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New Hampshire's Employment Data Collection: The Power to Transform Communication, Partnership, and Service Delivery

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Background

In 2010, when the New Hampshire Bureau of Developmental Services (BDS) received grant funds to strengthen multisystem service delivery, its administrators partnered with area agencies; community rehabilitation providers, or CRPs (employment providers); and other stakeholders to improve and streamline the process of collecting employment data. Originally a multi-system process, BDS continued the data-collection effort when other systems withdrew.

BDS's new data-collection system allows unprecedented access to clear data displays, as well as the ability to run a variety of detailed reports to guide the statewide promotion of integrated employment.

Implementation

BDS designed a useful, transparent data-collection process that would support the achievement of high-quality employment outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

At the outset, the agency determined that the state's new data system would evolve from a bi-annual data-collection effort, to a system that collected and shared data on a quarterly basis. As a first step, BDS sought feedback from a range of stakeholders about ways in which a new data system might support their work, and the most important features to be included.

In particular, BDS recognized the important role that New Hampshire's many CRPs would play in supplying the data. Although many CRPs had not been collecting data regularly, BDS engaged them in testing prototypes of the new database. The agency also offered training and support as its staff designed a system that busy CRP staff could use conveniently and consistently. Furthermore, they allowed subcontractors and vendors access to the database to enter data, which lessened the amount of data entry that providers had to do.

In addition to engaging stakeholders in design and providing them access, BDS used data systems already in existence in New Hampshire. BDS administrators established a link

between area agencies and New Hampshire Leads, a system that tracks information for the state and area agencies about consumers receiving state services.

BDS also used New Hampshire's participation in the National Core Indicators project, not only to understand current statewide performance, but also to guide future directions for employment services.

New Hampshire's data-collection system supplies information to the state, and also can be accessed and used by a variety of stakeholders. Area agencies can manage their own employment data and access regional data. The agencies also have access to data about any vendors they work with, and vendors have access to data about clients they serve.

Administrators at BDS retain full access to the system, and run a wide variety of reports. These administrators distribute the data quarterly in the NH Developmental Services Employment Summaries (www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcbcs/bds/publications.htm). These reports are sent to a variety of stakeholders, including the employment leadership committee, self-advocacy groups, the board of directors of area agencies, the family support council, state officials, and service coordinator supervisors.

Impact

New Hampshire's data system has strengthened partnerships in the achievement of a shared goal. The data now available through joint efforts has opened up new conversations about employment.

The level of access that CRPs have to each other's data fosters a sense of healthy competition, and has led several to eliminate subminimum-wage employment placements. Furthermore, having their outcome data so public has given CRPs an incentive to improve their services.

Most importantly, regularly sharing the New Hampshire Developmental Services Employment Summaries has increased multi-stakeholder investment in the vision of Employment First.

Highlights

- BDS acknowledged the importance of collaborating with a range of stakeholders, including employment providers (CRPs). They engaged CRPs in the design of the new data system, which increased the providers' investment in sharing data.
- BDS created a user-friendly system that met multiple needs, including performance management and increasing dialogue about integrated employment throughout the state.
- The data system not only supplies information to the state, but is also distributed to a variety of stakeholders on a quarterly basis. This keeps integrated employment on the minds of a larger coalition, and works to further the state's employment progress.

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