

Proposed SE Employment First Mentoring Model Human Development Center

Need. Despite their desire to work in the community, less than one in four (24%) of Louisianans with cognitive disabilities are employed (ICI, 2012). Louisiana's public officials have voiced their commitment to transform Louisiana to a true *Employment First* state. In order for Louisianans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) to achieve meaningful employment outcomes, we must have competent job coaches, statewide. The role of the job coach is complex and requires a myriad of skills across a wide variety of settings. Louisiana's vocational rehabilitation program (LRS) requires that all agency job coaches complete a 40-hour core university-based supported employment training. Louisiana's Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) has adopted the same standard of training for Medicaid employment services providers. Research and experience show that classroom-based training alone is necessary but not sufficient to achieve community employment outcomes (Niemiec, 2011, Rural Institute). To be successful, job coaches need **mentored** opportunities to demonstrate competencies and skills learned in classroom-based training in real world setting with real job seekers (Griffin, 1999).

Plan. We propose establishing a job coach mentoring model. This model will include components designed to ensure that job coaches who have completed the required 40 hour SE CORE curriculum have opportunities to demonstrate their competencies with real job seekers in real work settings. This model will ensure that job coaches have skills obtained through experience and not solely knowledge obtained through training. The components are described below:

- ❖ Job coach completes a university-based 40-hour core supported employment training
- ❖ Job coach observes a mentor model best-practice SE protocols with an actual job seeker - for every step of the process of supporting a job seeker with I/DD obtain/maintain community employment from assessment to placement to on-going follow-along
- ❖ Job coach practices implementing SE with guidance and feedback from the mentor (as needed) with at least one (different) actual job seeker
- ❖ Mentoring support is faded as the job coach demonstrates full mastery of national APSE job coach competencies by successfully supporting additional job seekers to obtain/maintain community employment
- ❖ Job coaches who complete the mentorship receive professional development to prepare them to serve as mentors within their own agency and regionally

Expected Outcome. The mentoring approach will result in employment outcomes for job seekers and job coach competency while creating provider capacity that will result in Louisiana becoming a true Employment First state.

Estimated Funding. \$60,000