



MENTAL RETARDATION BULLETIN

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

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SUBJECT:

**POLICY ON EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS
WITH MENTAL RETARDATION**

BY:

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SCOPE:

County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Administrators
Base Service Unit Directors
Vocational Facility Directors
Competitive Supported Employment Project Directors
Adult Day Care Center Directors
Intermediate Unit Special Education Directors
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation District Administrators
Non-State Operated Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally
Retarded (ICF's/MR) Directors
Community Residential Mental Retardation Facility Directors

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this bulletin is to announce the Office of Mental Retardation's policy on employment for persons with mental retardation.

BACKGROUND:

Historically the Office of Mental Retardation has funded, through the County Mental Retardation Programs, a variety of day programs for adults with mental retardation. Identified collectively as adult day services, these service options include adult developmental training (day care), facility-based vocational training and sheltered employment (sheltered workshop programs), industry integrated training programs, and, to some extent, a variety of employment models.

For a limited number of persons with mental retardation, participation in these programs has resulted in their integration into the competitive labor force with its subsequent benefits. Some of the benefits include competitive pay for work performed, social integration in the community, a lessening of the need to be dependent on others, and the dignity that comes from all of these benefits. For the majority of persons with mental retardation, however, traditional adult day services have not resulted in their employment in the competitive labor market.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS BULLETIN SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

Appropriate Regional Mental Retardation Program Manager

The Office of Mental Retardation believes that persons with mental retardation should have access to community employment opportunities and that employment opportunities should always be considered before any less integrated, more restrictive programs. The Office recognizes, however, that there are some individuals whose needs for employment services cannot currently be addressed by existing resources and technology. Until these issues are resolved, we must continue to support services which address the basic program needs of these individuals.

Over the past ten years, there have been recognized efforts by all components of the community mental retardation service system to identify employment as an important priority for persons with mental retardation. The Office of Mental Retardation's Planning Advisory Committee has identified employment as a major initiative. Further, the County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Plan Guidelines for Fiscal Years 1992-95 will require counties to provide individual specific information relating to people in need of employment services. The plan document will serve as an indicator of County movement regarding the provision of competitive employment opportunities for people currently receiving services as well as planning efforts for those waiting to receive services.

DISCUSSION:

There is a wide variety of approaches which can be used to assist persons with mental retardation in attaining employment. These approaches are designed to provide a broad range of opportunities through which people can attain community employment. The primary consideration as to the best approaches for each individual should be based on the individual's needs rather than service expediency. The various approaches conceptually fall into three distinct categories: employment training, in which the primary purpose and intent is to provide qualitative training opportunities; supported employment, in which the primary purpose and intent is to provide long-term supports to an employee at the job site; and supportive employment, in which the primary purpose and intent is to provide short-term supports to an employee at the job site to ensure job compatibility. A more complete description of these categories and currently recognized models follows:

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING - Employment training involves the training of an individual in a business/industry situation prior to actual employment. The training is designed to prepare the individual for employment in that situation or in a similar situation in another business/industry environment. In an employment training program the employer-employee (trainee) relationship is usually between the employee (trainee) and the vocational facility rather than business/industry.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT - Supported Employment combines placement of severely handicapped persons in competitive jobs, with training on-the-job and long-term support services. It is paid employment for persons for whom competitive employment at or above the minimum wage is unlikely and who, because of their disabilities, need ongoing support to perform their work. Support is provided through

activities such as training, job coaching and supervision, etc., and involves at least two contacts per month to address individual needs. The employer-employee relationship is usually between the employee and the business/industry.

SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYMENT - Supportive Employment is work in an integrated work site in which persons with developmental disabilities receive various supports of a short-term basis to ensure continued employment. Supports include follow-up by a trainer, work site job coaching and supervision, environmental adaptations and retraining, when necessary. There is one primary difference between supportive employment and supported employment. Supportive employment is time-limited, whereas supported employment involves more permanency and perhaps life-long support. The employer-employee relationship is usually between the employee and the business/industry.

Within these categories there are several training and/or employment models. Some of these models may be considered either employment training or supported/supportive employment depending on the primary emphasis of the model, i.e., training or employment. Listed below are examples of currently recognized industry-integrated employment training or employment models. Models preceded by an asterisk (*) are primarily employment training models. Models preceded by a double asterisk (**) may be either employment training or employment models depending on the primary focus of the specific program. Models preceded by a triple asterisk (***) are primarily employment models. With the exception of Competitive Employment any of the employment models listed below may be considered either supported employment or supportive employment depending on the nature and duration of the various supports provided as described in the definitions presented above.

***** MOBILE WORK FORCE** - A Mobile Work Force uses teams of clients/trainees who conduct service activities away from the rehabilitation agency. The agency contracts with an outside organization or business to perform maintenance, lawn care, janitorial services or similar tasks and the trainees are paid by the agency. A training/job supervisor from the agency accompanies each crew on their service activities. The employer/employee relationship is between the rehabilitation agency and client/trainees.

