved.

- Thirteen individuals obtained new community jobs since July 1st, 2014. The job developers at American Training have established positive relationships with several local businesses such as Chili's and Market Basket, who keep them informed of new job openings.
- They are successfully supporting 91 individuals in small group supported employment sites in different businesses in the area.
- A new internship program has been established with New Balance which provides valuable work experience for individuals and will hopefully lead to permanent employment.
- Four individuals are participating in Project Search, a new internship program in collaboration with another provider agency, Opportunity Works, and their employer partner, Northern Essex Community College. Individuals are provided several internship experiences and are then assisted to obtain a job with a local business that is aligned with the skills and interests developed through their internships.
- Their Options Program, which provides community-based day supports, has evolved over several years and as a result had a strong foundation to build upon with this pilot funding. Staff members work very hard to create inclusive experiences that offer individuals the opportunity to be part of the community in meaningful ways. There are twelve active volunteer sites and they are involved in two community television stations, in Andover and Lowell. One of the projects was to develop a video on employment that was made by the individuals who participate which has been aired in Andover. There is also active participation in numerous community service projects. As reported by project staff, "keeping individuals involved in the community and participating in a variety of activities has really been the key to success."
- They recently completed a satisfaction survey with individuals and families. There were minimal concerns expressed about the closing of the sheltered workshop. It was reported that as long as individuals have the opportunity to work, either in individual or group jobs, individuals and families have generally been fine with the changes.

Lifeworks, Inc.: Funding Allocation of \$170,058

- At the end of last fiscal year, there were 85 people participating in sheltered workshop services on a part or full-time basis. As of mid-December there are 16 people remaining in the workshop and the projected closure date is June 30th, 2015.
- There have been 24 new individual job placements since July 2014, fifteen of which were individuals who had been participating in the workshop. Examples of jobs include stocking, custodial work, dishwashing, and most recently, fulfillment work for Amazon.
- Thirty-two individuals who left the workshop entered into small group supported employment, working in local businesses with the support of a job coach from Lifeworks. Overall the agency is supporting 103 individuals in group supported employment.
- Their community based day supports services, the Life Enhancement Program, has been evolving and expanding with the hiring of additional staff and more individuals entering the program, both on a part-time and full-time basis. The pilot funding has been instrumental in this expansion. New volunteer opportunities have been established at a nursing home, several Meals on Wheel routes, preparing packages for deliveries at Community Servings in Jamaica Plain, and at a local food pantry, among other locations. These opportunities, in addition to giving back to their community, provide important experiences for individuals to explore different interests, develop skills, improve work habits, and build their resume, and can often be a pathway that leads to a job. A variety of health and wellness experiences are also offered through memberships at local YMCAs and gyms.
- In addition to annual outcome surveys a weekly newsletter is sent to families about activities in the community based day supports Life Enhancement Program. Many families have responded positively to the development of this program reflected in a few of the following quotes: "...is enjoying the program and is growing and opening up more. My family appreciates your effort for the Life Enhancement program."; "grateful that LES has started a wonderful program.. my daughter is enjoying a variety of activities."

Triangle, Inc.: Funding Allocation of \$376,429

- At the end of last fiscal year, there were 64 people participating in sheltered workshop services on a part or full-time basis. The projected closure date of their sheltered workshop program is January 31st, 2015. By the end of December the remaining individuals in the workshop will transition to group supported employment sites and their community based day support program, Community Choices.
- Six individuals have obtained new individual jobs since July 1st at businesses that include BJ's Wholesale, TJMaxx, Home Goods, and Liberty Tax.
- Triangle has expanded their group supported employment opportunities. Twenty-one individuals are participating in group supported employment, all paid minimum wage or higher, with companies that include Boston Retail Products, Bausch and Lomb, Bluefish Development and the City of Malden.
- Their Community Based Day Supports program, called Community Choices, is built around the choice of meaningful activities in the community to prepare individuals for integrated employment. Every day individuals are provided a choice of a minimum of two business related tours or volunteer opportunities, and are also expected to work with a Job Developer on a one-to-one basis weekly to work toward finding integrated, competitive employment. Community Choices is serving as a pathway and stepping stone to paid jobs in the community.
- The majority of individuals that transitioned from the sheltered workshop have moved into group supported employment and/or their community based day support program, Community Choice, but all will continue to be assisted to obtain an integrated job in the community based on their preferences and skills.
- Triangle has hosted multiple meetings for individuals and family members to discuss the changes in services and all have generally been positive with much open dialogue about the changes and how to best support each person in the transition to new opportunities. A formal satisfaction survey is planned for early 2015.

In addition to the pilot program sites, with the additional \$2 million in FY '15 funding appropriated to support the Employment First initiative, since the beginning of the fiscal year there has been a decrease of 960 individuals participating in sheltered workshop programs across the state, either part or full time. As of 11/30/14, there are 1,615 individuals enrolled in sheltered workshop programs, either on a part-time or full-time basis, provided by a total of thirty-one provider agencies (Meditech - data source).

The Department has also invested in a variety of capacity-building activities for providers of sheltered workshop programs to help them develop the expertise and resources needed to offer quality integrated community employment and inclusive community based days supports. This has included technical assistance and consultation, training and professional development for job developers and job coaches, program development of inclusive community-based services that are a pathway to employment, and the establishment of six Regional employment Collaboratives across the state. These Collaboratives are a partnership among state agencies, employers and non-profit employment provider agencies, and through the support of Employer Liaisons engage in broad outreach to the business community to help create access to new job opportunities. An important aspect of the Collaboratives is a Job Developers Network which brings together the job developers from the different provider agencies in the geographic area to share information about employment opportunities and job leads. This partnership and collaborative spirit is leading to increases in new job placements. The three providers who received this pilot program funding have been actively engaged with the Regional Employment Collaboratives in their respective geographic areas.

In summary, this pilot program funding has led to positive outcomes and enabled these three providers of sheltered workshop programs to implement significant changes that have led to the

transition of more than 250 individuals from sheltered workshop services to integrated community employment and/or inclusive community experiences. All three agencies continue to support individuals in a variety of ways to explore job interests and develop skills to help them obtain competitive jobs in the community.

It is important to stress these pilot funding activities are part of a broader system change effort initiated by the Department, with the support of EHS, to take an affirmative and pro-active approach to phase out the delivery of sheltered workshop services and expand integrated employment opportunities in response to important federal policy changes and legal actions in several states. Specifically, legal proceedings in Oregon and Rhode Island by the United States Departments of Justice and Labor and other plaintiffs have found segregated work environments, specifically sheltered workshops, violate both the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Supreme Court's ruling in the Olmstead inclusion case. Additional information about federal policy changes and directives, and the goals and plans the Department has developed to end sheltered workshop services and expand integrated employment and inclusive community experiences for adults with intellectual disabilities can be found in the *Blueprint for Success: Employing Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities in Massachusetts*, November 2013.