

Increasing Opportunities for Competitive Integrated Employment at the Local Level

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The work of CECY, including the Local Employment Collaborative Teams, is supported through the Partnerships in Employment Systems Change grant (#90DN0284) by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD). The Tarjan Center at UCLA provides its administrative leadership.

What's the issue?

California's youth and young adults with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (IDD) are mostly unemployed or underemployed. According to data from the Employment Development Department, the employment rate for working age adults with developmental disabilities in 2012 was 12.4%. This is lower than the national employment rate of 22.5% for people with developmental disabilities¹ and dramatically lower than the national employment rate of the general population (76.3%).² These percentages are also in contrast to findings from National Core Indicators California Adult Consumer Survey for FY 2011-2012 that indicated 39% of regional center clients without a job want to work. Part of the gap may be due to barriers at the individual, organization, and systems levels including:

- Low expectations for employment,
- Lack of job preparation and opportunities for work experiences,
- Gaps in service coordination for transition to postsecondary education or employment,
- Businesses uncertain of where or how to find support and accommodations for employees with disabilities,
- Inadequate funding rates for individual placement/supported employment, and
- Difficulty in transforming from a legacy system based upon provision of facility-based services to provision of community-based services.

In 2011, the California Employment Consortium for Youth and Young Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (CECY) was formed to stimulate policy change and build capacity in California state systems and local communities to increase

¹ Data is from National Population Statistics, page 57, table 2 (22.5%). Employment Participation for Working-Age People (Ages 16 to 64), StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes 2012 published by the Institute for Community Inclusion, UMASS. The data reflects individuals with cognitive disability employed in the United States.

² The data is from the 2012 Disability Status Report, United States, by Cornell University, by calendar year based on analysis of the US Census Bureau's, American Community Survey (ACS), page 8. The data reflects non-institutionalized working-age people (21-64) with disabilities who work full-time/full year in the United States. Types of disabilities included in the data are: hearing disability, visual disability, cognitive disability, self-care disability, and independent living disability.

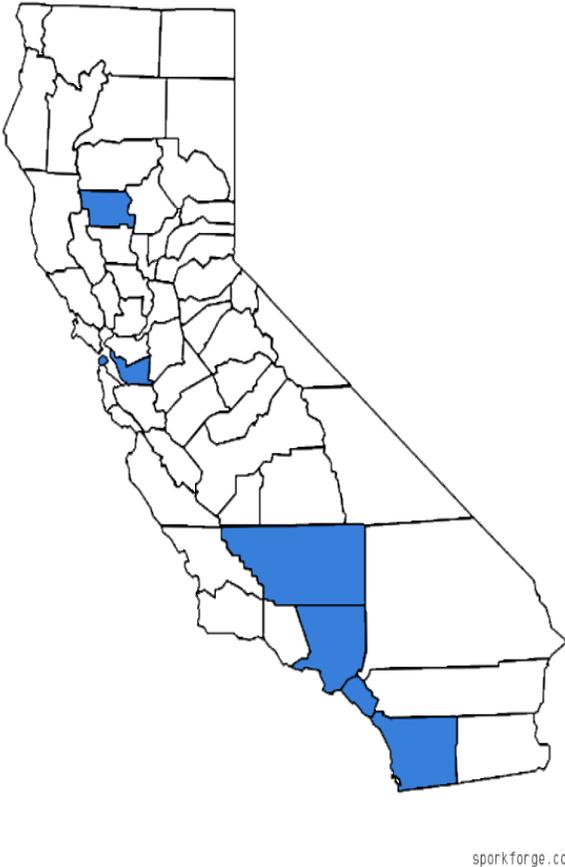
the number of youth and young adults with intellectual and other developmental disabilities in competitive integrated employment. Competitive integrated employment is defined as “meaning full or part-time work at minimum wage or higher, with wages and benefits similar to those without disabilities performing the same work, and fully integrated with coworkers without disabilities” (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act 2014). CECY is a collaboration of state agencies, centers, and organizations, families, and self-advocates with responsibilities for the education, rehabilitation, employment, and support of youth with disabilities. One of the ways CECY strives to enact its mission is through local employment Collaborative Teams (LECT)s.

