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Connect-Ability Infrastructure Change: Final Report

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Acknowledgments | i |
| I. Background | 1 |
| II. Purpose | 1 |
| III. Methodology | 1 |
| IV. Results | 2 |
| Infrastructure Changes | 3 |
| Barriers to Infrastructure Changes | 21 |
| Promising Practices and Resources | 22 |
| Future Directions | 24 |
| V. Conclusions | 28 |
| VI. References | 31 |
| VII. Appendices | 32 |
| Appendix A: Acronym Guide | 33 |
| Appendix B: Interviews and Response Rates | 35 |
| Appendix C: Key Informant Interview Questions 2007-2009 | 36 |
| Appendix D: Key Informant Interview Questions 2010-2011 | 38 |
| Appendix E: Additional Final Interview Questions | 39 |
| Appendix F: Statewide Interagency Collaboration | 40 |
| Appendix G: HomeWORK Project – Infrastructure Changes and Sustainability Plan | 47 |
| Appendix H: Highlights of EPIC I and II | 51 |
| Appendix I: DDS Sustainability Plan | 53 |

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Acronyms

Acronyms and definitions used in this report are listed in Appendix A.

I. Background

Connect-Ability (C-A) is an initiative that has grown out of Connecticut's (CT) Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG), a grant funded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to improve the State's employment and disabilities services infrastructure, identify employment barriers for residents with disabilities, and implement long-term solutions. C-A is organized around a comprehensive strategic plan developed with input from a broad range of stakeholders in CT including employers, people with disabilities, education professionals, community providers, parents of youth with disabilities, and government agencies. The strategic plan focuses on policy and practice changes in four priority areas: stakeholder education, recruitment/employment/promotion, transportation, and youth in transition from school to work.

II. Purpose

Since 2007, project evaluators from the University of Connecticut Health Center (UCHC) have interviewed key informants periodically to capture detailed information about infrastructure changes occurring in the state that affect the employment of people with disabilities. Infrastructure change is broadly defined and can include changes to government agency policies and practices, changes to employer practices, development of new programs, and information dissemination, among others. Key changes are summarized in detailed 2007-2009 yearly reports and in the 2007-2009, Executive Summary and the 2010 Highlights. These reports can be downloaded from the Research Papers page of the C-A website (http://www.connect-ability.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=131&Itemid=562&lang=en).

This report focuses on the most significant infrastructure changes occurring during the entire grant period (2007-2011) and demonstrates numerous ways in which C-A has implemented systemic change and progress in furthering the employment of people with disabilities in CT.

III. Methodology

Key informants included the twenty-three people who were originally identified based on their knowledge of some aspect of the employment infrastructure for people with disabilities in CT. These key informants represented the following organizations:

- Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB)
- Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)
- CT Business Leadership Network (CTBLN)
- CT Department of Developmental Services (DDS)
- CT Department of Labor (DOL)
- CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)
- CT Department of Social Services (DSS)
- CT Department of Transportation (DOT)
- CT State Department of Education (SDE)
- Disability Advocacy Collaborative (DAC)
- Job Developers Consortium - CTWorks
- Mintz and Hoke (C-A marketing campaign developers)

The interview group also included additional key informants who were added mid-year in 2009 to expand the original key informant group. Organizational affiliations of these informants include:

- BRS (includes transition counseling, benefits counseling, Walgreens project, Ticket To Work (TTW) initiative, and the newly created Employment Division)
- A CT DDS regional office
- State Education Resource Center (SERC)
- Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)

When key informants from certain organizations were unable to participate in the evaluation, researchers attempted to identify other key informants from the same organization for participation. During 2010 and 2011, response rates were over 80 percent (Appendix B). Interviews that were incomplete were due to informants who had left a job, had moved out of state, or were unable to respond due to health or other personal reasons.

During the 2010 and 2011 key informant interviews, the six primary questions asked were the same as in previous years (Appendix C) with the exception that the number of sub questions was reduced and modified under question number one (Appendix D) and an additional six questions were removed. Sub questions and additional questions were initially included to help informants think more broadly about infrastructure changes. To reduce redundancy in reporting during 2010 and 2011, for questions four and five informants were asked to report only on *new significant* barriers and *new significant* promising practices (Appendix D). For the final interview, key informants were asked two additional questions. The first asked them to think retrospectively and report what they believe to be the most significant infrastructure changes over the last five years to support the competitive employment of people with disabilities. The second question asked them to report what they believe still needs to be accomplished in CT to strengthen the employment structure for people with disabilities (Appendix E). In all interviews, respondents were encouraged to demonstrate the infrastructure changes they reported by providing details about the changes including the size and scope of changes where appropriate.

Reporting periods in 2010 and 2011 were as follows:

- January-April 2010
- May-August 2010
- September-December 2010
- January-May 2011
- June-October 2011

IV. Results

The results are organized around and focus on eight areas of infrastructure change. The first three areas demonstrate the most significant infrastructure change:

- Sustainable Technical Assistance Center (TAC)
- Brand recognition and awareness
- Statewide interagency collaboration

Five additional areas in which infrastructure change was demonstrated in varying degrees include:

- Process changes within individual state agencies

- Transition and education services
- Relationships with the business community
- Sustainable local level changes
- New statewide transportation resources

Two subsequent report sections underscore 1) some of the new significant barriers that may be getting in the way of infrastructure changes that would affect the employment of people with disabilities and 2) new promising practices/resources that key informants have encountered that may hold potential for further infrastructure change related to the employment of people with disabilities.

A final section addresses what key informants participating in the project believe still needs to be accomplished in CT to strengthen the employment infrastructure for people with disabilities.

Infrastructure Changes

Sustainable TAC

The TAC has become CT's primary source of information and a single point of entry to inform employers, employees, service providers and job seekers about employment issues for people with disabilities. The TAC serves employers, people with disabilities who seek new or different employment, families, employment service providers, school systems, and career counselors, and includes a toll free number (1-866-844-1903) and interactive website (www.connectability.com) to access information and technical assistance. Some benefits of this infrastructure change are noted below.

TAC is a source of information and outreach:

- Through C-A and partnerships with state agencies, the CT Community Rehabilitation Provider Searchable Database for youth in transition and adults with disabilities was developed. The database assists people in finding independent living and workforce supports and services and can be accessed on the C-A and BRS websites.
- C-A held informational transportation workshops for consumers throughout 2010 and 2011. These workshops are continuing under the leadership of Transit for CT and the CT Association for Community Transportation.
- C-A added information to its website about the CT Tech Act Project (CTTAP) and how to access assistive technology (AT). The statewide program assists individuals with disabilities of all ages as well as family members, employers, educators, and other professionals through services including AT demonstrations, AT device loans, and a low-interest financial loan program. CTTAP now has a Facebook page and can also be accessed at www.CTtechact.com.
- C-A did outreach for and promoted two Hiring Events in 2011 that were more employer focused than job seeker events previously held. This new way of connecting with employers was successful and included over 120 consumer participants and more than 20 employers. The model that targets specific employers and interview preparedness for consumers resulted in 21 hires and negotiations for several other consumers.

TAC serves employers, employment services providers, and consumers:

- C-A developed and posted the SmartGuide: Answers in Human Services on its website and the BRS website to provide useful connections to help people with disabilities with issues around employment, independent living, support services, and benefits.
- C-A developed and posted a Personal Assistance Services page on the BRS website to provide an ongoing resource related to hiring personal assistants. The section for employers on hiring a person with disabilities who needs personal assistance on the job is also useful.

TAC serves school systems:

- As part of a grant funded by C-A, the Advancing Connecticut’s Transition Services (ACTS) project is providing information on transition and serving as a catalyst to improve CT’s transition services.
- C-A created a database for a collaborative technical assistance initiative between BRS, SDE, the Regional Education Service Center (RESCs) and SERC to track information for outcomes and help identify gaps in services.

TAC’s toll free number and website continue to be a public portal for education and information. Through a relationship with 2-1-1 Infoline, major progress has been made toward sustainability of the TAC. Because of C-A funding and training, 2-1-1 counselors who get a caller with a disability now proactively inquire whether that person needs employment assistance and refers all such callers to C-A. The percentage of people who called the toll free number and report that they were referred to C-A by 2-1-1 has increased from 21% (n=81) in 2010 to 31% (n=81) in 2011. Table 1 displays TAC toll free number and website usage in 2010 and 2011.

Table 1. TAC toll free number and website usage

| | 1/1/10-12/31/10 | 1/1/11-12/31/11 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| Total number of TAC calls | 387 | 261 |
| Total number of unique visitors to the website | 10,530 | 13,104 |

Key informants referred to the TAC as a valuable infrastructure change bringing together many partners providing education, information, and support.

The creation of partnerships under the TAC and the different partners seeing their active role in that is a huge change. This is what will sustain C-A over time.

The TAC has excellent, comprehensive information – very impressive.

Education, education, education and information. To be able to have one-stop shopping, to be able to have the website and visuals (i.e., case examples of individuals that have been successful), to have information for individuals with disabilities and for parents and educators has been great. People know where to go to get the information and it’s interactive, which is invaluable.

One of the biggest things C-A has helped us with this quarter is revamping the On-the-Job Training handouts. These have been distributed to employers, Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) and consumers.

Brand Recognition and Awareness

There are few things more valuable than investing in brand awareness; the more aware consumers are of a product, the more likely they will use it (Gustafson & Chabot, 2007). In collaboration with Mintz and Hoke, C-A launched a brand awareness strategy that continues to promote positive brand awareness. This has been accomplished through consistency in its message, images (i.e., logo), and slogans/ taglines (i.e., “See the ability. See how we can work together”). Brand recognition has created a greater awareness of the ability of people with disabilities in the workplace and the value of building relationships between different agencies and organizations to further employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

- The television, radio, and print marketing messages released were intended to influence people’s perceptions of one another and encourage CT employers to hire qualified job seekers with disabilities.
- C-A and nearly 30 other MIG state projects throughout the nation support Think Beyond the Label (TBTL), a national media campaign directed toward employers, to change attitudes about hiring people with disabilities and raise awareness of the need for workplace diversity. TBTL has a national website (<http://www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com>) with links to state-specific websites offering employer resources and ready-made print/audio/visual material for implementation at the state and regional level.
- The C-A partnership with 2-1-1, CT’s free information and referral service, is the leading source of referrals to C-A and has had a positive impact on helping increase awareness of its resources.
- Within the DSS, the Social Work Division that manages two of the state’s Medicaid Waivers branded materials into a newer version including information on MED-Connect. Now when a social worker speaks with someone on one of the waivers, one of the first questions asked during the care plan summary is, “What are your immediate educational and vocational needs?” Through marketing, the latest information is being made available to people who are eligible for the programs letting them know employment is possible and although they are receiving additional supports, they can earn money and still keep benefits.
- The HomeWORK partnership between DMHAS, CSH, and C-A produced a video, *HomeWORK: The Way to Work*, which is aimed at creating greater awareness about communication between case managers, supportive housing tenants, and pursuing the goal of employment. The video underscores the consistent message that there’s no limit to what people with disabilities can accomplish. HomeWORK enabled more than 100 supportive housing tenants in CT find productive work.

Key informants underscored the powerful impact of brand recognition and awareness.

The marketing campaign and how many people who previously didn’t think about employment have had their expectations raised – that’s really big.

Having different marketing and advertising strategies have been huge and given C-A a lot of credibility.

The C-A initiative has been vital in making sure state partners are at the table with community rehab providers and in ensuring that everybody is getting the same information about employment initiatives.

Overall, the PR campaign that C-A put on was great and something we can tap into in the future – the video clips, tv ads, billboards especially are a positive way to look at disabilities and employment and this is one of the greatest strengths of the initiative and helped raise awareness. It gives the rest of us tools we can continue to use.

Awareness that people with disabilities can work. For me, the first video clip of the person who was a truck driver was a big wake up call. It caught people's attention. A person who has a disability and works in retail is not as big a deal as a person with a disability who drives a truck. I'm also beginning to see that there is more headway being made with employers and they are starting to see this as an initiative and not just a social responsibility task. This is helping turn the tide. C-A left its mark on these two main areas.

Disability awareness has resulted in many agencies making employment more of a standard question on intake and disability program forms. DMHAS, DDS, and the School Days to Pay Days Program are using the employment question on intake forms.

Awareness has helped us raise the issue of employment in policy discussions. It's new that someone usually stands up and says. "Don't forget about employment." That wasn't happening before.

Because all the players are more aware of disabilities now, there is no longer a divide between employment and medical coverage eligibility for persons with disabilities. C-A played a key role in making this happen particularly with regard to legislation that extended benefits to the elderly and persons needing special services because of a brain injury or a developmental disability.

People are now recognizing hidden disabilities much more and not just thinking physical disabilities.

The Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) project has been impacted by the marketing campaign and a significant number of people have gotten jobs because of WIPA. It has helped them make informed choices about work. MED-Connect has also made a difference with people being able to get Medicaid while working.

Statewide Interagency Collaboration

C-A is bringing state agencies, service providers and businesses together in a common system and is furthering progress in increased communications, networking, and collaborations across and within state agencies and with other (non-state agency) organizations to help remove employment barriers and ensure a useful, accessible infrastructure. As a result, there has been a paradigm shift in agency philosophies and in behaviors, attitudes, and values related to the employment of people with disabilities. The result of interagency collaboration is a sense of shared ownership, shared responsibility, and shared success (Bishop, 1993). Some examples of interagency collaboration and the outcomes are noted below. A complete list is included in Appendix F.

- BRS and the Commission on Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI) conducted a statewide tour to orient people to BRS and CDHI – this outreach to the community to keep people updated about services will continue.
- BRS is collaborating with the CT Office for Workforce Competitiveness (OWC), DMHAS, and nine other state agency partners on a data interoperability pilot project, the CT Agency Data Exchange (Conn-ADE). The project seeks to implement a technology solution that will improve the ability of state human service agencies to share data on a case management and policy level. Conn-ADE is designed to provide both case management options and overall research capacity, and these two capabilities differentiate Conn-ADE from other data interoperability platforms in CT.
- A partnership among BRS, SDE, the RESCs, SERC, and the CT Parent Advisory Center (CPAC), called the Transition Resource Counselor Initiative, is helping identify supports and services available through BRS and other adult service agencies such as DMHAS, DDS, BESB, and the Department of Public Health (DPH).
- C-A has kept communication about employment open with state and community rehabilitation partners. As a result, BRS, DDS, and DMHAS have joined the Association for People in Supported Employment (APSE) and are committed to its mission to provide advocacy and education to supported employment customers. APSE is a growing non-profit (with a chapter in CT) and the only national organization with an exclusive focus on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
- C-A has been instrumental in helping BESB increase agency training of CRPs to make them more aware of the blindness and sensitivity training they offer and to help them further identify client needs.
- Collaboration between C-A and the BRS Employment Division resulted in the creation of new marketing materials for an On-the-Job Training video that has been distributed to employers, CRPs and consumers.
- A partnership between C-A and CT's Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) is providing information on employment through the dissemination of brochures to ADRC clients, direct referral to Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling services administered by BRS and Benefits Counseling services available through C-A's partners in the WIPA program.
- C-A supported the development of a third "Employment Idol" video. DDS will use the third video to continue to promote the employment of people with intellectual disabilities in CT.
- C-A is working in partnership with DDS and DMHAS in support of their efforts to infuse employment in everyday practices with case managers.
- Sponsored by C-A, DDS and the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) are presenting a comprehensive training program on employment for individuals with developmental disabilities. This initiative is designed to provide job developers who work for service providers funded by DDS with the knowledge and skills needed to help job seekers meet their competitive employment goals, and expand organizational capacity to provide quality employment services. The focus of this program is on assisting job seekers to obtain individual employer-paid jobs in the community. The training incorporates comprehensive practices in job placement including business engagement, person-focused career planning, job site and off-site supports, and customized and created jobs.
- C-A provided funds to send a DDS representative to the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistant Center (NSTTAC) in May 2011. It was the first time a DDS

representative from its central office accompanied the state leadership team to NSTTAC. As a result, communication about transition between BRS and DDS has improved.

- C-A funding has enabled DDS to hire a person who is dedicated to improving relationships between BRS, SDE, and DOL and help make significant infrastructure changes to better accomplish the work.
- DDS is working on three ICI projects that are directly funded by C-A. These projects are important employment resources for people with disabilities and include 1) Job Developer and Training Assistance (as a result of trainings, 27 people with disabilities have new or better jobs outcomes), 2) Group to Individual Employment (this infrastructure change is resulting in an additional 36 people having better job outcomes); and 3) the Financial Literacy and Assets Management project (helps people work more than 20 hours).
- DDS and the CT Council on Developmental Disabilities (CDD) have had productive conversations about how they can support one another. The CDD is a Governor-appointed body of people with disabilities, family members and professionals who work together to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities in community life.
- The HomeWORK project, a collaboration between DMHAS, CSH, and C-A built a strong integrated career development infrastructure that leverages the employment services and supports of numerous agencies. The project, which ended in June 2011, assisted supportive housing tenants in obtaining and retaining employment with the ultimate goal of moving off Social Security (SS) benefits. It developed peer networks that are continuing to provide recovery education and support opportunities. For a copy of HomeWORK's Sustainability Plan see Appendix G.
- A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between C-A and DMHAS to support the Employment Practice Improvement Collaborative (EPIC) is helping consumers attain meaningful employment by building improved systems to train providers and stakeholders participating in their care. The EPIC I initiative comprises a wide range of training and program dissemination activities and EPIC II is a distance learning component similar to EPIC I and includes soft skills and life skills training, including financial literacy, social networking, and how to work with colleagues. Highlights of EPIC I and II are described in Appendix H.
- A Needs Assessment conducted in collaboration with DMHAS, BRS, and CRPs focused on what the needs are for employment services. The assessment resulted in statewide cross training with DMHAS clinicians and all BRS counselors.
- The DMHAS Employment Division and BRS are collaborating to improve services for individuals who are deaf. In the New Haven and Bridgeport areas, there is no long term support provider on contract with DMHAS who signs and the collaborative is trying to improve this and bridge the gap for that service.
- DOL and BRS are collaborating to develop a process to accelerate the time frame for joint clients who are going through their unemployment training.
- DOL provided funding to the Connect to Work Center and Co-Opportunity, Inc. of Hartford enabling them to launch a pilot program that provides financial education and Individual Development Account (IDA) services to individuals with significant disabilities and low to moderate income who are on SS. Eligible individuals are allowed alternative funding for an automobile, AT, personal care assistance, a home, and a small business. Brochures on the project have been developed and disseminated to BRS community provider programs, independent living centers, and other state agencies such as DMHAS and DDS. The SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) is a pilot project designed to serve adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and who

have mental illness, co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders and/or other serious health conditions. CT is the only state in the country that has tied employment into this grant. Written into the project plan of the SOAR project in New Haven, are goals around employment and education. The SOAR initiative in New Haven is led by Columbus House in partnership with DMHAS, SS, BRS, and CTWorks.

Key informants described some of the benefits of statewide interagency collaboration.

The fact that most of the state agencies including ours no longer think about what's best for their agency when making changes but think about what the other state agencies are doing and how they can help each other – a focus on interagency collaboration is the best thing that's happened.

C-A has brought agency partners together so work can be shared and everyone can get more done. A lot of the efforts that our agency has worked on collaboratively with BRS happened because of C-A and have helped our agency get to know more about BRS and them about us. A result of this interagency collaboration is that our managers and management staff are interacting more at a regional level than ever before. Before things were more generated by the central office, but now it's more region specific and the actual working areas.

C-A has helped BRS bridge gaps through the forums they set up across agencies and it's helped us become involved in employment-related initiatives. This was especially useful in increasing partnerships with DDS and DMHAS. BESB will be a more natural fit since we're under the same umbrella now. The interagency collaboration has increased and plays more of a role for us now than before.

A result of the collaborations with other state agencies is knowing that employment is part of the conversations they're having. For example, working with DDS because of the work we've done with them we're getting case management and staff needs to be a part of day to day conversations they have with consumers. We're seeing this with other state agencies too.

The best thing about C-A has been the collaborations and communications across agencies around benefits and employment first messages.

We as agencies are better at talking to each other now and sharing information – communication has been heightened and that's huge.

The relationships and partnerships that were developed between agencies who had never done much with employment - seeing in several of those agencies that employment has become a big part of what they talk about now with consumers rather than shying away from it. They're putting employment up front as an expectation. I'm thinking of DDS, DMHAS, and DSS in terms of when people apply for the Personal Care Assistance (PCA) waiver, the social worker actually asks what their plan is for employment rather than saying, "Oh no you don't want to work."

Because of C-A funding, we were able to sponsor joint activities between SDE and DDS. These activities have gotten more of our educators involved, which trickles down to central office administration and the more they hear about this the more they have opportunities to respond.

The funding that C-A gave to DDS to hire the ICI consultants is huge because we've been able to make such good inroads as a result of the collaboration between DDS and BRS.

The CT CDD has a new Executive Director who's interested in employment and has many creative ideas.

SOAR is a synergy of what happened under C-A and HomeWORK and demonstrates that one good thing can come from another.

Process Changes within Individual State Agencies

In addition to increased interagency collaboration, process changes have occurred within many state agencies as a result of C-A. Some of these are noted below. A more complete report of individual state process changes is included in the report, *Connecticut's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant: State Agency Employment Services Process Maps Update*, and is available on the Research Papers page of the C-A website (http://www.connect-ability.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=131&Itemid=562&lang=en). The changes listed below are organized by individual state agencies.

BESB

- BESB developed a paid internship model that BRS is now using in which an individual is on the employer's payroll. Funds are provided to the employer to offset the cost of wages. Temporary positions can result in permanent jobs. The model provides consumers with expanded opportunities for internships and employment.
- BESB expanded its traditional on-the-job training model and now provides more hours of on-the-job supports to individuals participating in supported employment. Individuals receive these time-limited services following placement in permanent employment.
- BESB also developed an eight week group job seeking skills program that teaches consumers computer skills, interviewing skills, and strategies to find employment.
- Using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds, BESB developed work assessments in which employers provide the sites. Funds provided to the CRP cover the cost of the assessments and allow counselors to authorize more than the typical 40 hour assessment, providing employers with better information on which to base hiring decisions.

BRS

- BRS created an Employment Division and hired its own internal employment consultants to supplement the services received from community providers. The Division has provided marketing assistance and brought BRS more current with the competitive market place and getting consumers jobs.
- BRS updated its new counselor training, *Foundations*, to include independent living training and distance learning.
- BRS created an Autism Spectrum Disorder Task Force to find out how to help people on the spectrum and to come up with new ideas to help them with employment.
- After waiting 7 years, BRS now has video phones.
- The BRS Work Incentive Seminars Event (WISE) included a mix of professionals and SS beneficiaries across the state, Employment Networks, town employees working in social services, and school systems. The events resulted in increased networking and the dissemination of information on TTW, Medicaid, and asset building.

- The first annual State of CT Interagency Deaf Service Sharing Meeting was held in April 2011. More than 60 people attended and participated in rebuilding partnerships, re-energizing networking, and sharing about program changes. This ongoing forum for communication will benefit Deaf services.

DDS

- DDS recently developed and implemented a new DDS Employment Policy and Procedure. The policy emphasizes the importance of employment and states that individuals need a fully integrated work setting, employment should be the first option explored, the employment process should begin during a child's school age years, and those already employed should focus on career advancement and increased work hours. Consultants were hired and actively engage in a wide variety of activities intended to develop the infrastructure needed to support this policy. Every division has employment goals and meets as cross divisions on a quarterly basis to discuss these goals. They also have an employment group that meets with providers and this has been very positive. For a copy of the DDS Sustainability Plan see Appendix I.
- The DDS Group to Individual Employment project is continuing as part of the agency's infrastructure and commitment to train and provide technical assistance to individual placement (IP) teams and their organizations on changing internal systems from a group employment to customized employment model.
- As part of the new infrastructure employment incentives, the DDS benefits planning training incorporates greater use of blended services and dissemination of educational materials that will lead to greater numbers of consumers working more than twenty hours per week.
- DDS established an incentive for CRPs who take a client in group-supported employment to competitive employment. The CRP will receive additional funds for the 3-6 month transition period, and then new wage-rate after person is established in individual competitive employment; the incentive money encourages more job development and coaching.

DMHAS

- DMHAS has a new overarching policy that frames employment and housing as a fundamental pursuit essential to a consumer's plan of recovery from the beginning of their recovery. This has made it possible for mental health staff to talk about employment earlier with clients than they have done in the past. Information is distributed to clients and their families at intake and clients are encouraged to meet with an employment specialist at intake.
- As a result of the HomeWORK project, infrastructure changes within DMHAS to help supportive housing tenants enter the workforce or advance in employment, improve earnings and/or strengthen their education and training include:
 - Protocols in place to enable all DMHAS LMHAs and employment providers to review benefits with all individuals expressing an interest in work
 - All supportive housing agencies now incorporate employment and education goals in their tenant service plans
 - On-line employment training was developed for housing case managers
 - Benefits counseling is now infused into clubs and work support programs
- DMHAS's quality assurance plan now includes employment outcomes with annual assessment of private providers. Notification letters were sent to providers in June 2010.

DOL

- DOL made changes to its youth website (www.ctdol.state.ct.us/youth/main.htm) and included sections on: self-assessment, career exploration, beyond high school, green jobs, and parent and teacher resources for youth with disabilities.

