

**Report on the Working Age Adult Policy  
Residential Providers Focus Groups**

Prepared for the King County  
Developmental Disabilities Division

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## **Introduction**

This is a report to the King County Developmental Disabilities Division on information gathered from five participants at a residential provider's focus group session on April 25, 2006. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather information on questions and concerns related to the Working Age Adult Policy.

The focus group session was led by a facilitator and a scribe to record participant responses to six questions.

- 1. The Working Age Adult Policy raises the following questions and concerns for me...*
- 2. I need more information or clarification on the following...*
- 3. What I like about the policy is...*
- 4. I have heard that the policy will...*
- 5. I would be less concerned and more comfortable if the policy...*
- 6. Other things I would like the county to know about the policy...*

The participants generated information on what residential providers are concerned about related to the policy; information or clarification they need on elements of the policy; what they like about the policy; what would make them less concerned and more comfortable with the policy and other things they would like the county to know regarding the policy.

## **Summary**

The residential provider's focus group participants generally agreed that it would be good if people had the opportunity to work. They are concerned that the policy lacks flexibility and does not address the needs of individuals with more significant/challenging disabilities. They are concerned that there are insufficient resources to support the one on one that many of the people they support will need. They would like to see the policy require employment programs to keep residential providers informed on the progress being made for individuals. They would also like the policy to have accountability standards. They would also like to know how the exception to policy process will work.

## **General Themes**

There are several themes that were shared by most of the participants.

The majority of residential providers would like to see accountability standards as part of the policy.

The majority of the residential providers do not believe the policy addresses the needs of people with severe/challenging behaviors.

The majority of the residential providers would like to see more flexibility and are concerned about what will happen to some people if Community Access is no longer available

The majority of the residential providers are concerned that there is insufficient funding to implement the policy.

Several of the residential providers are concerned that people with disabilities will not have choices and had questions about who makes the decisions.

The majority of the residential providers would like more information on how the exception to policy process will work.

The majority of the residential providers would like to see the school be more in line with the expectations for adults.

### **Items of Interest**

Some residential providers would like to see more planning around retirement services for individuals nearing the age of sixty-two.

Some residential providers would like to be able to provide employment services themselves.

Some of the residential providers are concerned that DDD and DVR decisions may not match.

A residential provider asked if County millage money could be used for non-employment activities.

A residential provider asked what defines a reasonable job? Is it money or hours?

Working Age Adult Policy Focus Group  
Residential Providers  
April 25, 2006

*1. The Working Age Adult Policy raises the following questions and concerns for me...*

Participant #1

Funding. I believe people should have something in their life. But to do this for our folks will require significant funding. Even people with funding don't have jobs now.

Some individuals think it is a guarantee they will now have/get a job. People with community protection issues should be coming with funding attached – guarantee – but it is difficult to find the money.

Participant #2

People with disabilities are feeling pressure with this policy. By word of mouth, some individuals are feeling pressure personally. I would like the provider to feel the pressure, not the individuals served. Needs to be given in "common people's language" in order for them and staff to understand. Policy needs to be flexible in terms of how it can be implemented in current service delivery system.

Participant #3

I like the intent behind the policy. My concern is around accountability by the providers. Some of our Community Access providers have made the transition to the Working Age Adult Policy, but nothing has changed in activities. I have some concern about those who don't fit the norm, don't want to or are unable to work. Employment providers seem to be less tolerant of people with greater support needs, toileting/hygiene, and behavior concerns; not willing to accept folks with more challenging needs.

Another concern is that DDD policy and DVR decisions will not match – where DDD may be committed but DVR refuses to support.

Participant #4

Our folks have significant physical challenges. Their providers are indicating that some won't be on a "pathway". It seems that those nearing the age 62 cut-off, are not being considered or supported to have pathway. There will need to be more planning around retirement services.

Participant #5

Working with folks who have very little motivation to work and have not been successful in previous jobs. Most would need one on one to be successful. Many I can't get in to services.

*2. I need more information or clarification on the following...*

Participant #1

How will it be implemented, given that there is already so much unmet need? Nothing in policy that says day program is required to keep residential agency or support informed.

Participant #2

How will pathway be judged to be successful? Who will make the decision and what criterion will be? Will activities of daily living (ADL's) be accepted as pathway to employment, due to skill development?

Participant #3

What defines a reasonable job? Is it hours, money? Is two hours a week enough if that works for someone? What will happen for those who refuse to work? Who gets to decide?

Participant #4

Criterion for pathway is needed and who makes decision. There needs to be strong language that directs employment providers to inform residential providers about what is happening?

*3. What I like about the policy is...*

Participant #1

I am a firm believer in value of work. People who work seem to have richer lives. This seems to be a prime time for the policy given low unemployment. Does this mean that Community Access is going away?

Participant #2

It feels like it could be discriminatory – consequence of not working could be more punishing than rest of population; though it may be punishing for the residential provider.  
What is the process of collaborating between residential and employment support?

Participant #3

As long as people are funded for one on one support I feel that time should be spent in employment. I think that generally folks are more challenging to support than in past.

Participant #4

May not be a big impact on those who don't understand the benefits of not working. I like the policy, but I think people should have a choice.

Participant #5

I like the intent of the policy. How would someone proceed with an exception to policy, this would be important to know? I like the intent, but for most of the people I work with it just doesn't seem to fit.

*4. I have heard that the policy will...*

Participant #1

I heard that if there is not a day program provider willing to support an individual that the county will give the residential program hours to support the person.

Participant #3

That many people will not get services, given the elimination of Community Access. Group agreed on this.

*5. I would be less concerned and more comfortable if the policy...*

Participant #1

Had additional money attached. There needs to be recognition of the gap between eighteen to twenty-one year olds. Some schools are insisting that kids graduate at eighteen, especially those with greater challenges, how will that be addressed?

Participant #2

If there was a provision for funding for residential providers to be involved in more structured way to get involved in employment; so they could be more effective in the work they already do.

Participant #3

(1)If the policy had accountability standards; (2)if policy outlined exception process; (3)if the policy recognized the additional dollars that would be needed for some people; (4)if the schools were more "in line" with expectations for adults and (5)if the policy allowed for differences in aging process – related to disability issues there may be earlier aging issues.

Participant #4 and 5 - Same as above.

*6. Other things I would like the County to know about the policy...*

Participant #2

I don't want residential providers to have to replace their other responsibilities in order to meet employment needs. Preference would be for employment providers to be expanded rather than for us to take this over.

### Participant #3

I wonder about how mileage funds are expended; how decisions are made? Is it possible that some of those funds could be used to support services that don't include employment? Could there be an opportunity to use those dollars to explore other options? Maybe to be used to explore how senior services might be expanded?