What are Local Employment Collaborative Teams (LECT)s?

While we know there are many barriers to competitive integrated employment for youth and young adults with IDD, we also know there are many areas within California where agencies working together have demonstrated success in assisting youth and young adults with IDD in gaining a job of their choosing at or above minimum wage. In 2012, a request for proposals was issued to identify these pockets of success. A competitive, multi-round process was used to select seven out of seventeen applications to provide support to document unique aspects of their programs. These seven programs were referred to as Local Employment Collaborative Teams (LECTs). Each LECT addressed challenges to competitive integrated employment in a unique way that made full use of their community’s resources.

The seven LECTs covered the demographic and geographic diversity of California (see Figure 1). Four of the LECTs were situated within secondary education (Glenn County Office of Education, Sweetwater Unified School District, Irvine Unified School District, and Whittier Union High School District) and one within postsecondary education (Taft). Two of the LECTs were led by agencies that had a specific aim around employment and had designated employment services (East Bay Innovations and TransCen). The following provides a brief summary of each LECT and their unique focus.

Figure 1. LECT sites throughout California



(1) East Bay Innovations (EBI): The goal of EBI’s Employment Services is to create access to gainful employment for individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities and to provide support to individuals, once on-the-job, so that they can be successful in the workplace. EBI researches the workforce needs of various untapped employment sectors; networks widely with prospective employers; creates pipelines to industries and opportunities for skill development through training programs, such as Project SEARCH; conducts intensive job development, and provides on-the job coaching once an individual is in the workplace. EBI provides

support to more than 125 individuals on-the-job and during the job development phase. Employment data was provided initially for all clients, but subsequently included a subset of the clients ranging from twenty to twenty-eight individuals served in EBI’s supported employment program, and were those individuals served through EBI’s Employment Services who were placed in jobs or were engaged in job development during the time period specified. LECT participants were typically 18 and older; predominantly male (71%); reflected diverse ethnicities with approximately half Caucasian, nearly a fifth Asian/Pacific Islander, and a little more than a tenth Black/African-American. Most participants have autism (43%) and/or intellectual disabilities (54%).ⁱ

(2) Glenn County Office of Education (Glenn COE): This LECT is a model for rural communities. Located in a sparsely populated region about 100 miles north of

Sacramento, CA, which has historically high rates of unemployment, Glenn COE has focused on developing certificate programs to help students with IDD become certified in areas such as food handling, basic tool safety, customer service, back-lifting and workplace safety. They developed a website, <http://www.glenncerts.org/>, which provides information and training on obtaining occupational certificates. The certificate training programs were modified and adapted to make them more accessible to students with IDD, while still covering the essential content areas for students to achieve the certificate. LECT participants (n=17) tended to be male (59%), Hispanic (65%), and have an intellectual disability (71%).ⁱ

(3) Sweetwater Union High School District (SUHSD): The Partnerships in Job Placement Project built community partnerships to make it possible to focus on jobs and work after the district faced significant budget cuts that removed job developers and left teachers with no time to do job development or related activities. Transition teachers were left to negotiate with local employers, develop work-training partnerships, and build employer relationships with only their “prep period” time of about 50 minutes per day. This LECT focused on utilizing partnerships between the Sweetwater School District, San Diego Regional Center, San Diego State University, and an experienced employment consultant/job developer to: support (1) more effective student transition preparation and (2) stronger vocational goal identification and job/career matching. An overwhelming majority of LECT participants (n=19) were male (74%). The majority of participants were Hispanic (68%) and one fifth were Caucasian.ⁱ

(4) Taft College Transition to Independent Living (TIL) Program: This residential post-secondary education program at Taft College in Taft, CA has a history of its graduates achieving competitive integrated employment; 82% of graduates are competitively employed with 87% of those students earning above minimum wage. As a LECT, the TIL program focused on significantly increasing parent/family involvement relative to locating and placing students in competitive integrated employment and exploring strategies to significantly decrease the amount of time it takes for students to achieve CIE after graduation. The Taft TIL produced and made available an employer

video; a parent training approach and materials to support such training; a Career Academy for use with students during the summer intersession between their first and second years. LECT participants (n=86) tended to be male (58%), and nearly three quarters were White (71%). Over a third (40%) of the participants had autism as their primary disability.ⁱ

