

## Summary Notes from CoP 7.27.21

**Jean Winsor (SELN)** provided background information about the Community of Practice (CoP) and the involvement of the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN).

**Jeaning Zlockie (SELN)** introduced herself.

**Bryn Peterson (DSPD)** provided a summary of the June 2021 CoP meeting. You can find information from the June meeting, including an explanation of SELN and biographies for Jean Winsor and Jeanine Zlockie at [dspd.utah.gov/employment/2021-community-inclusion-project/](https://dspd.utah.gov/employment/2021-community-inclusion-project/).

**Jean Winsor** - What does it look like to each person here in this meeting to be included in their community? What about outside of their work day? These are questions I consider in my research. Then figure out how we put these research based processes into place in people's lives with good data and validity. I primarily work with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) and Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to figure this out.

Questions from last time have formed the focus for today. The raw pieces shared were concerns about staffing and how to balance staffing needs with individual goals and new or evolving expectations of how they want to live inclusive lives in society. Middle points are grounded in a shared vision, mission, values. We sent out a spreadsheet to start looking at this. We understand the workload and time that is required, but please take a few minutes to copy and paste into that spreadsheet so we know how to help and support you going forward. The spreadsheet asked for your agency mission, vision, and goals as a whole. Then it asked for the client's goals and staffing needs in one community your agency serves.

### Clear and Consistent Goals

**Jeanine Zlockie** - Starting with mission, vision, values, and outcomes is the core of a change process to help people receive community integration and employment. What we learned in the research is that there are many new and exciting strategies being used and adopted. However, before change management strategies can be used, we have to stop and take stock of where we are. We wanted to use this approach too.

**Jean Winsor** - One of the deciding pieces is each agency looking at what they can do to help people get jobs in the community. A goal that is verbal, concrete words about what your agency will do. Some look at hard numbers of how many people we want to see working in the community or more hours working.  
**What key words stick out to you in your mission statement that you could tell a stranger what it is your agency does? What is the purpose of your organization and mission you uphold?**

### **Provider Discussion Summary:**

- Dreams into reality; quality of life for people with disabilities  
That becomes the visual outcome for all DSPs.
- Purposeful choice and meaningful lives; world of full integration or living and working in the community

- Independence, integration, employment - Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE), and happiness
- Supports opportunities, achieve independence, self-esteem, and sustainable quality of life; to be involved in the community in whatever way their best life looks like to them

### **An Agency Culture that Supports Inclusion**

**Jeanine Zlockie** - Strong customer service philosophy. This will be the foundation that all your programs and services are built on. It is important to revisit this often to make sure that everything you are doing aligns with your mission statement. If it changes that is great.

**Jean Winsor** - How aligned are these mission statements with federal and state policy? There is a shared understanding of what people with disabilities' lives can look like. Jeanine and I are happy button pushers in that we will ask questions that may make you uncomfortable, but with a smile. We want to help you think through old patterns to evolve on how you do things. We may push back to see how we can help you see how your actions as an agency are aligned with your mission.

Talk about your agency culture and how that supports your value of inclusion. The culture you set is an important piece. You may have a beautifully worded statement, but direct support professionals (DSPs) don't know what that means about how they should behave as a DSP. **Think about your shared value statement, how do you put your mission statement into practice?**

### **Provider Discussion Summary:**

- Core values are shared with new employees and in a welcome letter. Unsure how to have a corporate culture when people work in far flung areas. The strategic plan has 6 words to inspire the culture.
- Superior care, continued improvement, positive outcomes, no procrastination, and positivity. Make sure we keep promises and follow through.
- Relationships are a big one. With parents, community, schools, etc. We need to work together, especially in rural areas.
- Be patient and respectful.

**Jeanine Zlockie** - Values reflect what you believe in and everything you do will align with that. Some of your values remind me of work we do creating a culture of quality; think about balance too and a culture of no blame. Do what we can to implement based on our values and build a learning community. This last year definitely taught us patience.

### **Active, Person-Centered Job Placement**

**Jean Winsor** - Now is where the rubber meets the road. As I listened to you share, what resonated with me is the fact that no one used the words person-centered, yet the idea was there. What we look at nationally is how many people have a job, how many want a job and how many people have a goal for community employment.

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**Jeanine Zlockie** - The Person-Centered Support Plan (PCSP) is the foundation. It lists interests and viable employment interests which are all really important. As important as it is that we can develop a beautiful plan, a person-centered system, with understood challenges, allows us to delve deeper into how to provide services and supports. We don't want to bait and switch with a great plan that we can't implement. Everyone is in a different spot, but **what can we do one person at a time? How are you pursuing a person centered employment program? Or where are you struggling?**

### **Provider Discussion Summary:**

- Everyone has a PCSP. Reached out to all people to see what they wanted in terms of employment. We are not as large as some others and know each and every person and their aspirations intimately. Each person looking for employment is supported through our supported employment program and Vocational Rehabilitation. It goes to the reason we should be supporting a goal for all that want to work.
- Covid gave us time to really look at this. We made a paradigm shift to seeing DSPs as life coaches. We don't just employ people with disabilities, but seek to understand their career aspirations.
- We are trying to make the person-centered planning process a celebration. It has become more reporting to bring up issues that happened and funding issues. We decided to turn that into a party and celebration, focus on people's accomplishments, dreams, and goals. Diving into success stories with pictures on the wall and awards. We changed to excitement so people looked forward to meetings instead of refusing to go. They thought they would be in trouble because everyone is there. As we push CIE and community inclusion, it has played into the evolution of the planning meeting. Now we really celebrate and report how things are going on the job. If they are interested in employment we can talk about what the next year will look like. The focus is on the future and not the past. When we focus on positivity, more opportunities and options have come up in discussion. We have been working to evolve our programs. We put people on a pathway so that they can take the next step, wherever they are at.