DOT

- DOT had a grant approved by the federal transit administration under the New Freedom program for two wheelchair accessible taxis in New Haven and two in Hartford. The wheelchair accessible taxis for New Haven were delivered in February 2011 and the two for Hartford were delivered in September 2011. All four vehicles are currently in use. New Haven placed an order for a third taxi.

SDE

- The Transition Taskforce now has a mission statement and guiding principles.
- SDE has had an increase in 18-21 year old program services. In 2005 there were 8-9 programs. Now there are 30 programs. These programs are moving out into the community and impacting employment by getting students out into the real world.
- The Transition Resource Counselor Initiative is helping SDE identify supports and services available through BRS and other adult service agencies (DMHAS, DDS, BESB, and DPH).

Several key informants commented on process changes within state agencies.

Within BRS the employment consultants are giving the same message. So it's not just happening in the BRS central office but people at different levels are delivering that message and that's a big infrastructure change. This wasn't happening before.

Finally getting the video phones is a big success, it's historic, and gives more access to people who are deaf.

There were people at WISE who had had less than happy experiences with BRS in the past, but after the seminar they decided to go back to BRS. So it was encouraging to see this change in attitude.

C-A has given our agency guidance in ways to conduct outreach and data collection for statewide deaf community needs.

The new policy change in DDS stating that anyone who was a level 1,2, or 3 [level of need] or is a new graduate in our department has to have an employment goal that leads toward competitive employment and the provider contracts have to show for quality improvement indicator that they're moving more people toward competitive employment in their agency and requires that the DDS Planning and Resource Allocation Teams (PRAT) allocation makes sure that people justify why they don't have an employment goal before they give them any money, so that's pretty big.

The DDS Commissioner sent a statement to all DDS staff stating that its PRAT can now sign off on letters that BRS needs in order to commit to long term funding. That's a huge barrier that's been overcome and will limit delays for services.

The Transition Resource Counselor Initiative is one of the most positive organizational changes for SDE and is allowing us to help SERC and the RESCs prepare students who are exiting school for further education or employment.

Transition and Education Services

Transition and education services were developed during the grant period to assist in transition from secondary education to employment or further training. Some of these are noted below.

- With assistance from the CT Distance Learning Consortium (CTDLC), C-A is expanding online courses on its website for consumers, their support system (i.e., family and friends), and employers. Support from CTDLC is enabling educators in the state to meet the increasing demands of developing and delivering effective technology-enhanced learning opportunities for students, adults, and the workforce.
- A web-based database of providers of transition/vocational services providers, or CRPs, was developed through C-A and is a partnership of state agencies, families and young adults with disabilities. The site includes information on providers that can help with job development and training, transition assessment, job coaching, independent living, and other assistance needed to help youth with disabilities enter the workforce.
- DOL expanded its youth website (www.ctdol.state.ct.us/youth/main.htm) to focus on self-assessment, career exploration, beyond high school, green jobs, and parent and teacher resources for youth with disabilities.
- As a result of working with C-A, the annual “Transitions to College” conference, for high school students with disabilities and their parents, has changed its focus so that nearly all workshops and break-out sessions have an employment component. In the past, students got a sense of what college life was like but there was no focus on employment. Now employment and other disability issues are the primary focus of both the parent and student tracks and will continue to be in the future. It has become a sustainable change.
- The School Days to Pay Days Conference was the first partnership among DDS, C-A, SDE, DPH, CT APSE, SERC, families, and consumers. It focused on the importance of preparing individuals with intellectual disabilities for employment during their school years and more permanent employment after they graduate. The collaboration provides better transition services for DDS consumers and promotes “Real Work for Real Pay.”
- A collaborative initiative among BRS, SDE, and ICI, involving both DDS central office and DDS transition coordinators, has created opportunities for increased communication on transition issues.
- The SDE Transition Taskforce is focusing more on reform in order to prepare high school students for the 21st century global economy. This includes a focus on transition standards that include specific content and the incorporation of hands on practical application of those content areas. In addition, there is a new focus on cultural issues and the success or lack of success of African American and Hispanic students.
- A partnership with the RESCs, SERC, and BRS resulted in the hiring of Transition Resource Counselors to provide technical assistance to all the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to help improve relationships and identify supports and services available through BRS and other adult agencies so that students exiting school have better information about adult service agencies and get better connected to them before they leave school.
- An increase in BRS and LEA collaboration is resulting from the Transition Resource Counselor Initiative and is helping school personnel connect transition assessment with

the transition planning process making the selection of education options and careers more relevant.

- C-A started working with African, Caribbean, and American Parents of Children with Disabilities (AFCAMP) to increase awareness about C-A, provide training on transition, and assist them in being better able to provide resources to the population AFCAMP serves.

Key informants reported infrastructure changes that have occurred within transition and education services.

The biggest infrastructure change is the view toward distance learning and the fact that people have changed how they view it in BRS.

Up until this year [2011], “Transitions to College” had presentations about moving on, but this is the first time that all the agenda items were related directly to employment including how to use the C-A website.

There’s been an increase in 18-21 year old program services – it’s an awareness that you can’t do a good job with transition in the high school building or in a typical setting. Have 30 programs in the community now – started with 8-9 in 2005...some programs I’ve heard about aren’t 100% in the community, but they’re starting to move out into the community. Hopefully, this will impact employment by getting them out in the real world.

As part of an initiative between BRS, SDE, and ICI, for the first time DDS central office and DDS transition coordinators have come to the table with BRS and SDE and this a huge change.

In transition we have so many players – districts, CRPs. You have to make sure everybody gets sufficient information so people can collaborate...this has been the biggest thing, having all players at the state level knowing who to talk to – information sharing has improved the collaboration...it’s not just interagency but collaboration between the field or BRS and DDS counselors and central office. Now the worker bees and central office are more involved so you have practitioners and policy makers more closely aligned.

Relationships with the Business Community

Relationships with the business community increased in numerous ways during the grant period and outreach to employers has been productive.

- In response to business challenges in recruiting, hiring, and retaining people with disabilities, C-A developed the Model Employer program. Many employers have accessed a broad range of resources in this program including: pre-screened applicants who have proven qualifications that meet certain criteria; on-the-job training and internship candidates to learn more about a candidate’s skills and evaluate his/her performance prior to making a job offer; and tax credit programs to help employers cover accommodations costs for employees with disabilities to make their environment more accessible.
- Success in connecting employers to resources such as the Model Employer program and with people with disabilities is evidenced by the number of C-A Top Employer Award recipients at the Employment Summits and demonstrates that CT companies are making infrastructure changes in building and retaining a diverse workforce that includes people

with disabilities. Companies were recognized for some of the following diversity best practices:

- developing and sustaining model work programs aimed at attracting and retaining people with disabilities, including people in recovery;
 - developing a universal design work environment; participating in on-the-job training with BRS, and
 - participating in Disability Mentoring Day.
- The annual C-A Employment Summit has been consistent in delivering information and resources for employers who seek ways to support diversity hiring, retention, and growth strategies. In 2010 the C-A Employment Summit featured a new component and hosted a round table session to provide an interactive dialogue highlighting best practices being used and resources available in CT. Similarly, the 2011 C-A Employment Summit focused on what diversity can do for employer productivity and why diversity means business.
 - The BRS Employment Division consists of nine rehabilitation counselors working directly with businesses and the employment consultant overseeing the division. It offers employer services such as pre-screened applicants, on-the-job trainings, risk-free trial working interviews, and tax-credit program information. The Employment Division has led to more employer outreach and direct involvement with employers. From 10/01/10 to 9/30/11, there were 2,953 more development activities (i.e., cold calls, employer meetings, job fairs generated by employer consultants) than from 10/01/09 to 9/30/10. Compared to 10/1/09-9/30/10, there were 27 more placements and 66 more on-the-job trainings. There were a total of 497 work attachments (any time a consumer obtains a paid spot earning a wage) over the past two years and the number of these is expected to increase with the addition of other big employer projects.
 - Relationships with businesses have also been developed through the EPIC project. A designated person has been recruiting employers as “disability-friendly.” To date, 37 employers have committed to hiring people with disabilities. The employers sign a pledge and in return employer logos are posted on the C-A website.
 - The partnership among BRS, Community Enterprises, and Walgreens distribution center in Windsor, CT has raised awareness of opportunities for competitive employment where employees with disabilities are mainstreamed into the workforce. Walgreens achieved its goal to hire one-third of its workforce composed of people with disabilities, bringing hundreds of full-time opportunities for individuals with cognitive, physical, and mental health disabilities. As a model employer, Walgreens provides a number of accommodations for people with disabilities, such as ergonomically-designed workstations, simplified computer screens and on-staff job coaches and also offers a pre-employment training program for those individuals who require additional social or work skills in order to succeed in a job at the facility.
 - Lowe’s is another model employer in the state that is committed to continuing quarterly training and now offers part time opportunities to people with disabilities. Trainings have been successful with a better than 50 percent retention rate.
 - With Title I vocational rehabilitation services funding from the U.S. Department of Education, a coalition of business, government, and advocacy groups are participating in a job training and placement initiative for more than 275 citizens with disabilities in the state. Mohegan Sun, Lowe’s Distribution Center of Plainfield, and HomeGoods Distribution Center of Bloomfield are business leaders who are creating quality opportunities for citizens with disabilities who are able to work competitively and have the appropriate training to do the work. The initiative demonstrates how employers,

government, and the non-profit community can work together to create opportunities for all people.

- Funding from C-A enabled CTBLN to connect over 1,000 job seekers with disabilities, employment providers for people with disabilities, and others including people with disabilities in the workplace to over 60 employers through career fairs and other employment events.
- Funding from C-A enabled the CTBLN to experience numerous positive changes within its organization including joining the Metro Chamber Alliance and increasing membership over the past several years from 8 members to 178 with 88 businesses represented.
- CTBLN produced *Networked*, an electronic newsletter. *Networked* is an important resource for CTBLN members on local and national best practices for recruiting and retaining people with disabilities as well as national disability news.
- C-A partnered with CTBLN on Disability Mentoring Day in an effort to increase meaningful employment opportunities for people with disabilities and promote career development through hands-on career exploration. To date, more than 75 companies in a broad range of public and private industries throughout the state have hosted students on Disability Mentoring Day as part of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. In 2011, 80 students and 35 employers participated. Many more employers wanted to participate, but there weren't enough mentees to accommodate everyone. The event enables employers to recruit interns, tap a pool of potential future employees, develop lasting relationships with disabilities community leaders, and demonstrate positive leadership in their communities.
- July 1, 2010 new state tax credits were made available for employers with work opportunity tax credit (WOTC). An employer who hires an employee receiving SSI or who is a certified vocational rehabilitation participant may claim WOTC after certification is received from the State Employment Security Agency (CT DOL).
- As of 2010, CRPs have been invited to workgroups and were invited to the Employment Summit with the caveat that they have to bring at least one employer with them to the Summit.
- As a result of the TTW and other supportive employment programs, providers are doing more for people with disabilities and there has been an increase in Employment Network activity.

As evidenced below, key informants recognize the value of employer outreach and the outcomes that have occurred as a result of relationships that have been developed with the business community.

We are appreciative of how C-A has connected employers and many have become open minded and that hadn't been done before. For example, we just received a call from an insurance company wanting to hire a person who is deaf. Because we now have video phones, filling this employment position is a possibility.

The Employment Summit and hearing the success stories is a powerful message and helps break down barriers showing that people with disabilities can be employed.

The forums C-A provides for meeting employers (i.e., the Employment Summit) have been key in our reaching employers. C-A has created an infrastructure that we're able to tap into.

One of the biggest things is Walgreens. Their getting on board has helped change employers' minds about employing people with disabilities and that it's not just a social responsibility, it makes economic sense. If that continues, it could be a huge tide.

Most significant change has been with private employers – have made inroads with the Walgreens model, especially with competitive employment.

One of the most significant contributions made has been assisting and pushing employer engagement to the forefront in each of the major state agencies. BRS took its shot in creating the Employment Division with the ARRA funds, but there's been a lot more employment and employer awareness being brought center stage with DMHAS and DDS because everybody is focused on that and it's been easier to increase those collaborations between agencies. We're a lot more on the same page now than in the past.

The BRS industry specific training and partnership agreements with Lowes Warehouse (Plainfield), Walgreens Retail (statewide), HomeGoods Distribution Center (Bloomfield), Mohegan Sun (Uncasville), and CVS Retail are resulting in getting good numbers of people employed through these opportunities.

Disability Mentoring Day was excellent for the ones that participated. The highlight of the day was what we did at ESPN with one of our students and at Mintz and Hoke and CREC.

In one case, Disability Mentoring Day resulted in a group of employers wanting to extend their contact with students. This certainly could be replicable in other work sites. They approached it from a business oriented model, but during that half day of mentoring when you can attach a name and a face to a student and have conversations, they took on a life of its own that they had not anticipated.