(5) Transcen, through its WorkLink program, focuses on finding meaningful jobs for people with significant disabilities through the provision of braided resources and funding from the Developmental Disabilities system and Vocational Rehabilitation. Braiding and blending services helps eliminate service gaps and allows building the comprehensive, wrap around support that people with more significant disabilities need to work and live in the community. The support needs of the group vary from line of sight supervision to those who are able to travel and work independently once trained. WorkLink evaluates the level of support new enrollees need (i.e. 1/3 of those enrolled needed door-to-door support, 1/3 were able to become independent or semi-independent with training, and 1/3 were able to gain independence in new tasks fairly quickly). The WorkLink team has supported three California providers (ARC-SF, Marin Ventures and Goodwill of Northern California) to start transforming their organization's services. TransCen has 37 individuals enrolled in day/employment services. Employment data is provided for the subset who is currently employed in integrated, direct hire jobs. The remaining individuals are in the discovery process or are actively looking for work. There were 25 LECT participants in the April- September 2014 period. Of those, nearly three quarters (72%) were male. LECT participants reflected diverse ethnicities (36% Asian/Pacific Islander, 32% Black/African American, 16% Hispanic, 16% Caucasian) and types of developmental disabilities (64% Intellectual Disability, 16% autism, 16% Down Syndrome, 4% Cerebral Palsy).ⁱ

(6 and 7) Irvine Unified School District and Whittier Union High School District (IUSD, WUHSD): These two districts were selected as trainers based on their history of working together in presenting and mentoring various groups around the state on successful transition of students into post-secondary education and competitive

integrated employment. For the CECY Project, these two LECTs collaborated with many agencies and organizations to develop and disseminate information on unique approaches to successful transition from school to work. PowerPoint modules were created for training on best practices identified including the use of social media, i.e., video resumes and QR codes to help young people with IDD in their job search and job retention practices. A Social Security Administration Benefits Planning Handbook was developed and disseminated to students, families and other community stakeholders. In addition, the WUHSD and IUSD teams have developed parent/family transition handbooks that are being piloted at this time. Each addresses the demographics and needs of their respective communities.

Irvine LECT data was provided for those enrolled in the Irvine Adult Transition Program. The program includes all young adults with mild, moderate and severe intellectual/developmental disabilities (including ASD) who are enrolled in the following programs: Irvine Adult Transition Program (IATP) and the Irvine Adult Transition Program (IATP)/Transition Partnership Project (TPP). Irvine LECT participants (n=74) were fairly evenly male and female. About half (53%) of Irvine LECT participants were White/Caucasian and another quarter (27%) were Asian. The primary disabilities represented include Intellectual Disability (68%), Autism (27%), and Deaf/hearing impaired (5%).

Whittier's program, Career Connection, provides transition support services for 130 individuals with intellectual disabilities, ages 18-22. Career Connection also provides support services at the middle school and high school levels to all individuals who have IEPs to make the best transition from school to adult life. LECT participants (n=38) were individuals in four of the thirteen transition classes. There were slightly more males (58%) and a large majority of Whittier LECT participants were Hispanic (79%).

What is the employment experience for LECT participants?

Through the LECT projects, we collected employment data from October 2012 to September 2014 on a biannual basis. While the California employment rate for

individuals with IDD has remained fairly stable at 12-13%, the majority of the LECTs at the start of the documentation process reported a much higher employment rate for individuals in their programs. Six of the LECT's reported a quarter (25 or more) of their participants were working in integrated employment. By the last reporting period, all LECTs reported employment rates above the California rate of 12.4%; the percentage of LECT participants employed in integrated settings ranged from 15.8% (Whittier) to 100% (Taft and TransCen).³

