

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND  
REHABILITATIVE SERVICES  
REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM  
RSA-IM-91-26  
RSM-2035 <sup>1</sup>  
DATE: July 23, 1991

ADDRESSEES: STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (GENERAL)  
STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES (BLIND)  
CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS  
RSA DISCRETIONARY GRANTEES  
RSA SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

SUBJECT : EXEMPLARY PROJECTS, PROGRAMS, PRACTICES AND  
APPROACHES TO INCREASE COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The Rehabilitation Services Administration established an Operational Plan for FY 1991 which included an objective for increasing competitive employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. One of the activities under this objective was to identify programs, projects and practices which exemplify successful approaches to increasing competitive employment opportunities. Several months ago, RSA invited the Directors of State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies and RSA-funded grantees to nominate projects and practices which they considered to be exemplary in terms of placement and marketing initiatives with potential for replication. Thirty nominations were received. These nominated programs and projects were reviewed by a work group consisting of RSA staff and outside consultants. The programs and projects were evaluated and ranked based upon established criteria such as:

- Program philosophy, including emphasis on competitive placements in the community, consumer involvement, and individualized services;
- Accomplishment of goals and objectives, including population served, placement statistics, and success rate;
- Innovative approach, including employer services and/or supports, employer involvement, and linkages with public and private agencies and resources; and

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<sup>1</sup> Under development

- Potential for replication, including an interest on the part of program or project staff to serve in a technical assistance capacity to other programs.

The following three programs were identified as exhibiting exemplary approaches based upon the above criteria. Many other programs were also identified as having the potential to significantly increase competitive employment opportunities. The three exemplary programs represent unique approaches to placement implemented by nonprofit organizations.

EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS - FY 1991

"The Individualized Competitive Placement Program"--  
The Kennedy Center, Bridgeport, Connecticut

"ADAP/Supported Employment"--Raleigh Vocational Center,  
Raleigh, North Carolina

"Computer Programmer Training Program for the Physically  
Challenged"--El Centro College, Dallas, Texas

Attached are brief descriptions of each of these programs and projects. Please feel free to contact the identified representatives for further information. All of the individuals identified in the attachment have indicated an interest in serving as technical advisors and consultants to any program interested in replicating the approaches described.

I hope that the sharing of this information will encourage other programs and projects to implement innovative approaches to increase competitive employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Commissioner  
Rehabilitation Services Administration

Attachments

EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES  
TO INCREASE COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

FY 1991

Rehabilitation Services Administration  
June 1991

"The Individualized Competitive  
Placement Program"  
The Kennedy Center, Inc.

Contact: Linda Moriber  
Vice President of Rehabilitation Services  
The Kennedy Center, Inc.  
184 Garden Street  
Bridgeport, CN 06605  
Telephone: (203) 576-0211

Overview of Program:

The Individualized Competitive Placement Program for persons with mental retardation, psychiatric disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, sensory impairments, learning disabilities and physical disabilities was developed in the Spring of 1987 as a collaborative effort in Southern Connecticut by The Kennedy Center, the Department of Mental Retardation, the Department of Mental Health and the Division of Rehabilitation Services. The program was designed to provide vocational assessment, on-the-job training and placement services to individuals, age 16 and over, with the above-named disabilities.

The program requires background information on individuals referred regarding: social behaviors, physical dexterity, cognitive functioning and vocational skills. The Kennedy Center staff, which consists of evaluators, employment specialists, job developers, a social worker, counselors and administrative personnel, utilizes this information for assessment purposes, training, and appropriate community placement. Additional services provided include situational assessments, individualized placement plans, individualized case management, career awareness counseling, job seeking and coping skills, job development and placement, on-the-job training and on-site follow-up support services. Mock interviews are conducted by area employers to improve the inter-viewing techniques.

Since the program's inception, seventy-seven percent of the individuals served continue in employment. The program tripled its productivity from an initial placement rate of 25 individuals per year to 75 individuals last year. The Kennedy Center serves over 500 individuals on a daily basis and has provided individualized competitive placement to 171 individuals over the past two years. The Individualized Competitive Placement Program has served consumers who range in age from 19 to 69 years.

