

Participant Responses to Five *Employment First Maine* Recommendations

9. Promote a process for working together across systems to develop protocols for services to transition-age youth that are based on best practices. What best practices will make this a reality for all youth?

Promote community inclusion and their importance as a contributing member all their lives.

Youth have to be at the center of their planning process.

Meet students where they are at – technology improvement for staff. This will increase communications and then a rapport with students.

Youth leading the Way. Infrastructure, State, Regional, Local.
Players working together professional development.

Starting earlier in schools with a presentation to all youth to describe the value of participating in work activities prior to graduation to lead to increased employment outcomes. Partner with teachers, case manager, O.T., P.T., Speech and all resources including guidance counselors that have access to the encouragement of our youth.

Plan retreats/meetings by region or office when TVRCs, school personnel, CRPs to align processes and protocol.

Get to the parents specifically regarding expectations/dreams and SSI (lack of) impact when kids work.

If “All means All” – the systems and families (schools, VR agencies, individuals) need to provide work/career exploration opportunities for in-school youth.

Collaboration and education about services!

Develop forums to encourage VR and schools to identify barriers to implementing practices already required.

Get Businesses and School involved to show our youth jobs available to them.

Transition is a process that starts with dreams and aspirations.

Start youth on a path early in their education by having VR/vocational specialists integrate in school systems.

Commitment to work experience for all youth with disabilities before High School exit.

Need to educate educators on developing transition plans for youth that isn't just making referrals to Voc Rehab and have more focus on vocational skills.

Provide follow-up info on student work success to school staff to raise expectations and give them positive feedback on their work. Talk to employers to gather info and ideas for developing work goals for youth based on local employment trends and workforce needs.

Reach out to all students with IEPs no later than sophomore year of high school.

VR is not the answer to "transition services".

Engage Special Education Directors in Employment Options – work cooperatively with staff.

Multidisciplinary approach including parent or students to develop "Early intervention" to start the discussion of work and career and independence before high school like in elementary school.

Promote a process for IDEA – Be a presenter with panel at Chamber of Commerce Breakfast. "Eggs & Issues" Raise Awareness with employees.

Ensure that professional education and training, and system/agency protocols, stress a requirement that VRCs/CRPs understand and collaborate with the workforce system as a whole.

Some schools are implementing cross discipline transition teams with action items plus who will follow through and up with tasks.

Training across all systems to implement cohesive action.

Initiate conversations involving employment exploration and skill-set development in elementary schools.

Offer more group tours to students. Get school's decisionmakers involved.

Provide funding to hire a part-time assistant (full-time would be great too!) for each office to help Transition Counselors get things done. Hard to do as their own given how much time they are out of the office!

Increase VR outreach and get into schools more often to train parents and teachers on what VR really does.

Start this conversation in middle and junior high school. Don't wait to discuss this at 15 or 16 – start early.

Recommend a new nonprofit start-up – a company dedicated to transporting youth to places of employment for jobs, job shadows, informational interviews, etc.

Listen to youth and believe.

Advocate for WIOA and IDEA alignment.

12. Analyze services funding distribution and rate structures and realign where necessary to promote and incentivize employment services. How do we make providing employment services and supports the priority in Maine?

Reward/incentivize innovative approaches that include clients, helping professionals, and employers.

Pay CRPs more. Train them (VR responsibility). Community liaison with Chambers of Commerce so they know about VR. Just do it!

Reduce the VR caseload size ... they are the start. 120-160 people per VRC is wrong. Does not work.

System for providing job development and employment support needs to reimburse providers at a living wage if employment is truly a value.

CRPs are paid less than some clients. Increase rate to \$40/hr., continue early placement bonuses Pay coaching at \$35/hr. to remove disincentive.

Increase ... Increase ... Increase the rate of pay to providers which also increases incentive to provide and be able to provide the needed services. Include more outlying areas!!!

There has to be more utilization and exploration of generic resources and our partners – i.e. Career Centers, Employment programs, etc.

Ask the State agencies, especially DHHS and DOE to release information identifying funding distribution of services and comparing employment services funding to other services.

CRPs do important work – they should be compensated appropriately and also recognized as a collaborator in client services. Their skills are underused.

Transportation needs to be part of the equation.

Overall increase in public and private dollar support accompanied by an expectation that people are employed.

Pay CRPs more to attract and retain employees who have a passion to work with individuals with disabilities (our clients).

Pay more to CRP.

More well trained CRPs. More funding for mental health employment services.