Average hourly earnings by LECT

The average hourly rate among the LECTs ranged from \$5.60 to \$13.03 over the two year reporting period, with the overwhelming majority above minimum wage (see Table 1). Two of the LECTs, EBI and TransCen, had the highest average hourly rates (\$11.00 and above). Similarly, the Irvine USD LECT average hourly wages were close to ten dollars and above. The average hourly earnings for Glenn County Office of Education were stable at \$8.00 and Whittier USD reported average hourly earnings between eight and nine dollars. All Sweetwater LECT participants were paid below minimum wage during the first reporting period (October 2012-March 2013) and continued to be so with the exception of one individual during the April – September 2013 period, until the last reporting period. The source of wages for Sweetwater LECT participants were Workability I funds. This is in contrast to the other LECTs where the source of wages was predominantly the employer. By September 2014, the average hourly rate for Sweetwater LECT participants was above minimum wage (\$8.46) and the majority of working Sweetwater LECT participants (75.0%) were paid at or above minimum wage. This represents a major shift, especially as it occurred prior to implementation of WIOA, which prohibits schools from contracting with sub-minimum wage providers. While Workability was still source of wages for a few Sweetwater LECT participants, the

³ Starting in the second reporting period (April-September 2013), a data dictionary for each question was introduced to ensure all sites were using the same definitions when responding to a question. The question about integrated employment asked; "Is this individual in an integrated (individual with disability is able to interact with nondisabled person to the fullest extent possible) employment setting?"

majority were by employer by September 2014. **Table 1. Average hourly earnings for LECTs 2012-2014**

	Oct 2012- Mar 2013	Apr-Sept 2013	Oct 2013- Mar 2014	Apr-Sept 2014
EBI	\$11.24	\$10.97	\$11.43	\$11.04
Glenn COE	\$8.00	\$8.00	\$8.00	\$8.00
Irvine USD	\$10.54	\$9.91	\$9.79	\$10.28
Sweetwater USD	\$5.60	\$8.00	\$5.65	\$8.46
Taft College	\$8.86	\$8.86	\$8.86	\$9.81
TransCen	\$12.00	\$12.87	\$12.66	\$13.03
Whittier USD	\$8.33	\$8.33	\$8.20	\$8.89

There was a wide range for the number of hours worked per month by site. During April-September 2014, LECT participants reportedly worked on average between 20 and 120 hours a month. The lowest average number of hours worked was among GCOE LECT participants and highest among EBI LECT participants. Irvine USD, Whittier UHSD, and TransCen had monthly averages above seventy. The remaining LECTs had average monthly hours worked between forty-three and fifty-two hours.

Job supports

LECT participants used a range of supports. A little over half of LECT participants used natural supports and almost a third used supported employment with a job coach. Natural supports were the most commonly used form of support among LECT participants at Taft College, Irvine USD, and Whittier UHSD. This remained fairly stable from 2013 to 2014 with a slight increase in use of natural supports from 55.1% in September 2013 to 59.2% in September 2014. This also corresponded to a slight decline in use of job coaches without supported employment and supported employment with a job coach. Sweetwater LECT participants in 2013 relied mainly on a job coach without supported employment, but more participants were utilizing supported employment with a job coach in 2014.

Employers

LECTs engaged 75 employers during the April – September 2014 reporting period representing a variety of workplace settings including retail, entertainment, grocery, restaurants, government, health care, childcare, and banking sectors. Examples of employers include:

- Walgreens, CVS, Old Navy, Banana Republic, Marshall's, Petco, Home Depot,
- So Cal Pizza, Hometown Buffet, Chili's, Panera Bread, Sprouts,
- Norwalk Courthouse, City Hall, DMV, Alameda County District Attorney's Office,
- Rio Hondo Daycare, Health Partnership Project, Fremont Bank.

A unique aspect of the Taft LECT is that one of the largest employers in Taft is Taft College itself; over half (54.7%) of Taft LECT participants were employed by Taft College.

Success Stories

There are several pathways to competitive integrated employment, and each LECT facilitated the path in different ways. The following provide real life success stories organized by different themes of the supports needed to achieve CIE.