Statewide industry specific training with BRS is growing. We have one Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf (RCD) that visited HomeGoods in Bloomfield to see about accessibility for our consumers. Mohegan Sun historically is great for hiring deaf folks.

The Summit has helped increase networking between C-A and CRPs.

One employer who became an Employment Network (EN) provider offered job coaching support.

Sustainable Local Level Changes

The statewide C-A Strategic Planning Local Level Pilot (LLP) Initiative was created to develop and implement innovative strategic plans locally to produce change, improve access, build broad-based constituency, and increase employment for individuals with disabilities. Funded through C-A, nine organizations implemented several infrastructure changes as a result of the Local Level Pilot project. The pilot project funding ended in December, 2009 and UCHC completed the program evaluation. The initial evaluation report, *Connecticut's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant: Local Level Pilot Initiative* can be downloaded from the Research Papers page of the C-A website (http://www.connectability.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=131&Itemid=562&lang=en). A follow-up report (Higgins, Shugrue, Robison, 2011) confirmed that a large majority of LLP activities and changes have been sustained beyond the C-A funding period. The

complete report, *Connecticut's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant: Local Level Pilot Initiative Evaluation Follow-Up*, is also available on the C-A website.

The pilot initiative involved the following organizations:

- Arc New London County (ARC NLC): A non-profit organization founded by parents of children with intellectual disabilities to provide educational opportunities, competitive employment and community living skills.
- Bristol Community Organization, Inc. (BCO): A community action agency serving low income and disabled adults and providing local paratransit services.
- CT Association of Centers for Independent Living (CACIL): A non-profit service agency for people of all ages and all types of disability.
- Capitol Regional Education Council (CREC): One of six RESCs in CT. It furnishes programs and services to children and adults in the Capitol region of the state.
- New England Assistive Technology Center at Oak Hill (NEAT): Private provider of comprehensive services in AT.
- City of New Haven (NH): City Department of Services for Persons with Disabilities.
- Parents Opening Doors (Padres Abriendo Puertas) (PAP): A community-based organization that provides advocacy, training and services for Latino parents of children with developmental and mental health disabilities.
- Workforce Alliance (WFA): One of five Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) in CT, covering the south central region.
- The WorkPlace, Inc. of Southwest CT (WKP): One of five WIBs in CT, covering the southwestern region.

Ninety percent of the programs developed through the LLP Initiative remain active (Table 1). Five programs were discontinued due to lack of funding, and one due to lack of organizational support.

Table 2. Summary of LLP Programs

| Overall Program Activity 2010 – 2011 | Total Programs for 9 Pilots (N=51) |
|---|---|
| Number of programs continued | 46 |
| Number of programs discontinued | 5 |
| Number of programs discontinued due to lack of funding | 4 |
| Number of programs discontinued due to lack of organizational support | 1 |

Selected local level changes that have been sustained are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Sustainable LLP Changes

| Organization | Ongoing Programs |
|--------------|---|
| ARC NLC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition Network • CT College Best Buddies Program |
| BCO | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bristol School using transition goal planning process with current school resources and to implement the revised Individualized Education Program (IEP) Transition Goal Form in 2010. • BCO to continue partnership with Bristol High School to include youth with disabilities in summer youth program. |
| CACIL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Seeker toolkit is available as an on-line resource on Disability Network of Eastern CT (DNEC) website. Outreach coordinator updates the toolkit. • DNEC continues the weekly Job Club indefinitely and hired a vocational advocate to keep this going |
| CREC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition programs at Bloomfield and Rocky Hill high schools will continue Career Portfolio development for students as standard procedure. Programs will assist students to define future career paths that align with interests and abilities, expanding to students as early as grade 9. |
| NEAT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEAT secured two private foundation grants in order to continue to have resource information available on the NEAT website including C-A job seeker and transportation resources. They plan to obtain additional grant funding to evolve and expand webpage under new name “AT: Hire” to become a statewide resource for employers, employees and job seekers. |
| PAP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spanish Training Curriculum including 6 training modules in 9 sessions, and follow-up sessions to parents who completed program. Plan to expand to include parents as trainers for future programs. • Partnership with Greater Hartford Transit District and Kennedy Center to be presenters for the transportation module of the training. |
| WKP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three local high schools continue to have access to KeyTrain®, transition training program and assessment tool with 3-year license purchased through pilot grant. • Distribute updated transportation resource materials including: (1) revised “Getting There” Pocket guide (1000 pieces); (2) revised “Getting There” folder for transportation needs of people with disabilities to get to employers and schools to be distributed by transition specialists. Getting There materials are distributed at job fairs, school visits, community resource visits, etc. The resource is also available online at www.peopletojobs.org. |
| NH | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth@Work continues implementing new process for youth applications and asks about disability and need for accommodation. City of New Haven continues relationship with Youth@Work program to support inclusion of youth with disabilities and planning for any needed |

| | |
|-----|---|
| | <p>accommodations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship between Wilbur-Cross High School and Kennedy Center continues with student transportation trainings provided as needed. |
| WFA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced resources and tools for job developers to support people with disabilities including: (1) Questionnaire to identify if any disability or accommodation needs; (2) Ability self-assessment tools; (3) Vocational Assessment tool for clients. Provide individualized Transportation Plan designed to assess client transportation and training needs; continue to distribute Getting on Board transportation resource via the website. |

The local initiatives also made a big difference. Because of NEAT Market Place, employers now have tool kits they can let employers borrow, and because of the New Haven pilot, more employers now know what their rights and obligations are. [Key informant]

New Statewide Transportation Resources

Accessible and affordable transportation has been a persistent barrier for people with disabilities in CT. While there have been a few transit infrastructure changes, there are still more options needed to fill the gaps in service.

- CTTTransit modified bus service to accommodate Walgreens Training Center employees so they could utilize public transit to get to work. Currently, there are approximately 10 round-trips offered from Walgreens in Windsor to downtown Hartford with about 60 passengers riding during a normal weekday. This service did not eliminate service for anyone and accommodated Walgreens at little cost.
- Funded by C-A, a web based Trip Planner was developed and implemented by CTTTransit in collaboration with DOT. It is Section 508 compliant and accessible online (www.cttransit.com) for a variety of different users, including people with disabilities, to view in multiple formats.
- C-A developed and launched a Transportation Calculator on its website to help consumers compare the price of using public transportation with purchasing/driving their own car.
- Five *Getting on Board* accessible transportation guides were developed and posted on the C-A website. The guides are region-specific and provide commuters with transit information.
- A transportation guide for people with disabilities was developed and posted on the C-A website as a resource for public transportation options.

A significant infrastructure change was C-A's work with DOT to improve transportation options so people with disabilities had more choices in ways they could get to work. [Key informant]

The information provided in the Trip Planner goes beyond the bus schedules and provides detailed information on how to make the trip and whether or not the trip can be made in the time frame that you want to make it. The system removes the fear of using a system a person is unfamiliar with. [Key informant]

Barriers to Infrastructure Change

During the infrastructure evaluation, key informants were asked to underscore some of the barriers that may be getting in the way of infrastructure changes that affect the employment of people with disabilities. In past waves of interview through 2009 most barriers were related to the economy, attitudes, policies/procedures/regulations, deficiency in services, lack of transportation, lack of sharing or communication between agencies, or lack of relationships or partnerships. To reduce redundancy in reporting during 2010 and 2011, key informants were asked to report only on *new significant* barriers. Some of these barriers are listed below and are organized by type of barrier.

Economy

- Difficulty in state systems with distributing federal funds due to concerns about current spending within the state.
- Concern about what will happen to the ties with other agencies when grant funding ends. Will agencies be interested enough to continue with interagency cooperation? Will there continue to be communications to the community? How will BRS manage a C-A TAC without additional funds?
- Need to build or designate more funds for supportive housing to reduce the waitlist for placements; used to have more monies designated for building and operations for supportive housing, but that was taken away in the last year's budget.

Attitudes/biases/fears/lack of awareness

- Fear of C-A ending and concern about continuing relationships with other agencies after the Steering Committee is no longer available to guide the project.
- Some clients are unable to work full time due to their disability and lack of flexibility in schedules at some work sites makes it difficult for them to find work.
- Attitudes with parents, providers, and case managers are slow to change regarding full time work for people with disabilities.
- Due to a more recent focus on academic rigor, there has been less emphasis in transition services on broadening the concept of employment and helping students see the importance of employment goals or going to college.

Policies/procedures/regulations

- The consolidation of BRS and trying to figure out what out what the new structure will look like and how employment services will continue to be delivered.
- Change in the PCA waiver – as of January 2010 waiver recipients cannot use the PCA to provide transportation. The PCA typically cannot accompany the client/employee at the workplace and is therefore not a work incentive for people with disabilities.
- Problem with DSS “red tape” and having to wait for multiple higher level approvals before writing proposals and submitting purchase orders when funding is available. As a result some “good ideas” for projects may not be proposed because the timing will take too long.
- Concern about planning to implement projects before funding is approved.
- Ongoing Day Services option is paid more which becomes an incentive to go to day services instead of individualized options.
- Incentives are lacking for providers to be creative and find individual jobs versus group work for consumers.

- Time frame differences between agencies slows processes for clients and their opportunities to find work.

Deficiency in or lack of services

- There is a gap between One-Stop agencies and supportive housing consumers. One-Stops are unsure of how to provide support to consumer group and supportive housing agencies on how to best use One-Stops for their clients.
- Lack of staff in One-Stops to support people with disabilities has been a problem for the past year, especially with the reduction in number of Disability Program Navigators (DPN) available at One-Stops.
- Lack of services for people with disabilities who have trouble communicating and aren't able to access the information needed to select the service options they need.
- Resources are not sufficient for people with less severe mental health issues who are unable to get services through DMHAS.

Deficiency in or lack of transportation

- In October 2011, CT DOT denied the requests of two taxi companies for permits to add 70 wheelchair-accessible cabs to each of their fleets, ruling that the companies had not demonstrated the need for new permits and could instead replace existing vehicles with accessible ones.

Lack of sharing or communication between agencies

- Information from the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) about new tax credit for employers is lacking.
- Lack of infrastructure for information sharing between partner agencies whether job leads or otherwise. There is too much "red tape" and no process in place to allow for greater responsiveness to employers.
- Adversarial interactions between some agencies are preventing infrastructure change and the creation of solutions with positive outcomes for agencies and the employment of people with disabilities.

Lack of relationships/partnerships

- Lack of collaborative relationships between some state agencies result in unnecessary duplication of services and hindering of projects that could benefit the employment of people with disabilities.

Promising Practices and Resources

Promising practices and resources that key informants have encountered hold potential for further infrastructure change related to the employment of people with disabilities. To reduce redundancy in reporting during 2010 and 2011, key informants were asked to report only on *new promising practices and resources*. Promising practices and resources are listed below.

Promising practices

- BESB paid internship model.
- HomeWORK met its outcomes and goals with 6 months left; key to success was the assistance and networking across providers and agencies and helping to bridge gaps and communicate supportive housing issues.

- Travelers is a model employer who is committed to hiring people with disabilities. They are also using the KeyTrain® program to do job profiling to help employers get a better idea of the qualifications necessary for a job.
- The Purple Heart Foundation, Disabled American Veterans, and others participated in fundraising to rehabilitate facilities across from the Rocky Hill Veteran's Home for transition housing for veterans who are homeless. They donated time and money as did Bob's and other retail organizations for furniture, bedding, and household appliances.
- The Metro Taxi (www.metrotaxi.ct.com/) is a locally-based contributor to CT's economic development and currently operates 161 cabs in 16 towns and cities. In addition to other services, Metro Taxi provides on-demand, 24/7 transportation to persons with disabilities. Their wheelchair-accessible transportation is offered through Metro Access (www.metrotaxi.ct.com/metroaccess/index.htm), an affiliate company of Metro Taxi. Metro Taxi was the first taxi company in CT to offer universal access, equal transportation and equal fare and was instrumental in getting legislation passed in October 2009 that permitted wheel-chair accessible taxicabs in CT.
- MetLife participated in Disability Mentoring Day and developed extended mentoring relationships with mentees.

