



## Central Coast Regional Office – SB 639 Community Conversation

March 22, 2022, 4:30pm-6pm

**Attendee Information:** The Community Conversation for the Central Coast Regional Office (CCRO) was attended by 33 people. The following data was collected via poll from 23 of the 33 attendees:

- SA – 5; FA – 5; Service providers – 13
- Counties: San Luis Obispo (3); Santa Barbara (4); Santa Clara (5); Ventura (6); and other (5)
- Regional Center (if served): TCRC (13) and SARC (4)

**Presentation Details:** The March 22, 2022 Community Conversation was supported with Live Captioning and Spanish interpretation. David Grady, SCDD CCRO Manager, facilitated the meeting, while Jennifer Lucas, CCRO staff, served as the note taker and wrote this report. CCRO also shared the SB 639 page (<https://scdd.ca.gov/sb639-home/>) with attendees.

### 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?

- More programs that are comprehensive from the beginning. Like starting with training, then moving into soft skills, making sure someone has a job coach, placing in a job and partnering with more organizations.
- Look at all different levels of people. Not just people that are the high end of capabilities. It's everybody along the spectrum.
- Employment shouldn't be only for people with the highest function and must include preparation & training. My son has not qualified for day programs that have a 'job' component because he has not been successful in job situations.
- Working at the state and county levels to connect the various programs. There are already some great resources and best practices that you can leverage and emulate. But all those pieces need to be connected.

- I believe the future of employment would have an array of options, so there is a variety of opportunities for all levels.
- Job coaching programs expanded.
- Not a one shoe fits all approach.
- Some sort of emphasis or initiative towards elderly individuals who we support, because they especially, have some higher barriers or other barriers to employment.
- Consistent job coaching instead of 3 or 4 different people that stop by during a five-day work week. So, it's not one person that knows and is close or a person who perhaps hasn't had any training.
- Coming up with some quality standards for the job coaching community.
- Job coaches who can handle behavior and meltdowns. Incorporate behavioral wellness. Not walk off job (which happened to her daughter) since they don't know how to support the person.
- More funding for job coaching, more incentives for employers and for providers to place and retain people in jobs.
- We need to encourage businesses to offer employment to people with a disability. Making them aware of people with special needs and that they have skills and are capable of being in a workplace.
- More funding for 1:1 job coaching. Customized employment takes a lot of time and effort, but it's the investment that can truly help an individual find the right fit of a job.
- Day programs changed to more employment programs
- Perhaps regional centers providing training to company staff who want to become certified job coaches. The company I work for is renegotiating their regional center contract to include providing job coach services.
- Supporting the paid internship program (PIP) and extending it to schools. Have seen a lot of success with PIP.
- More money for city and county opportunities to provide/access/use PIP.
- More employers should be part of the conversation and more incentive to be part of this conversation. More incentive and push for the employer side. And more education for them and their hiring managers to hire from this population.
- Continued development of other programs/services that continue to be available (Braided Day, Community Based, Day Program, ESF, PIP, social wellness, student services, etc.); especially for those individuals seeking services that are person centered, for their supports. Also, with incentives for providers that continue to promote & grow/develop those supports.
- I also think that the government should employ more people with developmental disabilities.

## **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?**

- CA has that Industrial Relations website that has apprenticeships, but people don't seem to know about it.
- Ratio should be 1:1 or 2:1 to have a meaningful day and work on specific skills.
- Lack of vendors that have job coaching available.
- Wages for job coaching far less than for other meaningful employment. Low wages make it harder to hold on to those professionals and develop them to be very effective with our population. A lot of skills and a lot of measures need to go hand-in-hand to support someone in supported employment.
- Developing more DOR vendors. This is a systematic problem. And in my area, the Central Valley, I was able to get the administrator to generate another vendor. But that's only one it needs to happen statewide.
- Giving more weight to the interest of the individual. There are still underlying assumptions about what type of jobs pwd should or shouldn't have. Conversation needs to move toward interests.
- Identifying other supports the person needs, in community context (transportation, additional staff, etc.). Shift the burden off the individual.
- Our agency got grant funds through the State and hired two person-centered facilitators who work with everyone who had worked at subminimum wage.
- As the I/DD population continues to grow, there needs to be a focus on the workforce & making sure that our legislators understand the significance of the roles that our DSPs play in the day to day lives of the individuals we support; whether they are receiving Vocational or Residential supports. Then there needs to be a merit system in place to help assist with making the role of a DSP more lucrative, so those employees want to grow in our field of services.

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

- Community clubs and social connection.
- Online space for social connection and being able to navigate it safely and responsibly. Data needed regarding desire for online connection (vs. in-person).
- Using something like "Meetups" so people can connect on specific interests.
- Community college classes – but remedial classes are being eliminated so there is concern about academic availability to our participants.

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

- People need to know what to expect with their benefits. They often have a hard time being excited about earning minimum wage when they only see the negative outcome of losing benefits.
- Work incentive planning and benefits counseling very important.
- Transportation is a huge need and one of the biggest barriers to employment.
- Getting ride sharing companies accessible and integrated into providing services.
- Having timely transportation.
- Reducing work disincentives. A lot of programs are very closely tied to the work status of the individual. As soon as the person starts working, it triggers all this bureaucracy – reevaluation of hours, potential loss of services.
- Measure success by talking to the individual (how do you like your job? Are you feeling comfortable?) and the employer (any gaps, feedback, etc.?).

**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?**

- Being able to do situational assessments to assess a person's work abilities – really getting to know the person, what their strengths, limitations, hobbies, etc. are. Being the person's cheerleader and supporting their communication skills.
- Having simulated environments or jobs you can rotate through (like Project Search) can really help a person decide what they like and don't like.
- Making sure assessments are practical and in depth. Assessments during mock interviews and so on.

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

- Paid Internship Program
- Educating employers. And inviting them to volunteer within our community to help them better understand pwd (some companies are very encouraging of their employees volunteering).
- Educating small businesses about PIP and Work Opportunity Tax Credit. A lot of companies he reached out became interested after hearing about the monetary benefit.
- I think the Governor's office can do more outreach to small businesses to utilize the PIPs and partner with agencies which offer PIP. Maybe through the Go-Biz and CalJOBS office and website, and chambers of commerce.
- Many employers I've reached out to have never met someone with I/DD so very indicative about how not on the radar this population is when it comes to employers making employment decisions.

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

- Creating programs focused on businesses run by jobseekers – like some microenterprise programs. Especially helpful for navigating benefits because if people have a microenterprise, they're able to save a lot of those resources in that funding account (ABLE?).
- A model where you have one place (all the orgs in one place) to go for all the supports/information to help ease the systems navigation.
- More money/funding, which impacts better ratios to clients and attracting more professionals to support job seekers.
- Having mentor programs for our community.

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

- When 100% of pwd who want to work, have a job.
- When constructive action is taken. Without action, it's difficult to have success.
- More money/funding is available, which impacts better ratios to clients and attracting more professionals to support job seekers

### *Resources shared by attendees:*

- DRC has a unit that talks to people about their benefits and their work and they can retain my benefits and start work.
- <https://apse.org/events-learning/online-learning/>
- <https://vcurrtc.org/training/courses.cfm>
- DOR now has an “Adult Work Experience” program similar to the Student Work Experience program.

### *Other potential barriers identified as result of this conversation:*

- WIPA, who provides short-term and long-term benefits counseling, has small number of staff for huge regions (WIPA rep at meeting stated her office has 3 staff for 15 counties and this typical).
- Lack of vocational assessments for people who are non-verbal.