Job preparation, job development, job coaching

EBI

When B. graduated from EBI's first Project SEARCH job training class hosted by the County of Alameda, she was ready to go to work. Prepared, motivated, determined. *But it took three years after completing Project SEARCH to secure full-time employment.* Today, she is gainfully employed in Alameda County District Attorney Nancy O'Malley's office. She arrives at work and prepares a detailed "trial sheet" for the criminal and civil court cases being heard that day. She responds to questions at the front counter of the Alameda County District Attorney's office, handles interoffice mail, and answers phones. And she has successfully completed her six month probation period. With the support of a Job Coach, B. is successfully handling increasing responsibility on-the-job. She's extremely hard-working, dedicated to her job, and is embracing its challenges with growing confidence.

Whittier

One of our individuals had extensive team support with many job developers and support staff working on his behalf. He had a number of job sites, including the local Superior Court, Party City and Dollar Tree. Because of relationships developed in our community and the persistence of one of our job developers, our local movie theater gave our student the opportunity to work one afternoon a week for two hours. This opportunity has evolved into four afternoons a week for four hours each day. The student is now on their payroll and has transitioned to a surrounding adult agency that provides job coaching for supported employment leading to CIE.

TransCen

AW is a young man with developmental disabilities who entered WorkLink's program after completing a high school transition program two years ago. While in school, AW had little work-based experience and did not particularly like the job opportunities he was given (working in a small grocery store, landscaping with Parks and Rec). He was hoping to get a more professional job where he could work with computers and other office equipment. He wanted a job that would pay him enough money so he could get his own apartment and own a state-of-the-art video game console and all the newest video games.

During AW's first year in the program, WorkLink's community instructors helped him to explore different office settings and assessed his ability to use computers/software, copiers, scanners and fax machines. AW also needed instruction on professional behavior and social interactions. He had some difficulty accepting feedback and direction from supervisors, and, at times, he was disrespectful with staff and friends. He took a computer class at City College where he learned to use MS word and learned to type using both hands. AW had time management issues. His community goals focused on improving his punctuality and following his calendar, conversational skills, teamwork and being polite. Late last year, AW moved into a subsidized apartment and started to learn to cook, clean and do his own laundry. We also started working on money management. At this point, AW started to say he wanted a job so he could earn

a paycheck.

WorkLink's employment services team started working with AW to start his job search. Together, they targeted employment settings that matched AW's profile and resume. Three weeks ago, AW was hired by Invitae, a pediatric bio-tech firm based in San Francisco and Palo Alto--his first paid job. AW is earning \$15.65/hour and is working 30/hrs a week. He receives full benefits. He is classified as an office clerk and supports the facilities manager by processing incoming supplies for the office and laboratory, maintaining kitchens, work areas and conference rooms, inventorying supplies and setting up new hire desks (computer and desk supplies). He is using a computer to keep a list of supplies that need to be reordered and updates the employee phone list. He is very proud of his new position and is making friends with all the scientists. AW wants to use the money he earns to pay his rent and buy a PS4.

Job preparedness, postsecondary education, job matchmaking, family support

Taft

Cooper is a young adult who has autism. He completed a yearlong paid internship in merchandising with Frito Lay in Bakersfield. He completed the TIL program and the follow along TPSID program. He received both an academic completion certificate and a certificate in merchandising. Cooper planned on returning to the San Diego area and finding a job. His mother wanted to help her son find a job. While Cooper had envisioned going to work at a nearby Costco, his mother approached a manager working for Frito Lay in San Diego. She forwarded contact information for this manager to TIL staff. They followed up by contacting the Frito Lay manager in San Diego. One of the TIL staff went to San Diego to talk with the manager about Cooper and the program he had completed. Cooper was given an interview. He finished his program, got an apartment in San Diego and went to work as a merchandiser for Frito Lay in San Diego. He started working 20 hours per week at a wage of \$12.50 per hour.