Resources

- MED-Connect, formerly known as Medicaid for the Employed Disabled, provides medical assistance to employed individuals with disabilities. Total income from work and other benefits must be below \$75,000 per year. In general an eligible person with a disability, who is employed or becomes employed, can qualify for MED-Connect without the use of spenddown while earning more income than is allowed under other Medicaid coverage groups. A C-A brochure on MED-Connect can be downloaded from http://www.connect-ability.com/media/pdf/MED_Connect_final.pdf
- BRS is developing a financial education distance learning module for people with disabilities for the Assets for Independence (AFI) website and has been asked by the BRS technical assistance team through the Lewin Group, who are grantees under AFI, if they could use the BRS module on the national website. The module will have work incentives with the financial piece and no one else is doing it. AFI enables community-based nonprofits and government agencies to implement and demonstrate an assets-based approach for giving low-income families a hand up out of poverty. AFI project families use their IDA savings and the matching funds to achieve any of three objectives: acquiring a first home; capitalizing a small business; or enrolling in postsecondary education or training.
- A HomeWORK video prepared through C-A is used for outreach and on CSH and C-A websites.
- TBTL has an online job portal (<http://www.thinkbeyondthelabel.com/Job-Board/Job-Board.aspx>) in their website with sections for consumers and employers. The portal connects job seekers with disabilities to employers actively looking to hire them. This new job-search engine gives people looking for employment opportunities free access to approximately 1 million job postings from more than 90,000 screened employers in the private and public sectors.
- Alliance for Full Participation (AFP) (<http://www.allianceforfullparticipation.org/about-afp-2>), a national movement formed to create a better and more fulfilling quality of life for people with developmental disabilities, includes 28 different advocacy groups.

Future Directions

During the final interview for the evaluation, key informants were asked what they believe still needs to be accomplished in CT to strengthen the employment structure of people with disabilities. Key informant responses are organized around the following themes: Disability awareness and outreach; employer awareness and outreach; interagency collaboration; employment opportunities for consumers; youth and their families; transportation; policy and state level infrastructure changes, and the economy.

Disability awareness and outreach

The majority of responses focused on the importance of disability awareness and outreach and the need for this to continue. Respondents expressed concern that if the message about employment and people with disabilities doesn't continue, what was accomplished during the grant may be lost.

The marketing needs to continue. If that stops then that awareness will not expand but probably contract. People need to be reminded. It's very easy for people to forget if they don't keep seeing and hearing this and if it's not in front of them. We don't want to lose ground.

We need to continue the message. We need to do more advertising in the daytime and do more outreach to people. We need to share more success stories. If it stops, people will just forget about the competitive employment of people with disabilities. We need to keep people together, keep the collaboration going for the future.

Don't want that hard work to go down the drain – need to stay on top of things and keep that message out there. The TA Center and website are still available---so we need to stay on top of what's been done - stay committed to delivering the message – it will be embedded into state agencies we've worked with (DSS, DMHAS, DOL, DDS).

Respondents stated that disability awareness information still needs to be shared with families, consumers, professionals, different ethnic groups, and those at the state level.

There's still a huge need to share information with all constituents (i.e., parents, consumers and professionals). There was minimal outreach to parents and families in this project because we were looking at more of an adult population, but people with disabilities often stay more closely connected to family members for support so the families and caregivers need to be educated.

Still need to work with families to re-educate them regarding "employment first" then benefits.

We need to continue to develop more of an expectation that people with disabilities can and should work. The message has been out there for so long that, "Poor baby, you're disabled you should stay home," that it's really hard to break that culture for some people. Awareness must increase within the health care community that disability and employment are compatible and in fact desirable components in a person's life.

There needs to be more outreach to the Spanish speaking populations and people who sign. The commercials for these populations could be on the back of a city bus to help spread the word.

When we think about new initiatives, we need to talk about disability and the support businesses can get as part of the package through C-A. It needs to be built in to the statewide awareness. It needs to get back on the radar screen, kept there, and then make sure we're all moving in the same direction.

Have to build on our governor's interests and help him understand that the topic of people with disabilities has to be on the table of every commission and area he's focusing on, such as the economic division and higher education business entities, because it's still not happening.

Training was viewed as a crucial part of disability awareness that should not be overlooked, especially for consumers with disabilities.

We need to go well beyond web based tools and public relations campaigns. The C-A website is great, but many people need hands on help by trained professionals who can work with people seeking a job and employers in a very hands-on way. Had we not done training on the website it wouldn't have been as effective a tool. You have to get people engaged and training is one way to do it so that they can use the resources we have.

Employer awareness and outreach

Key informants recognize the lack of disability awareness that still exists and the need to continue educating employers about the value of diversity in the workforce.

As I still speak to employers and talk to individual employees in private industry there's still a lack of awareness for the ability piece and that people with disabilities still can't do stuff. There's a lack of creative thinking in terms of employers having one more pool of people that can actually work, want to work, and are educated to work. It's really a two-sided issue about what people want to do and putting the ownership on employers instead of the person with a disability to actually get those skills. If they want to work, what are the skills being looked for? The most crucial thing for the success of having people with disabilities get employment is being able to match a skill set with jobs. The skill set needs to be evaluated, and the resume needs to be kept up to date for the kinds of jobs people want.

We need to expose employers to more success stories and I'm not sure how we can do that, but anecdotally actually seeing a person with a disability doing a job that someone might not have considered that someone with a disability could do for no other reason that they just never thought of it – those success stories have been helpful in making that connection. I'd like more opportunity or another way to do that.

We have to keep the ball rolling with the employers. It's taken us 5 years to break down barriers and start collaborations and it's a shame that now we have the train on the right track that we can't fuel it a little more to keep it going. We have made a lot of positive progress, but there's a long way to go. A lot of employers haven't had the benefit of the knowledge that's available about what a good workforce is available to them.

Need employment consultants who understand the needs of businesses. It would be great if they understood the stresses of running a business and bringing qualified people to the table in making a match. Need people who act less like a consultant and more like hiring managers so that placements are seen as a stronger fit. They're getting there but they need some help.

We still need to eliminate some of the myths related to employing people with disabilities. For example, the absentee rate is greater, which is not true, or that a lot of money would need to be spent to accommodate a person with a disability, which is often not true. There are tax incentives that are available to employers who employ people with disabilities so if they do need to make changes to their structure they can find out how to make that a tax incentive. So an effort to eliminate those myths would strengthen the employment structure in general.

Outreach to develop more ongoing partnerships with businesses is necessary in developing the employment infrastructure for people with disabilities.

One school system had a transition specialist that had established a relationship with a Chamber of Commerce. Over time, she got to know people and relationships grew. When Disability Mentoring Day came, she went to the Commerce and said, "Here's a wonderful opportunity." There was a natural next step that the Chamber wanted to support the high school in an employment setting. If successful Disability Mentoring Day experiences are to be duplicated, we need to think about what needs to be done to promote natural business connections. In this case the schools reached out to the businesses and it made a difference and this is what needs to happen more globally – ongoing partnerships.

Interagency collaboration

Key informants recognize the positive outcomes of interagency collaboration and underscore the importance of addressing barriers so that partnerships can continue to be productive.

The continued collaboration and open table discussions initiated by C-A are useful in encouraging interagency communication - sharing ideas what works and doesn't work. Keeping open communication is necessary to continue encouraging the employment of people with disabilities.

Continue to work on relationships with state agencies and employers. All of the state agencies use different platforms for staff trainings and disseminate information differently. If we could all get on one training system it would make a huge difference because there is no reason why we shouldn't be able to use some of these staff trainings and supports across systems. Each agency has built a little fiefdom and has moved forward with that and it doesn't really make sense that we couldn't share more of that collectively without having to charge each and without trying to figure out how to move it to a different computer platform. It's very hard at this point to fully collaborate and share resources that would make a difference. For example, we do trainings around sensitivity with behavioral health disorders and yet while staff at different agencies would benefit from the training, we can't give that to them without having funding set aside. It's not helpful for the state.

Many of us see the same clients. Not only do we make our own lives miserable by not being able to share trainings as evidenced by getting Distance Training up and running, but we

also make our clients miserable and put them through the same hoops in different agencies – it's a real waste of resources within the state.

We need better cooperation between agencies to provide what people need (such as, easier transition between programs, better access to employers for training within their facilities). Part of the tool kit should be someone who can do presentations and training for various employers when they are trying to change the workforce or their organization so people get that awareness and understanding.

We need better collaboration with DOL and MH services/providers.

C-A has the information for people with disabilities all on one site. The challenge now for infrastructure, for the local and state agencies, is to work in a more coordinated, collaborated effort. C-A gave one way over the life of a grant how this could happen, but people with disabilities need a smooth transition to higher education or work and we need to work to make it a more seamless process.

Employment opportunities for consumers

Key informants identified gaps in the infrastructure including the need for more employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Need to create jobs and carve-outs, and promote self-employment to provide opportunities.

SS gives us very little funding to encourage people to work. As money shrinks, it causes problems within the benefits counseling projects to be able to provide the information people need to feel safer about working. If people don't want to work all the encouragement for employers isn't going to help if people don't want to work. There needs to be more full time good jobs available for people with disabilities. Many of the jobs are part time, nothing kinds of jobs, and people are never going to better themselves significantly financially if there isn't a real career opportunity available. What we're seeing is that if there's a career opportunity, many people will go off benefits – they'll risk it for something good versus a minimum wage job where they won't be any better off or worse off. So how do you develop jobs that are career opportunities versus just little poorly paying non-meaningful? We're doing some job development with some of the special projects with places like Lowes, but we need to do more.

A significant accomplishment would be having the final touch on the C-A website where we can share job leads and start to come together as a single point of contact. It may never get there, but to get as close as possible to job sharing, being on the same page, and partnering more so than getting in each other's way would be great.

Youth and their families

Respondents suggested a need for greater focus on youth and their families as well as increased education in life skills to better prepare students in transition.

I would like to see more outreach to the youth because I think C-A missed that a little.

Need to have agencies and public schools connect the dots. ... the agencies and schools indoctrinate family that the client will go to an agency but not on skill development, and go to

supportive group work but forget about life skills. Need to have schools teach students life skills and employment skills.

Transportation

While some transportation resources have been provided in the last several years, key informants recognize that challenges in providing accessible, affordable transportation are an ongoing problem that needs to be addressed.

We don't have enough funds to provide adequate transportation for people with disabilities. There have been improvements with the Google Transit software, but much more needs to be done.

Need to continue to reduce the transportation barriers and increase opportunities for telecommuting.

Policy and state level infrastructure changes

Barriers to employment existing at the state and federal level were noted, and key informants suggest the need to develop a plan to address these in the future.

The structure of the SS Disability system is an ongoing barrier that discourages people from working, especially at the federal level. Government continues to provide a disincentive to working. CT is doing better, but needs to continue making it more favorable for people with disabilities to work.

Still need to have a plan at the state level for how we're going to strengthen the employment structure for people with disabilities.

Economy

The current economic environment and ongoing discrimination toward people with disabilities were recognized as part of the problem in the high unemployment rate of people with disabilities.

We need a stronger economy that will support employment for people who are marginalized in the best of times and ignored in the hard times.

V. Conclusions

Administered by CMS, the MIG program provided funding for the development of infrastructure necessary to promote the competitive employment of individuals with disabilities and reduce the barriers they face in the process of seeking and maintaining employment. Given the current economic climate, these objectives have become increasingly relevant to stakeholders and job seekers with disabilities. While key respondents indicate there is still work to be done, the data collected during 14 waves of infrastructure change interviews in CT demonstrate that the MIG achieved some success in both of its primary goals.

The most significant infrastructure change was the development of a sustainable TAC. This center is CT's primary source of information and a single point of entry to inform people about

employment issues and people with disabilities and has been paramount in educating and providing outreach to people throughout the state. Brand recognition through the marketing campaign was also key in creating a greater awareness of the ability of people with disabilities in the workplace.

In addition, C-A provided a common system in which state agencies, service providers, and businesses were brought together and contributed to greater interagency collaboration through increased communications and networking. This resulted in an important paradigm shift in agency philosophies and attitudes related to the employment of people with disabilities and fostered interagency collaboration as well as system changes within many state agencies.

A major focus of C-A is the “Youth in Transition” initiative, which aims to help students with disabilities transition from secondary education to additional education or employment. During the grant, a number of partnerships provided opportunities for students to prepare for their future including mentoring, internships, informational interviews, and job shadowing. These collaborations have not only benefitted students but have also increased opportunities for agencies to communicate and better identify supports and services to help students transition more seamlessly.

C-A developed relationships with numerous employers and raised their awareness regarding the ability of people with disabilities through the Model Employer program and the Employment Summit. In an effort to help employers attract and retain employees with disabilities, C-A provided them with technical assistance including opportunities for mentoring and on-the-job training. The newly-formed BRS Employment Division has been providing quality outreach services to employers including pre-screened applicants, working interviews, and information about tax incentives. Other state agencies have also engaged employers and recruited employers who are “disability-friendly.”

The statewide C-A Strategic Planning LLP Initiative was created to develop and implement innovative strategic plans locally to produce change, improve access, build broad-based constituency, and increase employment for individuals with disabilities. Funded through C-A, nine organizations implemented several infrastructure changes as a result of the LLP and an impressive 90 percent of these initiatives have been sustained for at least two years after the funding ended.

