Putting Individuals with Disabilities on the Path to Meaningful Work & Community Inclusion

British Association for Supported Employment
2017 Annual Conference
Brighton, England
November 8, 2017
The question is not WHETHER a person can work, but WHERE
The most consistent predictor of post-school employment is employment during high school...

Experiences Make a Difference!
What Do People Want?

• Meaningful Day Activities (Interesting things to do)
• To Live in their Own Home (Housing)
• To Be Able to Get Around (Transportation)
• Lots of Friends (Social Capital)
How have we done?

• People with disabilities remain the highest unemployed minority group
• Many people are still segregated, institutionalized or have to leave their home for medical/support reasons
• Most communities have no, or very limited public transportation options
• Social capital is limited – many people end up socially isolated
Medical/Clinical Model

• Looks at deficits or deficiencies
• Separates and congregates
• Relies on experts to assess and make decisions
• Attempts to fix the person
Difference Model

- Identifies and highlights the difference
- The difference is identified in stereotypes
- The stereotypes separates the person
- The person is avoided/stigmatized
Outcomes

- Separate/Parallel “programs”
- Programs versus Supports
- Segregated residential settings
- Limited work opportunities
- Separate recreational programs
- Limited relationships, except with others who are “alike”
WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY AND HE IS US.

1971 WALT KELLY
Killer Concepts

• Ready ("pre")
• Realistic (No reality police!)

“Dignity of risk” means respecting each individual's autonomy and self-determination (or “dignity”) to make choices for himself or herself.
“Discovery consists of looking at the same thing as everyone else and thinking something different.” — A. Szent-Gyorgyi
Skills versus Deficits

- Focus on preferences and what a person can do, not what they can’t
- Shifts emphasis to adding value, not what needs to be fixed
- Targets employment where job seeker’s unique characteristics and skills will be assets—where they will fit in and make friends

Where they will SPARKLE
We must re-frame how we see job seekers and how we approach and partner with businesses and the community

- Presume employment
- Employment services versus Social service program
- Stop selling disability
Building Social Capital

• Focus our attention on the community and stop thinking clinically
• We must understand how community operates
• We must find ways to reverse institutionalization and clinical approaches
• We must listen to people and allow them to decide
• We must help people build social capital
Research Shows…

That Social Capital is related to:

• People getting jobs
• People finding others to live with
• People finding rides/transportation
• People being more tolerant, respectful, kind, helpful and the like
• Pro-social behaviors increase
• People advance & achieve more
Establish Meaningful Roles

- The right to realize potential for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development
- Be supported to participate in and contribute socially and economically to their communities
- Be supported to exercise choice, including taking risks in the pursuit of their goals
- Supports outside of the “system” – natural supports
Meaningful Roles = Positive Outcomes

• Builds connections within the community
• Increases friendships – shares interests, hobbies and experiences with others
• Promotes a sense of achievement and self respect
• Increases skill development
• Contributes to QoL - good physical and mental health
• Increases interdependence and reduces reliance on the system
• Exercises rights and encourages self-advocacy
• Improves job prospects
• Improves financial independence
Community Experiences = Community Inclusion
When it comes to the future, there are three kinds of people…

1. Those who let it happen
2. Those who make it happen
3. Those who wonder what happened

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fW8amMCVAJQ
Lead the Movement That….

• **All individuals** can and should be contributing members in their communities – meaningful roles

• **Everyone deserves the opportunity** to find and develop their passions and interests

• Local **economies benefit** from individuals who work and purchase good and services...And pay taxes

• Individuals with disabilities, families, employers, employment agencies, schools, and **entire communities CAN come together** to include individuals with disabilities in all aspects of life
Community: When Similarities Override Differences
Final Thought...

A meaningful life is not being rich, being popular, being highly educated or being perfect... It is about being real, being humble, being able to share ourselves and touch the lives of others. It is only then that we could have a full, happy and contented life.