



Los Angeles Regional Office – SB 639 Community Conversation April 8, 2022 -10am-12pm

The Community Conversation for the Los Angeles Regional Offices was held on April 8, 2022, attended by 29 people (1 Self-Advocate, 25 Family Advocates, 3 Others)

The April 8, 2022, Community Conversation was facilitated in Spanish only. Albert Feliciano facilitated and used a power point presentation to help guide the meeting. Christofer Arroyo, SCDD LA Office Regional Manager, was in attendance for further facilitation and administrative support. Sofia Cervantes was the notetaker.

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

SB 639 Community Conversation Questions

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?

- Strengths-based employment. Strengths-assessments to be conducted routinely.
- Keep assembly-line type jobs if that is what they are good at and enjoy doing. Open these jobs to the broader community and pay them more.
- Introduce financial education at a young age. In future they will know how to advocate for appropriate wages.
- Every employment to have a medical plans and other benefits.

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?

- Develop road maps based on their interests and strengths to support them in the transition.
- Develop a person-centered-plan, focused on employment.
- Regional center to develop transition-case-manager-type positions.
- Sanction employers who continue to pay sum-minimum wages.
- Create more supports like American Job Centers of America.

- Outreach to SAs and FAs on the services that are already available to support individuals for employment, and direct training on how to access and use these supports. This training should be available to SAs, FAs, and others in the field, and be available in different languages.
- Train FAs and others on the importance and benefits of employment, to dismantle myths about the loss of benefits (like SSI) due to employment – Why Work is Better (an SCDD publication). Training to also focus on helping parents “let their children go” and encourage independence.
- Training of employers/staff to increase empathy toward individuals transitioning into integrated employment.
- Transition case managers to directly facilitate the connection with appropriate employment support services.
- For more people with IDD to go to college, including those who initially only received a high school certificate and not a diploma.
- Implement and enforce reasonable accommodations as needed.
- Enforce company-wide disability awareness trainings/meetings and establish days to celebrate differences.
- Regional centers and service coordinators should play a central role in this transition. They should know about customized employment and about the person’s disability, since they’ve known them for years.

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

- Regional center clients to join the self-determination program and explore their employment interests and goals in more creative ways.
- If employment is individualized and tailored to their strengths, work will not feel like work.
- Strengths-based education aimed at future targeted employment.
- Internships in integrated settings, based on person’s targeted interests (technology, robotics, photography etc.). Recruit more targeted internship sites.
- They should be able to have fun and enjoy just like everyone else. To have leisure time.
- Have empowerment events for individuals with IDD, to encourage them and lift them up and help them believe that they too can hold employment, like everyone else!

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

- Employment managers/facilitators to directly connect (not just refer) the person to the support services they need (warm handoff). Employment facilitator would become part of the person's circle of support.
- An agency to provide resume and interview training, then DOR can take over and offer them a job coach and other direct supports as needed. The employment facilitator would always remain involved as a liaison, keeping all systems accountable.
- Support individuals with IDD to learn the benefits of disclosing their disability. Teach them how to approach their employers about it and how to request reasonable accommodations.
- Specialized job coaches for individuals who are non-verbal.
- Employers to have their own job coaches on how to support employees with IDD.
- Formalize an employment checklist with all steps from start to finish.
- Develop best-practices for employers to follow upon employing persons with disabilities.
- Continuous training to all staff on disability awareness, empathy, sensitivity and other related topics.
- Once employed, develop a growth plan for the person with IDD and track their progress. Conduct check-ins to ensure all is running well.

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?

- Empathy is key!
- Person-Centered training for job coaches.
- Formal check-ins on job-coaches, conducted by the employment facilitator referenced above. Maintain accountability.
- Formalized agreement/contact between the person and job-coach. The agreement would be based on the person's current job description and would be updated as needed. There would be a plan of support for each job description responsibility that the person must perform.
- Train job coaches on the IPP, to familiarize them with the person and their goals.
- A task-analysis to be developed for responsibilities that the person needs to develop skills in. Use a backward-chaining method (derived from ABA) to develop new complex skills. Don't skip steps. Focus on details. This is where the person may struggle - when people assume that he/she knows the basics or nuances of the specific job.

- Training employers on the use of plain language, alternative methods of communication (at least awareness of the use of them), disability cultural sensitivity and best practices for working with IDD community.

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

- Provide employers incentives for hiring people with IDD and retaining them.
- Give them training as needed to help them feel competent and comfortable in supervising and managing individuals with IDD.
- Have job coaches on site to relieve the responsibility from employers who may not feel adequate to provide appropriate direct support.
- Wean employers off incentives. Support them in recognizing the inherent value of the person they have hired and what they bring to the site.
- Approach family businesses / smaller corporations who require more support for a range of tasks, including those tasks that may seem tedious and unattractive for some, but perfectly in line with the interests and preferences of some individuals with IDD. There may also be less bureaucracy in these types of smaller businesses.
- Outreach and recruitment between individuals with IDD and employers should begin in high school. The school should begin that connection through job fairs and networking events.

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

- Create a taskforce of FAs to support SAs on the job, as natural supports.
- Approach family businesses who themselves have family members with IDD and who may already know the individual.
- Create a colleague-support system, where an employee who already has disability awareness training and who does the same job as the person with IDD, becomes the support-on-the-job for that individual.
- Have peer-support-specialists: someone with IDD who has experienced barriers on the job in the past and has achieved success. Have an accreditation process for individuals to be deemed specialists. Formalize this title for validity.
- For California to develop a standard exit packet to give to adults when they leave high school (at 18 or 22), in their primary language, and in plain language, that provides a roadmap to employment.

- Make it law for schools or regional centers to provide an employment readiness course to students before the age of 18 on the roadmap to employment and the range of supports, services and resources available.
- Make it law for schools or regional centers to provide training on how to apply for college and scholarships. Provide direct support for the process.
- Create a requirement for regional centers to develop IPEs - Individual Plan for Employment, in addition or complementary to the IPP process.
- Have an employment-support-person assigned, from RC or DOR, to help the individual with IDD walk the roadmap from high school/transition program to employment. Similar to the employment facilitator referenced above.
- We need direct representation, advocacy supports and lawyers for individuals with IDD to defend them and fight for their rights on the job.

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

- Regional centers, generic resource and other systems do what they are legally mandated to do.
- When there is enough community supports for real integration.
- When people don't have stigma and discriminate based on differences.
- When all the barriers for employment are gone.
- When we, as parents, give our children with IDD confidence within the home and encourage them to work!
- When we all recognize the dignity in each employment opportunity and encourage our kids to get out there!
- When we have the needed supports for inclusion and integration and not see people with IDD for their disability but just as a person, like anyone else.
- When the information is out there, and families become educated.
- When information is easily accessible and attainable, without barriers to benefits and supports.
- When the person is happy and respected for their own interests and preferences, and supported, without personal biases from parents.
- When systems stop putting barriers!
- When services don't just stop but they continue based on the person's needs.
- When our children are treated with respect.
- When our children have services in all areas of need, from different systems.
- When our children know that they can do it!
- When people are able to participate in the community, have valued relationships and meaningful lives.

- Change and success is already coming! HCBS and SB 639 laws are making way for it!