Shut the front door to day programs that promote an idle leisure life.

Getting into schools and youth jails/residential homes. Start early!

Analyze Service Funding – Our need for a skilled workforce is and will further push this agenda. Informing business about our resources and supports.

Work closely with universities, small businesses, provide work incentives. Re-open business consultant position in BRS.

Pay CRPs more.

Increase funding for CRPs.

Employment services need to be funded for individuals with a mental health diagnosis. This population is significantly underserved.

Reduce funding (Medicaid waiver) to “day programs”. Decrease the rate for community support (with the exception of 1-1 only in the community, not in a center). Increase the rate for Career Planning and Discovery to \$40/hour. Within VR increase the rate for job development to \$40/hour.

Pay CRPs more.

Invest in our CRP community and potentially reconfigure rate structures to help them remain sustainable. We rely on them and want them to succeed.

Become creative with increasing the job developers in our state. We need coaches and job developers to network with employers and thereby have increased employment.

I believe it is necessary to change funding methods so that more VRCs can be hired.

Provide in-house job developers/job coaches.

Pay for outcomes. Increase rates for CRPs. Increase salaries for VRCs to retain good staff.

CRPs job coaching and LTS. Need more money for services so we can maintain quality professionals in a field too often clients make more money than support services staff.

In HCBS medicare waiver, pay provider more when their clients have (can't read).

15. Promote understanding and use of assistive technology and accommodations needed to support the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace. Who can help Maine increase the use of technology?

A mobile lending library for assistive technology that places items in business for all to use for 1 month. Universal design.

Publicly praise and reward employers and businesses who take a leadership role in providing accommodations.

Promote understanding and use of technology. Chamber of Commerce is a great platform to engage and inform employers.

Discuss technology with employers. Help them become comfortable. Some now encourage it become part of HR training to increase comfort.

Professional development webinars and hands-on/live training. Utilize professionals at Iris Network, Alpha One, Black Bear, Maine Cite.

Partnerships/Challenges/Ideas. Tech Hire, Maine start-ups Insider (challenges \$\$ ideas), New Ventures Maine?

VRCs to have much more exposure to what's available so more in-service education.

Partner with colleges, like Maine Robotics and engineering.

Disability Rights Maine, Maine Cite, Universities.

More hands-on training especially around new services and the different things that are out there and are more relevant to new technology.

Increase training for VR Counselors by providers of AT and accommodation/worksite evaluation.

Invite AT specialists and businesses to present at staff meetings, workshops and conferences. Demonstrations.

More affordable and faster internet. More classes on basic computer skills. More knowledge about what accommodations are available.

We have staff who are knowledgeable/experienced with Tech. LCTs use them. Also need to make our own workplace/materials accessible.

Outfit day support programs with tech. We must all know how to use this technology and where to find it.

At4Maine! (But need devices mailed as Maine is a large State!). Can't always get there to borrow device.

Provide training on assistive technology and accommodations to employers to provide inclusion in the workplace.

Technical/CTE education – establish curricula that include innovating, designing, and manufacturing AT.

Start with Maine OIT. Require inhouse expertise on AT.

CRPs assess clients who may need technology and advocate for their need.

Get technology into the hands of individuals, family members, providers ... so they may learn what is possible.

Live and work in Maine – statewide initiative, tax incentives for STEM careers and people that learn and live in Maine.

22. Create a Business to Business platform that engages and shares information, resources and strategies that have been effective ... What businesses can we tap to share their success in having a diverse workforce?

Employers need to partner with agencies providing employment services. They need access to training to best support individuals with a disability.

TJ Max & Sodexo

IT Services. I feel are an untapped resource.

Rejuvenate Special Appointment Process. Huge potential for Augusta.

Use media to raise awareness.

Are there really any businesses that exist and work that provide internships/paid & paid apprenticeships anymore, if so where are they?

This is the best kept secret.

Present BRS services to HR industry to highlight our quality clients.

Bring together staff meetings and staff trainings that shares information across all platforms.

Maine is about small businesses not CVS & Walgreens & Tambrands.

Speakers for Rotary to talk about services especially in urban areas.

Maine State Chamber/Business Leadership Network – give them, expect them to have a greater role.

Work with members of Maine Business for Social Responsibility.

Tap employers who employ VR clients and others with disabilities.

Involve the State Chamber of Commerce and local Chambers – create an initiative for them to get behind.