Benefits planning training, Gaining family support

Irvine

One of our IATP students, 21 year old Garrett, was in his last year of programming during the 2013-14 school year. He had been training at Wholesome Choice Market for approximately 6 months. The Wholesome Choice Manger left to take a new management position at Farm Direct Market (a new upscale market in Irvine), and Garrett was offered a paid position at Farm Direct Market. Garrett was very excited about this opportunity but his Dad was insistent that Garrett not work because he would lose his benefits. The IATP staff met with Garrett and his Dad and explained how to utilize SSA work incentives and after much discussion, Dad agreed to let Garrett accept the position four members of the family are currently receiving SSI). Garrett worked at Farm Direct for approximately 17 weeks. Garrett was laid off when the market had to downsize their staff due to slow business. The manager wrote a letter of recommendation, and Garrett was hired at Trader Joe's after a short internship. He now works 30 hours per week. Staff has continued to give benefits planning support to Garrett and ensures that he completes his wage reporting paperwork to send to SSA.

DOR services

Sweetwater USD

This young man is not due to exit public school transition program until June 2015, but he was identified by a supported employment Summit developer as a good candidate for a position with the local Vons grocery store in late May. By the end of June 2014, he had successfully interviewed and passed the requisite tests and other hiring procedures. He also had his case successfully opened with DOR, and they assisted with purchasing interview clothing and uniform material. He began employment with Vons in July 2014, and is currently employed for 22 to 22 hours a week at \$9.00 an hour. While he is part of the supported employment group, his opportunities for integration or contact with nondisabled peers is maximized. If he remains on the job successfully for another 90–120 days, he may be exited early from transition services.

What is needed to achieve competitive integrated employment?

As can be seen by stories of success, it often takes a combination of factors to connect individuals with IDD to appropriate job opportunities. There are several lessons to be

learned from the LECTs in how to address the barriers and how to successfully achieve CIE. These include:

- Philosophical shift and commitment to integrated community-based employment by leadership and staff. This requires a shift in funding and resources including staff time.
- Training and technical assistance are needed for educators and service agency staff to implement state and local employment first policies. Training and resources are also needed to help make family members and individuals with IDD aware of the various services and supports available toward CIE.
- Job preparedness and job matching are necessary to secure employment of choice that yields higher wages and retention. These are specific skills that may require additional training for staff or enlisting staff with this area of expertise.
- A team approach is needed, particularly for those transitioning from high school. Partnerships among educators, regional centers, and rehabilitation staff are key to connecting youth with IDD to appropriate services and supports towards CIE. Community partners such as employers or local assets (such as in the case of graduate students in rehabilitation counseling) can greatly assist in matching skills and job opportunities.
- Business partnerships addressing a variety of industry sectors must be established to ensure access to work-training and employment opportunities in integrated settings.
- Mentors/peer networks, whether for educators, employers, agency staff or family members, are an important way to guide those wanting to support individuals with IDD in pursuing competitive integrated employment.
- Youth with IDD need skill development and work experience opportunities.
- Youth with IDD need to be motivated and able to express their desire to work.
- Success stories are needed to promote high expectations from all stakeholders.

Resources created by LECTs

Braided/sequenced funding

WorkLink Braided Services Toolkit- This toolkit is a result of TransCen's work to create flexible, person-centered supports by braiding and blending services.

https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/53092888/WorkLinkToolkit_v1.pdf

Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation Article: Transcen Inc.'s WorkLink program: A new day for day services.

This article discusses an innovative approach to braiding funding resources and services that addresses programmatic barriers and utilizes the Developmental Disabilities Service (DDS) system to augment Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services to facilitate direct hire, integrated jobs for people with more significant intellectual disabilities. It describes TransCen, Inc.'s approach to braiding services to promote employment and support customized job placement. Ideas for improving program services and recommendations for system-change are presented.

http://transcen.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=254:newday&catid=1:latest-news

Industry certification

Glenn County Office of Education website provides information and training on obtaining occupational certificates: <http://www.glenncerts.org/>

Employment/Employer videos

East Bay Innovations' videos on:

Diverse and Productive Workforce: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=byveKvZVuJL>

Valued role of employees with disabilities: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-U48WU_Yj0

Community and social responsibility: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cbo1Pmxflw>

Job coaching: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3AsHopb5zc4>

Taft College TIL employer video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/mzxRrOKKioo>

¹ Data presented to provide a fuller description of the LECT participants is based on data and materials submitted for the April-September 2014 reporting period.