Transportation provides a vital lifeline for individuals with disabilities to access community life, education, healthcare, and employment allowing them greater independence within their communities. Despite two landmark federal laws (i.e., The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, specifically Sections 503, 504, and 508, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended), transportation is often still not accessible and/or affordable. Although CT has not been able to solve these transportation difficulties, there have been some important advances in its transit infrastructure including the development and implementation of a Trip Planner and the statewide dissemination of accessible transportation guides.

Despite significant changes in CT’s employment infrastructure for people with disabilities, barriers still exist that are getting in the way of infrastructure change. These include ongoing economic issues at the state level and how federal funds are distributed, lack of awareness about people with disabilities at all levels, regulations that impede the planning and implementation of projects that would benefit people with disabilities, deficiencies in services such as are being experienced at the One-Stops and in transportation. While key informants

reported a significant increase in interagency collaboration over the past several years, many still believe there needs to be even greater collaboration and information sharing.

Looking to the future, respondents suggest continued investment in disability awareness and outreach to the general public and the business community. Awareness should focus on where there are gaps including families, the health care community, different ethnic groups, and training in how to use the website as an effective tool. Outreach should concentrate on maintaining existing relationships with employers as well as forging new partnerships. In order to continue experiencing positive outcomes of interagency collaboration, efforts should be made to address the barriers that exist so partnerships can be more productive. There should be a focus on gaps in employment opportunities and transition services in order to provide a better employment climate and increased services for students preparing to enter the workforce.

This project collected data from key informants, those people in the best position to know what infrastructure changes have been made in their particular area of expertise. This evaluation presents a summary of the infrastructure changes reported by key informants and does not include any interpretations or opinions of the evaluators. There are some limitations to the methodological approach used including that people who are in a position to make and/or influence infrastructure changes may be more likely to overstate their importance or impact. In addition, for this project, people with disabilities, family members, employers, and other stakeholders were not interviewed to try and measure whether these changes are as important as key informants stated they were. However, the evaluators did get input through the 2011 Needs Assessments from people with disabilities, employers, and providers on what they perceive their needs are. The outcomes of these three separate assessments can be downloaded from the Research Papers page of the C-A website (http://www.connect-ability.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=131&Itemid=562&lang=en). Together, these evaluative efforts provide a good perspective on what has been accomplished and what remains to be done for the employment of people with disabilities in Connecticut.

VI. References

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IV. Appendices

Appendix A: Acronym Guide

Appendix B: Interviews and Response Rates

Appendix C: Key Informant Questions 2007-2009

Appendix D: Key Informant Questions 2010-2011

Appendix E: Additional Final Interview Questions

Appendix F: Statewide Interagency Collaboration

Appendix G: HomeWORK Project – Infrastructure Changes and Sustainability Plan

Appendix H: Highlights of EPIC I and II

Appendix I: DDS Sustainability Plan

Appendix A: Acronym Guide

Acronym Guide

Acronyms and definitions used in this report are listed below.

| <u>Acronym</u> | <u>Definition</u> |
|----------------|--|
| ACTS | Advancing Connecticut's Transition Services |
| ADRC | Aging and Disability Resource Center |
| AFCAMP | African, Caribbean, and American Parents of Children with Disabilities |
| AFI | Assets for Independence |
| APSE | Association for Persons in Supported Employment |
| ARC NLC | Arc New London County |
| ARRA | American Recovery and Reinvestment Act |
| AT | Assistive Technology |
| BCO | Bristol Community Organization |
| BESB | Board of Education and Services for the Blind |
| BRS | Bureau of Rehabilitation Services |
| CACIL | Connecticut Association of Centers for Independent Living |
| C-A | Connect-Ability |
| CDD | Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities |
| CDHI | Commission on Deaf and Hearing Impaired |
| CMS | Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services |
| Conn-ADE | Connecticut Agency Data Exchange |
| CPAC | Connecticut Parent Advisory Center |
| CREC | Capitol Regional Education Council |
| CRP | Community Rehabilitation Provider |
| CSH | Corporation for Supportive Housing |
| CT | Connecticut |
| CTBLN | Connecticut Business Leadership Network |
| CTDLC | Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium |
| CTTAP | Connecticut Tech Act Project |
| DAC | Disability Advocacy Collaborative |
| DCF | Department of Children and Families |
| DDS | Department of Developmental Services |
| DECD | Department of Economic and Community Development |
| DMHAS | Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services |
| DNEC | Disability Network of Eastern Connecticut |
| DOL | Department of Labor |

| | |
|--------|--|
| DOT | Department of Transportation |
| DPN | Disability Program Navigator |
| DSS | Department of Social Services |
| EPIC | Employment Practice Improvement Collaborative |
| ICI | Institute for Community Inclusion |
| IDA | Individual Development Account |
| IEP | Individualized Education Program |
| LEA | Local Education Agencies |
| LLP | Local Level Pilot |
| MIG | Medicaid Infrastructure Grant |
| MOA | Memorandum of Agreement |
| NCRS | National Career Readiness Certificate |
| NEAT | New England Assistive Technology Center |
| NH | City of New Haven |
| NSTTAC | National Secondary Transition Technical Assistant Center |
| OWC | Office for Workforce Competitiveness |
| PAP | Parents Opening Doors (Padres Abriendo Puertas) |
| PCA | Personal Care Assistance |
| PRAT | Planning and Resource Allocation Teams |
| RESC | Regional Educational Service Centers |
| ROES | Recovery-Oriented Employment Services |
| SOAR | Supplemental Security Insurance/Social Security Disability Income Outreach, Access and Recovery |
| SDE | State Department of Education |
| SERC | State Education Resource Center |
| SCSU | Southern Connecticut State University |
| SS | Social Security |
| TAC | Technical Assistance Center |
| TTW | Ticket to Work |
| UCHC | University of Connecticut Health Center |
| VR | Vocational Rehabilitation |
| WFA | Workforce Alliance |
| WIB | Workforce Investment Board |
| WIPA | Work Incentives Planning and Assistance |
| WISE | Work Incentive Seminars Event |
| WKP | The Workplace |

Appendix B: Interviews and Response Rates*

| Interviewee | # 10 Wave | # 11 Wave | # 12 Wave | 13th Wave | 14th Wave |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 2 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 3 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 4 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 5 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 6 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 7 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 8 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 10 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 11 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 12 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 13 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 14 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | |
| 15 | 10 | | 12 | 13 | |
| 16 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 17 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 18 | | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 19 | | 11 | | | |
| 20 | 10 | | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 21 | | | | | 14 |
| 22 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 23 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 24 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 25 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 26 | 10 | 11 | 12 | | |
| 27 | | 11 | 12 | 13 | |
| 28 | | | | | 14 |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Completed interviews | 23 | 24 | 25 | 24 | 23 |
| Response rate | 82% | 86% | 89% | 86% | 82% |

*gray box indicates incomplete interview

Appendix C: Key Informant Questions 2007-2009

- 1) What positive changes can you document that can be directly attributed to Connect-Ability?
Prompt: Please keep in mind this could include: policy changes, new programs or grants, program changes, information dissemination activities or cross agency collaboration.
 - a) How has Connect-Ability enabled your organization to engage new partners (i.e., businesses)?
 - b) In what ways has Connect-Ability helped your organization develop high-level leadership to support or facilitate the employment of people with disabilities?
 - c) How has Connect-Ability helped your organization bridge gaps between state agencies and meet information needs?
 - d) In what ways has Connect-Ability engaged the community?
 - e) How has Connect-Ability funding helped to change employment dynamics in Connecticut?
 - f) What Connect-Ability project has had the most positive impact on your organization and why?
- 2) What positive changes can you document that may not be attributable to Connect-Ability, but have directly impacted the employment of people with disabilities?
Prompt: Please keep in mind this could include: policy changes, new programs or grants, program changes, information dissemination activities or cross agency collaboration.
- 3) What changes can you document that may have had an adverse impact on the employment of people with disabilities?
Prompt: Please keep in mind this could include: policy changes, new programs or grants, program changes, information dissemination activities or cross agency collaboration.
- 4) What barriers can you document that may be getting in the way of infrastructure changes that would affect the employment of people with disabilities?
Prompt: This could include administrative barriers, delays, and/or union issues.
 - a) What barriers are preventing high-level leadership in organizations from supporting disability employment?
 - b) What barriers are limiting interagency information needs in the state?
- 5) What promising practices, exceptional websites, model employer(s), or other piece of information have you encountered related to the employment of people with disabilities?
- 6) Is there anything else you'd like to add that hasn't been covered and is related to the employment of people with disabilities?

Key informants were also invited to respond to any of the following additional questions.

- 1) What novel and effective approaches have been successful in developing mutually beneficial partnerships for businesses and people with disabilities?
- 2) What factors have been crucial in facilitating partnerships with employers?
- 3) How does your program/agency address barriers to developing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities?
- 4) What are the best practices for forging new partnerships and expanding outreach to employers?
- 5) What steps are needed to enhance the existing infrastructure to adequately support the employment of people with disabilities?
- 6) What are the needs of employers in urban or rural areas, and how can these needs be addressed to enhance opportunities for people with disabilities?
- 7) How can we identify existing infrastructure and leverage the infrastructure to improve the Connect-Ability project?

Appendix D: Key Informant Questions 2010-2011

- 1) What positive changes can you document that can be directly attributed to Connect-Ability?
Prompt: Please keep in mind this could include: policy changes, new programs or grants, program changes, information dissemination activities or cross agency collaboration.
 - a) How has Connect-Ability enabled your organization to engage new partners (i.e., businesses)?
 - b) How has Connect-Ability helped your organization bridge gaps between state agencies and meet information needs?
 - c) What Connect-Ability project has had the most positive impact on your organization and why?
- 2) What positive changes can you document that may not be attributable to Connect-Ability, but have directly impacted the employment of people with disabilities?
Prompt: Please keep in mind this could include: policy changes, new programs or grants, program changes, information dissemination activities or cross agency collaboration.
- 3) What changes can you document that may have had an adverse impact on the employment of people with disabilities?
Prompt: Please keep in mind this could include: policy changes, new programs or grants, program changes, information dissemination activities or cross agency collaboration.
- 4) What *new significant* barriers can you document that may be getting in the way of infrastructure changes that would affect the employment of people with disabilities?
Prompt: This could include administrative barriers, delays, and/or union issues.
 - a) Any *new significant* barriers that are preventing high-level leadership in organizations from supporting disability employment.
 - b) Any *new significant* barriers that are limiting interagency information needs in the state.
- 5) What *new significant* promising practices, exceptional websites, model employer(s), or other piece of information have you encountered related to the employment of people with disabilities?
- 6) Is there anything else you'd like to add that hasn't been covered and is related to the employment of people with disabilities?

Appendix E: Additional Final Interview Questions

1. Looking back over the last 4 years, in what area has Connect-Ability made the most significant infrastructure change to support the competitive employment of people with disabilities?
2. What still needs to be accomplished in CT to strengthen the employment structure for people with disabilities?

Appendix F: Statewide Interagency Collaboration

The list below includes examples of statewide interagency collaboration that were reported to have occurred during the grant and involved infrastructure change. These are organized in the four priority areas of the strategic plan: Stakeholder education, recruitment/employment/promotion, transportation, and youth in transition from school to work.

Stakeholder Education

- The creation of partnerships with various state agencies (i.e., DSS, DDS, DMHAS, DOL, DMHAS) under the premier TAC is a significant infrastructure change that will sustain C-A over time.
- BRS Aging Services Division is changing its infrastructure through MIG by the updating of promotional materials for the Aging and Disability Resource Center. New material includes a focus on employment.
- BRS and the Social Work Division of DSS are focusing on the training of social workers in conjunction with BRS counselors for better communication between the two divisions of DDS including the updating of waiver brochures.
- BRS entered into a MOA with DDS to advance efforts to change the infrastructure of employment for people with disabilities by focusing on four tasks: 1) Conduct an employment marketing campaign to increase the number of DDS consumers being employed in the State of CT, 2) Develop an Individual Plan (IP) Buddy Curriculum & Process, 3) Develop an Employment Idol Video II, and 4) Increase access to employment information for consumers with developmental disabilities in partnership with C-A (i.e., develop content for fact sheets to describe the employment supports and resources available to job seekers with developmental disabilities).
- C-A partnered with BRS, BESB, SDE, DMHAS and did outreach for and promoted Prep Rallies and Hiring Events, which provided resources to help people with disabilities prepare for career fairs and employment.
- C-A partnered with BRS to develop and post the SmartGuide: Answers in Human Services on its website and the BRS website to provide useful connections to help people with disabilities with issues around employment, independent living, support services, and benefits.
- C-A has been instrumental in helping BESB increase agency training of CRPs to make them more aware of the blindness and sensitivity training they offer and to help them further identify client needs. As a result, workgroups were formed to address specific topics (e.g., on the job training and how to provide consistent training across agencies, how to create a fast track for people with disabilities seeking employment, and how to market and package materials for employers).
- C-A and DSS collaborated on a brochure called, Medicaid for the Employed Disabled (MED-Connect). The brochure is posted on the DSS website. A link to DSS and the brochure is included on the C-A website. Approximately 5,000 CT residents currently are taking advantage of this program, which allows employed persons with disabilities to access services not covered by most employer-sponsored plans.
- C-A has partnered with other state agencies and provided an opportunity for agencies to broaden viewpoints, share knowledge and create synergistic overlaps and an "interweaving of agencies."

