



## **Orange County & Sequoia Regional Offices – SB 639 Community Conversation** **March 14, 2022, 10am to noon**

**The Community Conversation for the Orange County and Sequoia Regional Offices was held on March 14, 2022, from 10 am to noon and attended by 28 people.**

The March 14, 2022, Community Conversation was supported Live Captioning and simultaneous Spanish and Vietnamese interpretation. Scarlett K. vonThenen, SCDD Orange County Regional Manager and Yolanda Cruz, SCDD Sequoia Regional Manager hosted and co-facilitated and used a power point presentation to help guide the meeting. Linda O’Neal, Chapman University’s Thompson Policy Institute on Disability and Autism and facilitator for the OC LPA helped as the primary facilitator. Linda has worked in the education field for 39 years and has experience teaching in grades K-12 as a General Education Teacher, Special Education Teacher and Transition Specialist. She has spent the past 25 years focused on employment initiatives in Orange County.

The meeting included a series of questions with input on the topic areas listed below.

### **SB 639 Community Conversation Questions**

**Ice Breaker – “What has been your experience in your employment journey and what would have made it better”?**

- OCRO and SEQ Office provided this question to ROM’s as feedback following our community conversation.

**1. In a perfect world, with no funding (money) or other barriers, what would the future of employment look like for people with developmental disabilities?**

- Receive minimum wage like everyone else
- With good job support and accommodations, modifications, we should be able to support everyone in a job site. If there is no limit on funding, the ability to have 60-100% job coaching to allow them to live, work and play in the community. If individuals could get paid less than minimum wage at any point, I think there is still some place for that. For some individuals whose productivity is not at par with entry level person, subminimum wage should still be permitted in some circumstances.
- We need to raise our expectations as a group community for PWD.

- Something is better than nothing, including subminimum wage – and moving forward will this legislation limit person ability to get job.
- SB 639 – both those in workshops and in community receiving subminimum wage are both taken into consideration as plans are being developed. We hope the future of employment, in my dream world, is that PWD have the same opportunity as their peers without disabilities: working in all fields and levels, college, etc.
- It would be wonderful thing because people with disabilities would be able to receive minimum wage just like everyone.

## **2. What needs to be in place to help a person move from a subminimum wage sheltered workshop into a meaningful day based on their interests?**

- There are no more workshops in Orange County; they all closed before pandemic. Having appropriate options for individuals to transition into CIE. Interesting to see the diversity in the pathways of individuals leaving the workshop: (1) Some went into day programs doing volunteer work and internships, (2) some have been in CIE, (3) some in transition into group settings but integrated, (4) and some folks have retired. Make sure our providers have funding necessary to hire staff that have the qualifications needed to support individuals that need more support in the community.
- One of the best programs was paid internships, as it has given opportunity to give individuals the opportunity to explore what they like and what they don't. One person changed 3 job sites because he didn't like it. PIP's work. Many individuals need 1:1 ratio so PIP's are helpful before CIE.
- Awareness of PIP and DOR. In the specific example you shared, when a person with disability does not do well in one setting, they are seen as failure and that it was a failed attempt. Many of us go through many different job options and opportunities to see what we like, what we are good at. We need opportunities to figure things out and PIP is a good way to do this.
- Making sure we can make sure we have right supports in place and due to some barriers like supports and transportation, those in sheltered workshops could have been integrated elsewhere, but were not. Focus on supports and transportation
- Many differently abled individuals are afraid to lose their benefits if their income goes over a certain amount.
- The business to store agencies need to do it takes to place the person seeking employment accordingly to their skills.

## **3. For people who want something other than work, what are the best options or ideas?**

- Volunteering x2
- Needs to be person centered, but I hate seeing hanging out at the park or the mall. Want to see productivity, develop skills and be more independent, access the community. Meaningful is the bottom line.
- Advocacy and training according to their skills

## **4. For people who want to work, what services to support success?**

- DOR provided job-shadow or job support
- Supplement wages. Need service providers to train in micro enterprise.
- Parent and son shared their work training program making and selling soap, but said it is all on them and they receive no regional center support. Mom is hiring job coaches and this is not a sustainable model. How much business received versus supplementing coaches, etc. I do think there is lots of opportunity for micro enterprise, but infrastructure to get it set up and sustainable.
- Definitely opportunity to address microenterprise and making sure all pathways for PWD are available.
- Family engagement and support-families can consciously or unconsciously sabotage a job
- Job coaching that fades out
- Educating corporations and working with their HR / D&I groups.
- Parent said “I attended a workshop on micro enterprise at the Transition Alliance Forum. He was told that if he goes back to work that he will lose his benefits, told this by DOR counselor. I am scared that we are back at the myth of losing benefits if work.”
- Must increase knowledge of benefits planning and utilize benefits planners. Need to inform all TAY that it is always better to work.
- Training on the position or internship or volunteering in the position to get familiar with this position.