Innovative Approaches:

The Kennedy Center, in cooperation with the Southwestern Connecticut Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, developed an Employer Awareness Training Packet which provides information to employers on myths about hiring people with disabilities. The staff also works directly with employers through the Supported Employment/Business Advisory Council. The Council recently developed a program which assists employers in providing long-term job support to individuals with disabilities employed from the program; workers are trained

by the program staff on techniques of providing these supports.

Additionally, the Kennedy Center established two auxiliary programs to assist people with disabilities secure employment. The Training, Assessment and Placement Program (TAPP) consists of staff from the Kennedy Center, the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Rehabilitation Center of Eastern Fairfield County. These agencies coordinate specialized services to assist selected individuals with special needs in securing competitive employment. This program was awarded "exemplary program status" by the Rehabilitation Network of New England. The Work Services Program was established by the Kennedy Center and the Department of Mental Health. This program addresses the special needs of individuals with psychiatric disabilities and assists them obtain and maintain competitive employment.

In conjunction with these programs, the Kennedy Center utilizes other placement strategies including telemarketing, cold calls, employer networking and pinpointing vertical labor markets to expand employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Case managers carry these approaches out and educate employers as to the benefits of hiring individuals from the program. Additionally, the Kennedy Center publishes, on a quarterly basis, Project Hire which provides agency information to more than 600 area employers.

Replication:

The Kennedy Center staff provide technical assistance to community organizations wishing to replicate their program. The staff are also available for technical assistance to other organizations interested in replicating their program.

For further validation of this program's success, please contact:

Lorene Castle  
District Director  
Division of Rehabilitation Development  
Services Department of Mental Health  
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06608

Baruch F. Gould  
Director of Human Resources  
Department of Mental Health  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

"Adult Development Activity Program/Supported Employment"  
Raleigh Vocational Center

Contact: Mary Anna Newman  
Director  
Adult Development Activity Program/Supported Employment  
3011 Falstaff Road  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27610  
Telephone: (919) 231-8245

Overview of Program:

The Raleigh Vocational Center (RVC) was formed in 1964 by parents and community leaders in order to provide sheltered work activities for individuals with developmental disabilities. Over the past 26 years, the facility continued to expand its programs. At present, the Center has five vocational rehabilitation programs and serves over 500 adults annually. One of the programs, the Adult Development Activity Program (ADAP), is geared to low functioning individuals who are developmentally disabled. In July, 1986, this program initiated a supported employment program through funding from a demonstration grant from the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Over the past few years, ADAP developed a three-step approach to placement in order to assist individuals with disabilities achieve community employment. These steps are: compensatory education classes focused on community integration; job experience in community-based enclaves; and direct placement through an individual job coach model. ADAP has served fifty-three individuals. Twenty-three individuals were placed in permanent, full time work while thirty individuals remained in the Center. Forty-three percent of the program converted from segregated employment to supported employment. ADAP was recently awarded an additional grant to convert 80 percent of its services to supported employment.

Innovative Approaches:

The ADAP program developed a Business Advisory Council (BAC) to "market" individuals and the program's services to the community. BAC employers conduct mock interviews, provide job leads, and educate other employers on the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities through a regularly scheduled disability awareness seminar.

The ADAP staff collaborate regularly with other agencies such as the Wake Technical Community College for individuals enrolled in the program to receive instruction in community living skills, job seeking and retention skills, academic training and health fitness. The staff also collaborates with the Wake County Job Developers' Association to place individuals in a variety of employment settings.

The ADAP staff researched "failures" in community placements. The reason for these failures are:

- Length of Institutionalization. Individuals who have been institutionalized for long periods of time tend to resist change. This resistance increases when these individuals consider community based employment.
- Stamina and Physical Disability. Individuals with physical disabilities employed in sheltered settings often have jobs with reduced physical demands. As such, these individuals find competitive employment difficult with the generally increased physical exertion.
- Family Support. ADAP surveyed families of individuals with disabilities and discovered tendencies toward fear of benefit loss and reluctance to accept a family member's abilities vis a vis competitive employment.