- Examples of agencies/services that overlap and work together partially because of C-A include: WKP (a LLP initiative) and One-Stops; TTW activity overlaps with CSH through board member involvement.
- C-A media campaigns are valuable because they use people with disabilities as spokespeople and challenge the stereotypes that people (i.e., employers, family, affected persons) have. As a result of collaborating with C-A and following its example, in its open house kick-off event the CSH used a person's own experience to demonstrate a point.
- C-A participated in three kick-off events for the HomeWORK project, a two-year MIG-funded project and collaboration between BRS, DMHAS, and the CSH, to build an innovative service infrastructure that improves employment outcomes for residents of supportive housing with behavioral disorders. The HomeWORK Project is a unique approach to helping supportive housing tenants enter the workforce (or advance in their employment), improve their earnings, and/or strengthen their education and training. C-A has enabled DMHAS to take a big step forward in talking about housing and employment as significant aspects of recovery. This hasn't happened in the DMHAS system before. C-A has encouraged agencies, like DMHAS, to collaborate about commonalities rather than differences.
- C-A engaged new partners by inviting other stakeholders (i.e., Ability Beyond Disability, the Kennedy Center, DOT, DAC, and the CDD) to attend and participate in its bi-monthly meetings.
- C-A hired a project manager through UCHC for the Data Interoperability Project (also known as Conn-ADE). Interoperability allows data to be used in applications regardless of origin and to be aggregated and compared across location and time. Goals of this data system initiative include leading the creation of a plan to share data among multiple state agencies, planning for data platform solutions, and improving program effectiveness.
- The C-A partnership with 2-1-1 Infoline, CT's free information and referral service, has been positive and helps increase awareness of C-A's resources.
- C-A joined nearly 30 other MIG states to promote Think Beyond the Label, a national media campaign directed toward employers to raise awareness about hiring people with disabilities. The campaign is enhancing systems that provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- DDS developed four Employment Idol videos in partnership with C-A and CT People First to highlight and promote the employment of people with disabilities and to demonstrate that people with disabilities want to work, are great employees, and when provided the opportunity can contribute to the workforce in CT. The videos showcase the employment success stories of a select group individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- To meet the goal of developing agency action plans with DSS, DMHAS, DDS, and BESB, C-A identified and generated a process for approaching other agencies called Development of Agency Action Plans. Elements of the work plan include: articulate the purpose, create best practices, develop agency-specific action plans (e.g., establish time frames, identify agency vision/goals, identify ongoing linkages, develop feedback loop), develop process maps for existing hiring process, and adapt existing materials for state agencies.

Recruitment, employment, and promotion

- BRS, BESB, and DOL received ARRA funds allocated for vocational rehabilitation and employment services. This joint collaboration will enable BRS, BESB and DOL to expand employment services to underserved and un-served populations, students transitioning from school to work, and improve overall vocational rehabilitation services. One goal of the project is to educate employers who have misconstrued beliefs regarding the advantages of hiring people with disabilities.
- New relationships exist between BRS and the Department of Administrative Services for the state to consider on-the-job training with employer consultants.
- BRS invited BESB regional counselors to participate in its regional staff meetings for at least part of the meetings on a monthly basis. This practice encourages the exchange of joint information and new ideas related to job outreach and connections with employers.
- The statewide C-A Strategic Planning LLP Initiative involving nine pilots developed and implemented innovative one-year strategic plans locally to bring about change, improve access, and build broad-based constituency in the areas of employment, transportation, and transition. Some examples of collaboration are noted below:
 - CACIL developed relationships with a local provider agency (DNEC) and other social services agencies and job developers (i.e., BRS, BESB, DPNs) evidenced by willingness and trust to work together to find suitable employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
 - NEAT developed new relationships with the Veterans Association, CTBLN, DOL (CT Works, JobCorps), and a few local businesses as a result of providing services with its lending library, and assistance with AT acquisition and training.
 - WFA created two new Ability Works centers focused on promoting services for people with disabilities in One-Stops, including trained staff and visible AT resources (i.e., text readers, software, books videos, other technology).
 - BCO developed stronger relationships with Chamber of Commerce and local nonprofit and private provider agencies.
 - NH developed a new relationship between schools and SCSU Adaptive Technology lab.
- A partnership between C-A and CT's ADRCs is providing information on employment through the dissemination of brochures to ADRC clients, direct referral to Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling services administered by the BRS, and Benefits Counseling services available through C-A's partners in the WIPA program.
- Collaboration between C-A and the BRS Employment Division resulted in the creation of new marketing materials for an On-the-Job Training video that has been distributed to employers, Community Rehabilitation Providers and consumers.
- C-A is working in partnership with DDS and DMHAS in support of their efforts to infuse employment in everyday practices with case managers.
- The HomeWORK project, a collaboration between C-A and DMHAS, established a strong integrated career development infrastructure that leverages the employment services and supports of numerous agencies. The project, which ended in June 2010, assisted supportive housing tenants in obtaining and retaining employment with the ultimate goal of moving off SS benefits. It developed peer networks that are continuing to provide recovery education and support opportunities. Achievements for the DMHAS HomeWORK project include:

- securing an expanded (and new for CT) rent-based work incentive program, the Earned Income Disregard, for eligible recipients of State Rental Assistance Program rental subsidies in partnership with the DSS;
- developing and implementing a sustainable and replicable model of linking supportive housing tenants with newly-available training and job placement resources (through the Weatherization Program), and linking participants to employment opportunities in career path job, and
- focusing on job creation, HomeWORK staff have been active in the facilitating supportive housing providers to become Employment Networks (EN) through TTW
- A MOA between C-A and DMHAS to support EPIC is helping consumers attain meaningful employment by building improved systems to train providers and stakeholders participating in their care. Current employment initiatives and infrastructure changes in the DMHAS system that are resulting from EPIC with a focus on cross-project and cross-agency collaboration include:
 - DMHAS Mental Health Employment Initiative: the goal for these activities is to build staff capacity within the DMHAS system to provide effective employment services while extending BRS-DMHAS collaborative approaches beyond the three embedded BRS counselors.
 - DMHAS Recovery-Oriented Employment System (ROES): the goal of these activities is to increase DMHAS staff capacity and awareness of cross-agency resources regarding employment with an emphasis on networking with employers. Linkage strategies with the DOL will be facilitated and recovery-relevant resources will be created for the C-A website.
 - Specialized Training for BRS Counselors: the goal of these activities is to increase BRS staff capacity to serve persons with psychiatric disorders and raise awareness of evidence-based supported employment strategies to more effectively link with DMHAS employment services.
 - DSS C-A Program: the goal of these activities is to increase DMHAS consumers' and providers' usage of the C-A TAC and website as well as increasing their interface with the local level pilots.
 - DMHAS Peer Support Staff: the goal of these activities is to increase the awareness of mental health and addictions peer staff of employment resources as well as link peers with MIG partner agency employment resources.
 - DMHAS Women's Services: the goal of these activities is to build staff capacity on employment strategies and resources among women's service programs, assisting them to tap services beyond DMHAS.
 - CT DOL, WIBs, and other MIG Partner Agencies: the goal of these activities is to increase awareness of resources and the dynamics of recovery among MIG partner agency staff to better coordinate services for persons in recovery and improve employment outcomes.
 - Criminal Justice Clients: the goal of these activities is to promote collaboration between DMHAS providers, other MIG partner agencies and the criminal justice system to increase employment outcomes for persons with criminal justice involvement.
- CT was one of three states selected to participate in the National Technical Assistance and Research Leadership Center grant that C-A helped write. The initiative involves the State Leaders Innovation Institute, which is part of a national effort to improve

employment for people with disabilities by connecting state workforce policies to state and local economic growth and development goals. Throughout participation in the 15-month State Leaders Institute, teams of state policymakers from CT, Maryland, and Minnesota will receive specialized technical assistance, leadership support, and other resources as they work to develop innovative approaches to improve employment for people with disabilities. All three states have similar goals in the pilot including looking at the state as model employer, exploring employer toolkits in other states, and collaborating to avoid duplicating efforts. As it participates in this initiative, the CT team has developed stronger relationships between state agencies particularly between BRS and BESB, and BESB marketing materials reflect its partnership with C-A.

- DDS Employment Subcommittee of the Provider Council is expanding to include the CTBLN and C-A staff. The Subcommittee is currently working on initial activities in developing a fact sheet for providers. Other activities include working on disability employment mentoring, job fairs, and connecting to the national employment month and the APSE.
- DMHAS and BRS are linking the employment services of both agencies to achieve improved outcomes for persons with behavioral health disorders. As part of this linkage, a DMHAS Mental Health Employment Coordinator occupies a shared position with BRS. In her liaison position she works with staff of agencies, transferring resources and best practices between the two agencies, promoting local collaboration, organizing staff training and troubleshooting systemic problems that arise. Two BRS counselors are co-located in DMHAS LMHAs (Greater Bridgeport Community Mental Health Center and CT Mental Health Center). With clinical treatment teams, including DMHAS employment staff, the BRS counselors coordinate BRS services and resources with those of the DMHAS system. Both agencies report that this partnership is resulting in improved employment outcomes and a broader range of services for people with mental illness.

Transportation

- C-A helped two local level pilots with their application for New Freedom Initiative funding for transportation. New Haven applied for funding to purchase a wheelchair accessible taxi, and ARC applied for funds to hire a mobility manager to provide information and services regarding transportation.
- LLPs have brought additional partners and viewpoints to DOT's coordinated planning process to know how to use federal transit funds designated for seniors, low income people and people with disabilities.
- C-A enabled DOT to have more face-to-face interaction with a lot of different agencies and to gain information more quickly about whether rear access or side access in a taxi is better. Without the communication that occurred, this decision would have taken longer and been more difficult to make.
- As a result of C-A's advocacy for accessible taxis, the City of New Haven's Department of Persons with Disabilities and Metro Taxi (West Haven) independently purchased one wheel chair accessible taxi. Recently passed state legislation permits this type of wheelchair accessible taxi and around the clock service for eligible people.
- BRS entered into a MOA with CTTransit to advance efforts to change the infrastructure of employment for people with disabilities by focusing on the development of a new software module for web-based trip planning. Trapeze Info will assist people with disabilities who use ADA paratransit transportation. The planner will allow its computerized schedule information data base to be accessed on-line for the purpose of

trip planning. Since very little transit coordination is currently done in CT, coordination with fixed-route bus service can make paratransit service more efficient. The Trip Planner can be accessed on the CTTtransit website and on the C-A and DOT websites.

Youth in Transition

- BRS Transition Committee put a new initiative in place and revised the content and appearance of School to Work brochures that were developed earlier to reflect the partnership BRS has with C-A. The slight shift in content is toward shared responsibility between the consumer and agency in their move toward employment.
- A collaborative partnership between BRS, SDE, the RESCs (ACES, CES, CREC, EASTCONN, EDUCATION CONNECTION, LEARN), and CPAC, called the Transition Resource Counselor Initiative, is helping identify supports and services available through BRS and other adult service agencies (DMHAS, DDS, BESB, and DPH). Each RESC and SERC has hired one Transition Counselor to support the initiative. The counselors collaborate with all the initiative partners to identify supports and services available to youth with disabilities through BRS and other adult service agencies (i.e., DMHAS, DDS, BESB, and DPH). Goals of the initiative include:
 - developing effective working partnerships between BRS and the LEAs
 - coordinating effective and efficient services for students and families regarding employment
 - increasing RESCs/SERC's capacity to work collaboratively with BRS and other state and local adult service agencies, and
 - developing RESCs/SERC's sustainability plans to continue the systems
- BRS worked with DMHAS and BESB to provide stronger linkages with urban school systems and Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs) and are building employment opportunities for people with disabilities. For one job description, three people that were referred to the job had mental illness; this is utilizing the concept of opening the door to opportunity.
- Collaboration between BRS and SCSU has resulted in workshops that are part of an eight module program that is being presented to students who have disabilities each semester for eight semesters (theoretically to be completed within four years). A major focus of the modules is on the importance of employment and how to prepare for it.
- Through C-A and partnerships with state agencies, the CT Community Rehabilitation Provider Searchable Database for youth in transition and adults with disabilities was developed. The database assists people in finding independent living and workforce supports and services and can be accessed on the C-A and BRS websites.
- C-A partnered with CT school systems to fund the ACTS project – this provides information on transition and serves as a catalyst to improve CT's transition services.
- C-A enabled BRS to engage new partners through the inclusive mentoring training program with the Governor's Prevention Partnership and Partners for Youth with Disabilities (the trainers). This model includes introductory and advanced training. Introductory training provides basic information about disability. Participants complete a self-assessment on how inclusive their programs are and develop an action plan. Advanced training focuses on specific disabilities and includes young adults with specific disabilities in their mentoring programs. Attendees are administrative program staff that develop and run programs for schools, workforce boards, or any other community-based mentoring programs. Many good things have resulted from the trainings, for example,

the Governor's Prevention Partnership has decided to include disability as part of its diversity training. This wasn't part of their demographics before. DCF participated in the program in the fall and is now providing training to its own mentoring contractors.

