

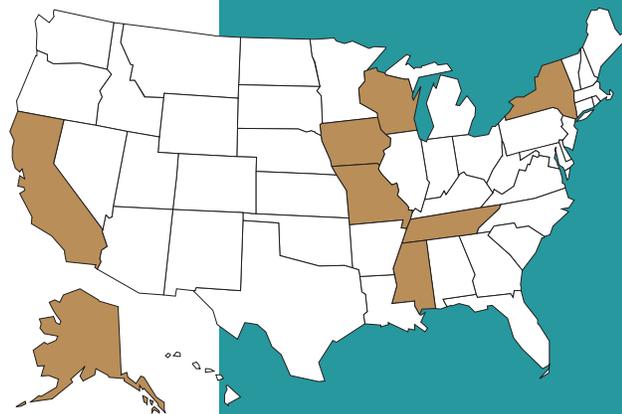
# partnerships in employment

Partnerships in Employment is a five-year systems change initiative to increase employment and post-secondary outcomes for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Each project is led by a consortium, including youth and young adults with intellectual disabilities, family members, state agency leaders, university centers, advocates, teachers, service providers, and employers. Projects have defined an operating plan for improving employment and education through new or revised policy development.

## Here's what we've achieved so far:

- Advocating for Employment First legislation and prioritizing funds to support individual integrated work
- Promoting Medicaid waiver service definition language changes
- Supporting promising practices in education and community settings through pilot initiatives and policy
- Delivering targeted training and technical assistance to build capacity
- Developing employment outcome data strategy
- Coordinating and blending resources across schools and adult agencies
- Defining guidance for integrated employment and career development experiences



Projects are occurring in eight states:

- Alaska
- California
- Iowa
- Mississippi
- Missouri
- New York
- Tennessee
- Wisconsin

## Elements of Change

- » Leadership and goals
- » Policy development
- » Funding and contracting
- » Staff training & technical assistance
- » Services and innovations
- » Employment performance measurement
- » Youth development and leadership
- » Family engagement

## Framework for a High-Performing Employment System

A framework for employment, developed through extensive systems change experience and research conducted with states, guides the work of the project's Technical Assistance Center. The framework elements are practices and outcomes shown to be effective at enabling states to develop and sustain high-performing integrated employment systems. Higher-performing states maintain a clear and consistent investment in policy and strategy across these elements.



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The Partnerships in Employment Technical Assistance Center is a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston, in partnership with the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services. It is funded by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health & Human Services.



Hall et al. (2007)

## Parent/Young Adult Youth Transition Panels

The LEND program can develop a strong message that medical and education professionals' early conversations and information to families sets the stage for a lifetime of expectations that can greatly impact the child and the entire family's life. Youth transition is a critical time when service systems are especially complex for families to navigate, and when youth and family expectations are especially critical in developing long-term supports, opportunities, and experiences. A family/youth panel is an especially effective way for LEND trainees to learn about the personal experiences of families with children who have disabilities, and identify how early and ongoing providers impacted and continue to impact expectations and experiences. The following are some recommendations for putting together a successful transition panel.

### Setting the Tone

Most families can relate early stories of how professionals relayed a diagnosis or shared difficult news about a child's disability and long-term prognosis. One especially meaningful way to start the panel and set a positive tone is to play this quick video that features 15 youth with Down Syndrome telling an expectant mother who just learned her baby has Down Syndrome what kind of future they think her baby will have.

<http://www.babble.com/mom/dont-be-afraid-kids-help-reassure-mom-expecting-baby-with-down-syndrome/>  
(2:29)

### Choosing the Panel

It's important to choose your panel carefully so that the audience hears from families who have had a range of experiences, yet have high expectations for a full life in the community. For example, families from rural and urban areas, families who represent an age range to highlight different experiences at different times in a child's life, families with positive stories and those with more challenging experiences.

Remember, the overall message you want the audience to leave with is that high expectations can lead to great outcomes. Parents who expect their children to have a full life are more likely to have children who live, work, are active and are known in their community.

### Asking the Right Questions

Providing questions to families/youth in advance is helpful in keeping the panel on time and on topic. For the youth, it's especially important that they have time to prepare and practice ahead of time. The following are suggested questions to ask a panel. The number of questions you will be able to ask will depend on the amount of time you have allotted. Choose the questions that fit the outcome you want to achieve and that fit with the life experiences of the families you have asked to speak.

#### **Parents:**

- What are the things you think contributed to having a positive vision for your child's future? What might have helped you be more positive?

- What did medical and other professionals tell you that was helpful to you in thinking about a positive future for your child or what do you wish medical and other professionals would have told you?
- In what ways have you been able to successfully include your child in school? In the community?
- How did professionals support you in those efforts? How could they have better supported you?
- What kinds of natural supports do you have for your child to be successful in the community? How did you set those up? How could professionals help your family in developing natural supports?
- In your community, what kinds of opportunities do you want your child to have both at this time in her/his life and in the years to come?
- What kinds of opportunities do you want for yourself as a parent at this time in your life and in the years to come?
- Why are these opportunities important to you and to your child?
- Talk about the relationships in your life – both personal and professional. What role have those people played in your child’s development? What kinds of things were the most helpful to you in reaching your goals for your child’s future? What was not helpful to you?
- What was your experience in your first contacts with providers?
- What are some examples of times that you have felt particularly supported by medical and other professionals? By family and friends?
- How is being a parent of a child with a disability different than you thought it would be? How is it the same?
- Has parenting changed how you think of your child’s community?
- How has having your child created opportunities to have different relationships and experiences? (Consider both long and short term relationships that you would not have had if you were not this child’s parent.)
- What are the things that are important to your family, regardless of your child’s disability?
- What kinds of barriers have stood in your way of achieving the goals and dreams you have for your child? How have you overcome those barriers?
- What aspects of your experiences have been the most valuable for you and your child? How could the experiences have been more responsive to you and your child’s needs?
- How have services helped you reached your goals for your child and your family? Have some aspects distracted you from those goals? How?
- What advice would you give to other parents? To professionals?

### **Youth:**

- What are your goals for working and for living in the community?
- What kinds of help do you think you will need to reach your goals?
- What kinds of things do you like to do (at home, school, the community, etc.)?
- Talk about the relationships you have in your life – family, friends, paid people, etc. How did you get to know these people? For students who are transitioning out of high school or older, what are some ways you’ve made new connections with people in the community?
- What are some ways that your parents have helped support you?
- What would you like other parents and professionals to know about how to help you reach your goals?
- What advice do you have for parents and professionals to help you be successful?