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Editorial

Now that supported employment has been developed and people with disabilities have experienced what is possible, we should do nothing short of making it available to everyone who needs and wants it. Each city, state, and country is struggling with this task as they change and improve services to people with disabilities. Continual growth in technology, methods, and competencies makes it possible for people with varying abilities to work successfully. New designs in assistive technology, new ways of supporting people with behavioral challenges, and new alliances with employers are improving our abilities to assist people to be successful in employment. As our capacities to support people grow, so do our waiting lists. To meet this ever increasing demand, growth is essential in long-term funding, resources and supports.

Long-term support has been the key aspect of a supported employment approach. We have dedicated this issue of JVR to specifically study and address this key issue.

Ongoing development of long-term financial resources is essential to meet the needs of people entering supported employment. Many vocational rehabilitation programs have successfully implemented cooperative agreements and leveraged extended service dollars from long-term funding agencies. These funds are predominantly from state agencies, social services, mental health, mental retardation and other developmental disability programs. As traditional providers of ongoing services, those agencies purchase extended employment supports with both new dollars and a redirection of funds normally used for day programs and sheltered work.

Long-term funding is the unique feature of supported employment that makes it possible for people with severe disabilities to sustain employment over time. On and off-site assistance and support continue indefinitely and differ significantly from services in day programs and other segregated models. For example, more traditional models move people through a continuum of program criteria in order to successfully transition them to competitive work. Unfortunately, independence from the service system is rarely achieved by people with severe disabilities when served through this approach. In the Table 1 below is a summary of the 1991 vs. 1993 supported employment outcomes for people with disabilities in the U.S. There is an obvious steady growth despite recessionary pressures in the economy.

The U.S. Congress recognized the value of supported employment in 1986 and identified this approach as a vocational outcome in the Rehabilitation Act Amendments (Federal Register, 1987). It authorized funding under title I and title VI (part C) for 'time-limited post-employment services' leading to supported employment. The act includes 'ongoing support services' as an essential element of supported employment and requires the availability of 'extended services' before vocational rehabilitation funding can begin.

Ongoing supports, as defined in the amended regulations for the Federal Supported Employment Program (Federal Register, June 24, 1992, p. 28438), are those 'needed to support and maintain an individual with severe handicaps in supported employment.' They are the activities and relationships which help a person maintain a job

Table 1
Supported employment outcomes in the U.S. for fiscal years 1991 and 1993 (preliminary data)

Data element	FY 93	FY 91
No. of participants in supported employment	105 381	90 375
Type of supported employment model	Individual placement: 79% Group placement: 21%	Individual placement: 79% Group placement: 21%
Mean avg. hourly wage	\$4.53	\$4.45
Mean avg. weekly wage	\$107.10	\$111.44
Mean avg. hours worked weekly	22.5	Not available
No. of S.E. provider	3739	2449
Primary disability	Mental retardation: 63.4% Mental illness: 17.4% Physical disability: 18.9% Other (autism): 0.3%	Mental retardation: 62.8% Mental illness: 22.2% Physical disability: 14.8% Other (autism): 0.2%
Level of mental retardation	Borderline: 2.3% Mild: 44.6% Moderate: 40.7% Severe/profound: 12.9%	Borderline: 14.1% Mild: 46.8% Moderate: 30.4% Severe/profound: 8.7%
The use of natural support is:	Increasing: 74% Staying the same: 7% Decreasing: 0% Don't know: 18.5%	Not available
Natural supports are the predominant source of extended services:	Frequently: 3.7% Sometimes: 33.3% Rarely: 29.6% Don't know: 33.3%	Not available

Source: Developed by W. Grant Revell at Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center

in the community. Supports differ for each individual and vary widely in type and intensity for the duration of employment. Those provided through the services of a job coach or employment specialist may be 'job-specific' or 'individual community supports.'

For supported employment services to be available to the full population of people with varied and significant challenges to employment, new and alternative funding sources and support strategies must be developed. With limited resources in the midst of national and state recessions, critical accomplishments in all states are necessary to ensure the ongoing availability of supports for people with severe disabilities in community jobs. These critical accomplishments are described in this issue. Some of them include

the following:

- increasing the use of existing funding sources, such as the Medicaid waiver and social security work incentives;
- improving the use of existing service dollars by reallocating funds from segregated day programs to supports in community employment;
- redirecting short-term funding, which traditionally purchases preplacement activities, to supports that facilitate job stability;
- identifying new dollars from diverse sources, such as community foundations or employer fees;
- adjusting funding structures for more efficient use of services, attaching ongoing dollars to people rather than slots, and providing indi-

vidualized services rather than group programs;

- improving the competencies of staff for more cost-efficient, quality services;
- using natural sources of supports from employers, co-workers and other people in the community;
- maintaining and disseminating data around costs, outcomes, benefits and needs;
- and using collaborative efforts in developing innovative approaches to ongoing supports.

Long-term support is a critically important area for advocates and persons with severe disabilities to develop if employment programs are to be effective. The traditional model of placement without support has not been successful with people who have severe disabilities. This issue will provide help to those who are looking for information in this area.

Paul Wehman