- C-A and BRS expanded Professional Development Training on how to use the C-A website to DMHAS.
- The School to Transition Workgroup members have been pivotal in their agencies to make things happen so when C-A wants to do training in an agency, the increased networking capability helps people get in touch quickly.
- SDE in collaboration with SERC developed professional training to demonstrate how the C-A website would be used in school curriculum.
- SERC is offering a training entitled, Secondary Transition Planning: Making the IEP a Living Document. The unusual piece about it is that they are using the BRS Transition Toolkit (on the BRS website) as the basis of the training exercise. Until recently, SERC wouldn't even have been aware of the toolkit on the BRS website. This partnership also provides a wonderful opportunity for school personnel to know about the tools used by adult service providers and will help facilitate collaboration because they will be using similar information with students.
- The Young Adult Services project is a collaboration including the Department of Corrections, DOL, DCF, DDS, CT Business and Industry Association, BRS, and DMHAS to use a soft skills curriculum developed by Access Technologies and to get buy-in from multiple agencies across the state. The curriculum will be piloted with DMHAS's young Adult Services population because this population is lacking in connections to jobs.

Appendix G: HomeWORK Project – Infrastructure Changes and Sustainability Plan*

Goal: Help supportive housing tenants enter the workforce or advance in employment, improve their earnings and/or strengthen their education and training

| Objective: Cultural Change | Strategy | Infrastructure Change | Sustainability Efforts/Plan |
|----------------------------|---|--|---|
| Agency Action Plans | Using the service plans to establish supportive housing goals, and then assess progress toward goals in order to identify gaps, then targeting resources and supports where needed: employment staff positions created by supportive housing agencies; supportive housing agencies collect and report on employment-related outcomes. | 42% Employment Specialists on Staff | Agencies are continuing to access funding to support these positions on-going. |
| | | All DMHAS LMHAs and employment providers now have protocols in place to review benefits with all persons expressing an interest in work. | For those interested in the level of work that will affect their benefits, they will be provided with comprehensive benefits counseling such as those provided by the BRS CWIC staff. |
| | | New tools created to assist case managers with | These tools will continue to be updated and posted on C-A & CSH websites. |
| Cross-agency training | One Stop staff knowledgeable about supportive housing agencies and processes for accommodating consumers such as designated work stations. | Facilitated cross-agency collaboration between CT One-Stop Centers and supportive housing staff | Meet n Greets at local CT One-Stop Centers for supportive housing staff and CTWorks staff will continue to engage in cross-agency collaborations. |
| | | Created a separate space for supportive housing tenants to use technology for their employment search | The Hartford and New Britain One-Stop Centers will continue to host the Modern Technology Corners, which offer disabled tenants a quiet area to engage in employment services. |
| | | Added employment goals to the Continuum of Care and 10-year Plan to End Homelessness | The local Continuums of Care, and 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness planning bodies will continue to incorporate employment plans into their |

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| | | | goals around ending homelessness. |
| | | Implemented Earned Income Disregard | A DSS collaboration with the Rental Assistance Program in CT led to the implementation of the Earned Income Disregard, this will continue on after the HomeWORK project. |
| Property Management Curriculum | Partner with a Community College to create a Property Management Career Path Program | Collaborated with Housatonic Community College and created a Property Management Career Path Program | Enhancement of The Property Management Career Path curriculum led to the development of a "for-credit" course available to both supportive housing tenants and community based students in the fall of 2011 and beyond. |
| Supportive housing agencies incorporate employment as key to recovery | Agency mission statements, case manager job descriptions and tenant service plans include employment: Case Managers routinely link tenants with employment resources | 68.4% of supportive housing agencies now incorporate employment into their agency vision or mission statement | Supportive Housing Staff will continue to apply and put into action new agency vision and support employment goals. |
| | | 100% of supportive housing agencies now incorporate employment/education goals in their tenant service plans. | All supportive housing tenants will continue to receive employment education. |
| | | 78.9% of supportive housing agencies will now include employment/educational related tasks in their case managers job descriptions. | All case managers in these agencies will continue to implement employment education tasks. |
| Create collaboration between the CSH and DMHAS to create training geared toward supportive housing tenants | Design training that can be used with residents to address positive impact of work on recovery, etc. | On-line training on employment developed for housing Case Managers | Supportive housing staff will continue to have access to employment related trainings through the C-A and CSH websites. These trainings include the following: (a) Creating a "Work-Ready" Service Plan, (b) Creating a "Work-Ready" Supportive Housing Environment, (c) Making Work, Work for You: Peer to Peer Workshop |

| Objective: Peer Engagement | Strategy | Infrastructure Change | Sustainability Efforts/Plan |
|---|--|--|---|
| Peer Advisory Group | Include representatives from all peer supported service sectors: Re-Entry, NAMI, CARC, CoC Consumer Groups, Advocacy Unlimited, and the Disability Resource Center | Creation of a Peer Advisory Group | The HomeWORK, "The Way to Work" video will remain available through the C-A website. |
| | | | Focus on Recovery - United has committed to holding bi-annual peer driven employment summits, where the peer advisory group will continue and be enhanced. |
| Speaker's Bureau | Create a peer Speaker's Bureau | Created a peer Speaker's Bureau | Peer recruitment through the National Alliance on Mentally Ill (NAMI) and will continue after the project close. |
| Objective: Benefits | Strategy | Infrastructure Change | Sustainability Efforts/Plan |
| Provide Benefits Counseling to Employment Providers | Hire Durational Counselors | Counselors were deemed a crucial part of sustaining the engagement of supportive housing tenants in pursuing employment. They were hired by individual agencies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ All DMHAS LMHAs and employment providers now have protocols in place to review benefits with all persons expressing an interest in work. ~ DMHAS Providers have adopted protocols that use BRS CWIC Benefits Counselors at specific points during a tenant's pathway to work. ~ Written into the project plan of the SOAR Project in New Haven are goals around employment and education. |
| Provide Benefits Counseling to supportive housing tenants | Add supportive housing module to Advocacy Unlimited's Recovery University Peer Support Specialist Course. | Benefits Counseling supportive housing module was added to an existing university course. | A supportive housing module has been added to Advocacy Unlimited's Recovery University Peer Support Specialist Course, and will continue to be offered as on-going curriculum. |
| Provide Benefits Counseling to supportive housing | Infuse benefits counseling into already existing programs such as job clubs, case conferencing and | Benefits Counseling is now infused into clubs and work support programs | ~ Case Conferences have been adopted by supportive housing providers in each region, these groups |

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| tenants | employment work supportive housing at supportive housing agencies | | <p>will continue to meet on a bi-monthly basis.</p> <p>~ Supportive housing agencies have made a commitment to continue to provide job clubs, employment and supportive housing workshops, and job skills groups for supportive housing tenants.</p> <p>~ A Bridgeport supportive housing agency (Alpha Community Services) will continue to include a service to assist tenants who would like to volunteer in the community.</p> |
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*Source – Adapted from C-A HomeWORK Sustainability Plan

Appendix H: Highlights of EPIC I and EPIC II

EPIC I

The EPIC I initiatives include a broad range of training and program dissemination activities.

Pardons Project

This train the trainer model was conducted in all five regions of CT. Trained DMHAS staff trains consumers to know the pardon process and how to complete the application.

Americans with Disabilities Legal Rights Training

Various training activities have occurred statewide to pass on legal knowledge to consumers about employment rights and the Americans with Disabilities Act. After C-A funding ends, DMHAS is committed to continue the trainings through their education and training division.

Women's Services

DMHAS Women's Specialty Program organizations received ongoing training and technical assistance on employment and educational services available statewide. Selected Women's Programs also received training on the web-based KeyTrain® program (see details below).

- During a 12 month time span, DMHAS Woman's Specialty Program Organizations showed a 10% increase in their residential program participants obtaining one or more of the following: General Education Degree, Post-secondary training certificate, or Competitive Employment.

ROES

ROES created recovery relevant resources and increased DMHAS staff capacity and awareness of cross-agency employment resources with an emphasis on networking with employers statewide. Ten CT employers are enlisted in the employer network/coalition and have posted open positions are "recovery ready". A "Train the Trainer" component was developed for the ROES seven-module employment curriculum and at least two trainers per DMHAS region were trained. A regional resource directory pocket-sized handbook was developed, printed, and distributed to consumers seeking jobs.

KeyTrain®

KeyTrain® is a nationally recognized complete interactive training system for career readiness skills, based on ACT's WorkKeys assessment system and the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC). The NCRC is the national standard in certifying workplace skills and allows individuals to demonstrate their level of skill in the most common skills required for success in the workplace. This system is used to assess a consumer's capacity to be trained for a specific job and to determine whether a consumer is ready to return to work by passing a series of skill sets in the areas of math, reading searching for information, and locating information.

- EPIC purchased seven licenses and the program is strategically placed throughout CT.
- In February 2012, the EPIC I employment distance learning curriculum will be posted on the C-A website offering expanded employment courses to consumers that include resume writing and job search skills, what to do with their first paycheck, and how to work with colleagues.

Supervisor Training

The EPIC I program has a component to train supervisors on how to utilize evidence-based practice outcomes to help providers enhance their services.

EPIC II – Distance Learning Component for Young Adults

EPIC II is a distance learning component similar to EPIC I. The curriculum includes soft skills and life skills training (i.e., financial literacy, social networking, and how to work with colleagues). While the curriculum focuses on the young adult population, it is also appropriate for many adults with disabilities. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) and DOL are directly involved in this initiative, with the following state agencies invited to participate: Department of Corrections, Court Support Services Division, Adult Education, DDS, BRS, OWC, and the state community colleges.

Appendix I: DDS Sustainability Plan*

Goal: To support implementation of DDS' employment goals and activities

| Goals | Objectives | Sustainability Efforts/Plan |
|---|---|--|
| Develop and implement 500 employment service questionnaires | Results of questionnaires will be used to implement activities to better understand the Employment First Concept | |
| Education | Employment Conference and Job Developer Training | Develop a training manual that will be used to educate DDS staff re-deployed into employment positions. |
| Benefits Planning Training | Training on SS work incentives, financial management and asset development | The new infrastructure incentives, greater use of blended services, and dissemination of educational materials and actions that occur as a result of the benefits project will lead to greater numbers of people working more than twenty hours per week. |
| Group to Individual Employment Project | Training and technical assistance to a minimum of 25 IP teams and their organizations on changing internal systems from a group employment to customized employment model | The funding incentives to move individuals from group to individual employment will continue as part of DDS's infrastructure. Contracts with providers will include performance measure to determine whether greater numbers of individuals are moving from group to individual employment. Other infrastructure changes such as the new DDS policy that requires that all graduates and persons with a LON 1, 2, 3 have an employment goal in their IP, or provide a justification why that cannot occur, will also help maintain enhanced expectations and support for employment. |
| Other Infrastructure Change Activities | Consultants hired and actively engaged in a wide range of activities intended to support | The majority of the "other activities" will result in the creation of the following products that |

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| | <p>DDS in building the infrastructure needed to support the Employment First policy.</p> | <p>will be able to be used after the DSS Employment MOU ends.</p> <p>Survey Instruments: Consumer, Parent, Provider and Resource Manager Surveys that can be used to compare changes in attitudes/ beliefs over time.</p> <p>Marketing Materials: Case Manager, Self Advocate Coordinator, Resource Manager “Talking Point Scripts, CT Works/DOL fact sheet, School to Work Transition Fact Sheet, Brochure for LEA staff, Benefits Packet, BRS referral sheet, DDS funding incentives fact sheet, Employer Incentives fact sheet, Summer youth employment fact sheet, sample employment goals for case managers, Great Expectations Employment Guide for Families, added materials for consumer corner webpage.</p> <p>Training Materials: Training curriculum for employment instructors. Power Point materials will be developed for all stakeholders-consumers, family members, DDS staff, providers and employers.</p> |
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*Source – Adapted from DDS’ Sustainability Plan