*** TRANSITIONAL EMPLOYMENT** - Transitional Employment Training involves individual training which may be carried out on one or more job sites. Transitional Employment Training slots are most frequently jobs that an agency has contracted to do on-site by using trainees to do the work. Trainees are on the agency payroll during training with the agency receiving a reimbursement at a contracted rate. Trainees remain in a slot for a specific time or until they meet some other predetermined criterion. At the completion of training, successful trainees are placed in a competitive job similar to the one they were trained on, but

usually not with the business or company where they were trained. The essence of the Transitional Employment Training slot is that the agency contracts with a business to do the work, thereby offering a transitional work experience to the trainee who may need this type of "weaning off" process before being placed in competitive employment. Jobs in food services and material handling operations in light industry are examples of where Transitional Employment Training often occurs.

- ** **WORK STATION IN INDUSTRY** - This program involves individual or group training of client/trainees at the industry site. Training is conducted by a rehabilitation representative or by company personnel and is phased out as the trainees demonstrate job expertise and meet established production rates. During training, the trainees may be on the agency payroll, the company payroll, or shared by both, but once training is completed, they may be integrated into the company's operation as permanent employees or be employed by another company.

- ** **AFFIRMATIVE INDUSTRY** - An Affirmative Industry is a business/industry whose primary goal is to provide employment for persons who are handicapped. An affirmative industry is operated as a business enterprise in which handicapped and non-handicapped employees work together to carry out the functions of the business. On-the-job training of handicapped as well as non-handicapped employees is the primary type of training provided in an affirmative industry. Salaries/wages for non-handicapped as well as handicapped persons are usually determined by the production rate of each employee.

- *** **ON-THE-JOB TRAINING (OJT)** - OJT is a model whereby an employer provides training to handicapped workers on the job and is reimbursed for extraordinary training costs.

- *** **ENCLAVE** - An Enclave is a model in which a group of handicapped workers are employed by a business/industry to perform a specific type of job for the firm on-site while working along side of non-handicapped employees. Performing a specific function on the assembly line of an industry is a typical example of the enclave model.

- *** **COMPETITIVE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT** - Competitive Supported Employment is a model currently promoted by the Pennsylvania State Task Force on Competitive Supported Employment. It combines placement of a severely handicapped person in a competitive job, with training on-the-job, wages at or above those commensurate with wages of non-handicapped employees, and long-term support services. It is paid employment for a person for whom competitive employment at or above the minimum wage is

unlikely and who, because of his/her disabilities, needs ongoing support to perform his/her work. Support is provided at the work site on a 1:1 basis by a job coach who provides individualized training, coaching, supervision, etc.

*** **COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT** - Competitive Employment involves the placement of an individual into real work for real pay. The individual is employed by a company or industry rather than by a rehabilitation facility. The relationship between the rehabilitation facility and the client usually is limited to initial job training and short-term follow-up.

POLICY:

EMPLOYMENT

\$6000.171. Policy on employment.

Persons with mental retardation who are of legal working age should have access to employment and the training necessary to sustain employment.

\$6000.172. Available funding:

(a) Counties are encouraged to redirect existing resources from traditional adult day services, such as adult developmental training and sheltered workshops, to community-integrated employment opportunities for persons with mental retardation.

(b) If additional funding becomes available for adult day services in the future, such funding will be targetted specifically and exclusively for employment opportunities for persons with mental retardation.

(c) The Office of Mental Retardation will continue to support the projects sponsored by the Competitive Supported Employment of Pennsylvania (CSEPA) Task Force through local funding arrangements with the participating County Mental Retardation Programs.

\$6000.173. Training and technical assistance.

The Office of Mental Retardation will work with other available resources to provide training and technical assistance to counties and private provider agencies in the provision of employment services for persons with mental retardation.

\$6000.174. Priority.

The provision of employment services to recent graduates of public special education programs should be a high priority at the State and local levels.

\$6000.175. Transition planning.

Counties should work cooperatively with the local special education and vocational rehabilitation systems to ensure that school to work transition planning occurs for students enrolled in public special education programs.

\$6000.176. Referral.

Referral to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for employment services should be a high priority for counties when developing service plans for persons with mental retardation who are of legal working age.

\$6000.177. Follow-up services.

Follow up services should be available on an ongoing basis to all persons with mental retardation who need them to maintain employment.

\$6000.178. Performance expectations.

Contracts with providers of employment services should be negotiated to contain clear performance expectations in terms of client progress and outcomes, i.e., competitive employment, job/employment retention, etc.

\$6000.179. County responsibilities.

(a) Counties should initiate cooperative efforts with providers of adult day services to plan for the further development of community employment opportunities.

(b) Counties should initiate efforts, with assistance from providers, to ensure that consumers and their families, as well as case managers, are educated about the availability and benefits of employment. Individual consumer and family education about employment should be integral to the client intake and referral process, as well as to the development of the life management and service plans.

(c) Counties should strive to ensure that a variety of employment program models are available for persons with mental retardation in order to address individual and local needs.