To address these failures, the program identified several approaches:

- Length of Institutionalization.

--ADAP encourages visits by job candidates to community-based work sites to desensitize them to competitive employment.

--Seminars are provided by individuals successful in supported employment to center-based individuals in order to introduce the concept of community employment.

--Enclave work is encouraged for center-based individuals in an effort to "wean" them from the facility.

- Stamina and Physical Disability.

--Vocational rehabilitation engineering services are provided for work-site modification.

--The Vocational Evaluation Unit utilizes job task analysis for appropriate job matching and modification.

--The Production Unit designs, as necessary, jigs and modifies work sites in order to maximize individual productivity.

--Sedentary enclaves are provided to selected individuals.

- Lack of Family Support.

--Family Network Groups are run to address supported employment issues. These groups are led by committed families who are experienced with supported employment.

--Seminars are held with parents to familiarize them with enclave employment.

Replication:

This project provides statewide training. Project staff are available for technical assistance to organizations interested in replicating the program.

For further validation of this program's success, please contact:

Ms. Jo Perkins  
Specialist for Supported  
Employment Programs  
Division of Rehabilitation  
Raleigh, NC 27611

Mr. Duncan Munn  
Chief of Day Services  
North Carolina Department  
of Human Resources Services  
Raleigh, NC 27611



"Computer Programmer Training Program  
For The Physically Challenged"  
Vocational Rehabilitation Division  
El Centro College

Contact:Gloria Hayes-Rosenberg  
Director  
VR Program  
El Centro College  
Main at Lamar  
Dallas, TX 75202-3604  
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Overview of Program:

The primary goal of the Computer Programmer Training Program for the Physical Challenged (CPTPC) is to recruit and train people with severe disabilities to become entry level COBOL programmers.

CPTPC is part of the Vocational Rehabilitation Division (VRD) of El Centro College, a member of the Dallas County Community College district. In 1985, the Mayor's Committee for the Employment of People with Disabilities contacted the IBM Corporation to begin a local computer programmer training program similar to others initiated by IBM. El Centro College formed a Business Advisory Council (BAC) through the VRD and funding resources were secured from various agencies to establish the program.

The total operating budget of the program is \$198,752. Nearly 80 percent of the funding for the project comes from El Centro College and the Texas Rehabilitation Commission, with the remainder derived from the Dallas County Private Industry Council - JTPA, the Texas Commission for the Blind and a local church. The 105 individuals who have been served by the project have a wide variety of physical and mental disabilities. Despite the fact that the program is serving individuals with severe disabilities, the project's placement rate ranged from 100 percent in 1986 and 1987 to 75 percent in 1988. All individuals served by CPTCP in the past two years were referred from the State VR agency.

Innovative Approaches:

The project emphasizes the benefits that accrue to employers through the hiring of qualified individuals with disabilities who have completed eight months of training, including a two month internship. Rehabilitation engineering and/or adaptive equipment are provided at the work site, as needed.

The project's 40-member BAC includes six individuals with disabilities or family members of individuals with disabilities as well as employers in the data processing community involved

with financial investments, transportation, communications and energy. The BAC addresses program issues such as student selection, curriculum, evaluation, equipment, placement and public relations. In addition to close ties with private industry, CPTPC maintains strong linkages with State and local government personnel for purposes of funding and placement.

The public relations activities of the program focus on "marketing" individuals to employers. A bi-annual newsletter is utilized as well as a professional video tape, brochures, mass mailings, and attendance at job fairs to canvas for appropriate employment.

Currently, the project is focusing its efforts on increasing the placement rate of individuals who are blind. Coordination with the Texas Commission for the Blind has resulted in the placement of seven individuals who are blind.

Replication:

The project is modeled after other IBM computer training programs. BAC members continue to provide technical assistance to fledgling programs. CPTPC plans to meet with IBM to address the possibility of replicating the program in Costa Rica.

For further validation of this program's success, please contact:

Bob Marx  
Regional Director  
Texas Rehabilitation Commission  
10935 Estate Lane, Suite 370  
Dallas, TX 75238-2376

David L. Jeppson  
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Dallas, TX 75235