**5. Let’s think about supported employment professionals - like job developers or job coaches. What additional skills or supports do they need to be successful in their roles?**

- Better coordination of job development efforts
- In IUSD, we have both JC and JD, and some of the supports needed to be successful include permission to advocate for students and go out to the sites and be able to connect student to the site and the training on how to do that. JD need help on marketing side and how to pitch students to the employer.
- Post COVID, need to go above and beyond and be infused with the work environment – if we can get into the corporation and have our guys be part of the workforce simultaneously.
- Better coordination of school district and RC-funded employment efforts.
- Formal certification or PSE for positions like job coaches and job developers. Most of the training is put on the service provider, but it is a challenging job. There is no equivalent. The expectations for school district JD and JC versus when they age out of school services – different requirements, pay different, and the difference is one day. Infrastructure and the way that JC services are funded by DOR and taking a closer look – JD are hired by service agency and services based on outcomes. JD can spend hours and hours trying to find employment very person centered when it would be easier to get job in grocery store and retail. The agency not funded for the SEP discovery process.
- We need to figure out a way to pay JC more money increasing their hourly rate.
- Ask questions of the position to be knowledgeable and successful in your job.

## **6. How can we encourage employers to hire people with disabilities to work at their companies?**

- How do we navigate conversation with employer about competitive pay – work output of typical employee to PWD – we need to find job sites that really meets the need of the population. We approach jobs with employees that match the needs of the employer. Hire some people with coaches that are knowledgeable. Right now, we just use warm bodies with them, but not a knowledgeable person/DSP.
- Using intermediaries in JC efforts to coordinate to better serve business partners. The intermediary concept is being discussed but need funding to model it.
- OCEAN tried to do intermediary work, but at the end of the day, everyone had to speak to their own agency because they had their own obligations for work. Some funding source to have a neutral position that speaks for all of us.
- Funding to pay for the infrastructure and intermediaries. Identified position and funding source – start to look at how that works and how do we get ATP to work cooperatively with Community College and Adult SP.
- PIP to use as a tool for employer as well as PWD. No risk for employer.
- Parents and family members are some of the best job developers.
- Work incentives – few business interested in them.
- Showing them their skills

## **7. Thinking creatively or outside the box, what kind of new programs should California develop for people with significant disabilities and or support needs?**

- Project SEARCH needs to be expanded – lots of opportunities for those with significant disabilities. Most here in CA are in hospitals and we are seen great success for those coming out of the project search programs. Four rotations in various sites at hospital.
- More immediate outside the box is that I have been made aware of so many individuals impacted by pandemic, masks, isolation, leading to more folks with depression and those that can leave the house. Focus on mental health first before anything else.
- Mindfulness app being launched at some school district sites to help with mental health needs of students with disabilities and TAY
- One idea that has been shared at other platforms is making customized employment an official service code/designation. Each service code has title 17 regulation that guides the way services are provided and also service codes have specific rates linked to them. Right now, there are some misc codes, but not a designated customized employment service code. Need state to create it as own service code. Complete ACRE training to be certified to provide support. For those that have no had success in traditional system, have CE become formal service code to be used by the system.
- The culture of the workplace has improved due to project search.
- Reliability – how many PWD show up to work and retention
- California needs more job developers to help seek employment for people with developmental disabilities.

**8. For a last question, please complete this thought: “Success will be achieved when...”**

- Anyone who wants to work and wants support will get it
- When we all work together as a team
- When there are no barriers to employment
- When we have a lot of really happy PWD and family member when they see that employment is an option for them and having minimum wage is something that they never had, but happy to have.
- When RCOC no longer has a job and does not have these conversations.
- Success is when thousands of people with disabilities are working and making minimum wage like myself.