CRPs and VR should have an inter-access and share database of businesses that promote inclusion. More trainings to businesses on the benefits of employing people with disabilities – panels of people who have improved their lives (and bosses) who can share how it has improved their businesses.

Other State VR agencies have partnered with Uber and other ride services. Give it a try in Maine.

Public Service announcements – TV & Radio.

26. Improve and increase availability, options, resources, funding, vehicles, etc., for people to have access to reliable transportation to and from employment. How can Maine tackle transportation for work – what is needed now?

If you're eligible for VR services, you should have access to para transit systems even if subsidized.

Logisticare and Penquis should have the same protocols.

If someone had at one time been involved with transportation, or has an interest in it or would like to start their own business but doesn't have a business idea, maybe VR could help with starting their own business, ie. writing business plan, classes etc. This company would provide

transportation for people needing to get a job. In time this business owner would build a fleet of buses, vans, cars to get people to work.

Rural areas need better to public transportation. Some city areas do not offer transportation on the weekends (or it is limited). Is there a ride-share program for getting to/from work? How will someone with a more severe disability be able to access that?

Uber business.

Large increase in public and private \$ support for viable transportation services and systems.

Create a network of at home moms, unemployed, retirees, etc. using a uber like app to get folks who can't drive to work. Get rid of Logisticare and pay for this.

Approach deep pocketed company (Uber, Google) to demonstrate social good at driverless vehicles with a rural demo project in Maine.

Options to fund vehicle repairs and driver's license renewal.

DOL promote a client-run garage where clients can have their cars serviced and repaired. Training clients to work and operate and garage.

Uber.

Grant options outside of VR that allows car repairs or matching grants to purchase a car/drivers ed.

Focus on transportation options in rural areas to develop some kind of structure in areas where there is none currently.

In general – publicly pressure political leaders/lawmakers/policymakers to fund and supervise transportation options for PWDs and others.

Public transit. Increase services of WMT and Logisticare to include work travel.

Partner with GO Maine/Business Community.

Increased transportation will allow clients to increase their range of employment opportunities – this needs to be worked at on a statewide level to connect our rural State with each other.

I'd like to see VR partner with larger employers and work with the employer to hire and arrange transportation pick-up spots for new workers with a plan toward self-sufficiency to purchase

their own vehicles through a reputable resource when available. Payment for transport services would be an employment benefit offered.

Hire a grant writer to write a proposal/develop a proposal for a youth transportation company. Private funders would fund if a well written grant with statistics could outline the desperate need.

Work with organizations, councils, advocacy groups to explore and develop resources, i.e. vouchers; Uber; public transportation.

Make sure disability is a visible consideration and active member of transportation coalitions.

Low interest-long term loans to buy cars. Ride-sharing online to connect people going to the same place.

Expanding Bangor bus route to outer areas, expand bus times.

Funding for lift/Uber type service for transportation to work.

Transportation. Increase transportation times going north and south. Bus stops with schedules posted and have benches and coverings so people can wait in comfort.

State reimbursement programs to families, friends, coworkers to help transport people to and from work.

Payments for Ubers, taxis, family members, neighbors, co-workers without onerous paperwork.

This is one of the greatest obstacles especially for low-income people and outlying areas that do not have cab services, Uber services, bus or train services. We need to address this now to be successful.

Statewide bus services. Use the railways.

Grant money – pursuing grants for “Work Buses” dedicated to getting people to work.

Ensure all who want employment will have transportation in place.

What is needed is transportation in rural areas such as Lakes Region.

Transportation supported by SSI and SSDI.

Expand Penquis New Freedom to include all counties \$2.50 each way and be available during bad weather.

Support community actions, including non-violent demonstrations/ protests to bring attention to public.

Have repairs for clients done at Regional or Community Colleges (body work).

Use MaineCare funded transportation for employment.

Transportation donated vehicles repaired and made road worthy by high school automotive students. Those that donate get a tax break.

Under SSI/SSDI allow transportation as an allowable expense (incentive) for all recipients of disability benefits.

More services, more funding. Don't forget the rural areas! More hours!

Rent cars for short-term use or use old State fleet cars. Sell over time to clients.

Utilize the railways. Accessible bus services/planning services for use on smart phones. Statewide bus services.

Work with Uber to encourage people with disabilities to become Uber drivers themselves.

More public transportation in rural areas. More carpooling options.

Increase public transportation – more routes, bus that actually stops at the stops, increased incentives for ride sharing, easier to locate carpools.

Create natural support network for kids.