**Jeanine Zlockie** - This sounds like developing a meaningful life. I am sure you are having different conversations when it comes to the person's perspective and not the professionals. It takes on a whole new meaning. It gives people the meaning and courage to be a part of the process instead of avoiding it. It is about a meaningful life for them and to seek employment. It is no longer a meeting where everyone else is talking about the person, now the person can brag about themselves. That is something we need to break. We need people to have a voice and informed choice. This CoP is for you to feel safe to share. We don't need you to do things the way you think we want you to. We want to have genuine conversations about what you are doing terrific and where you need support.

**Jean Winsor** - **In a person-centered meeting, do people say they shouldn't share their goal or it isn't realistic or not to bring it up?** Sometimes this happens, not because people are mean, but many of us in these roles have a caretaker mindset and we tend to caution others away from taking risks. **How do you navigate that?**

### **Provider Discussion Summary:**

- Some people that want to work with animals are discouraged since there aren't a lot of paid options. They try to apply the skills to somewhere there may be a more successful placement.
- Education is a big thing to understand options. Some of the difficulties recently are maintaining the placement and ongoing job coaching. Other providers asked us to provide the job coach after a placement. There are costs for transportation, short shifts and staffing crazy schedules for check-ins. It's becoming more and more of an issue.

**Jeanine Zlockie** - Think about the rates, sustainability, initial job match and thoroughly understand the needs of a person to master the job themselves or get support from coworkers or supervisors. The right job match with the person's needs met appropriately is important. The placement is potentially unsteady to not have this upfront. This is my concern with job coaching without being the one making the placement. Many factors to think about.

### **Data Based Decision Making**

**Jean Winsor** - **What are your concerns about scaling from providers geographically? How do you have enough demand to bring in providers for adequate choice for individuals to get their needs met?**

There are a wide variety of state staff here to help us see how many aspects that play into this. Rural communities are struggling with a wide variety of issues. **Are there needs in Utah's rural communities that we need to think about differently than urban areas?** Some states have varied rates based on location to support added costs in rural areas as an idea.

**Jeanine Zlockie** - Technology is booming over the last year and has been brought into the light. We are seeing technology on the job site to do check-ins, something to think about on the state level. How and if you embed technology in services is something to consider. It is less intrusive, could help in the DSP crisis, and limits in-person staff that are needed.

### **Provider Discussion Summary:**

- When providers communicate well and work as a team with support coordinators they can best work within the DSPD structure and systems. Grateful for the REquest for Services (RFS) committee that we get things approved for specific situations. For individual specific needs like transportation, reach out to your support coordinator. If you can lay out a good case, they can get funding, especially with employment. Just need to work together and follow up with the support coordinator to put forth the info the committee needs.

**Jeanine Zlockie** - The point with person-centered planning is building a strong structure and collaborative process to meet the needs and outcomes of the person.

### **Reallocated and Restructured Resources**

**Jean Winsor** - We do not mean to solve this problem today, but want to put it on the table. Last meeting there was more urgency on filling staff positions and that can make it hard to feel you can move forward

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in your change effort when you are just meeting day to day needs. **Do you have a sense of what staffing needs you have in just one location? Do you have data on the number of people that aren't there daily that are shifted around to make sure you meet needs?** In the next meeting we will talk through what are those gaps and are they stopping you from moving forward in a one person at a time approach.

### **Provider Discussion Summary:**

- It is dire in residential services, we can't pay people enough. Tried using a temp agency and that is not working anymore either. We have all the data and are more than happy to share. We have a waiting list for day services. The day services rate is inadequate. It's dire. We are doing everything to provide quality services. Doing a lot of work internally trying to raise DSP rates. Working on it without a rate increase, but it may not be sustainable. Here is the time and place to be emphatic. Appreciate that DSPD is addressing this issue.

**Angie Pinna** - DSPD is definitely aware. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding proposal is looking to stabilize our workforce with a 5% supplemental payment to providers quarterly. We are waiting to hear back from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on our proposal. We are definitely hearing a need to address staff stability. Once approved, ARPA funding will be available for a three year period.

**Jean Winsor** - I acknowledge some work was done a few years ago with the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) to develop new services and new rates, was anyone here involved in that work?

### **Provider Discussion Summary:**

- I was involved in some of that. Looking at internal research on ways to mimic what other states have done to get increases to meet demand of what is happening now. We are pleased with efforts for ARPA funding, but even with a 5% increase, that is only about a \$1 an hour increase for DSPs. Providers are now below what fast food is paying. This stretches us thinner and thinner. Within the Utah Association of Community Services (UACS) there are programs that are shutting down or consolidating. The momentum is good for employment, but people are hunkering down so it is hard to be person-centered because of the staffing issues. Looking at how other states advocate with their legislature to get up to speed with where we need to be to plead for DSP wages, we feel like we are at the bottom of the barrel.

**Jean Winsor** - Even the APRA funds won't be enough to deal with the crisis of finding qualified staff at the wages available. I did graduate work in economics, so bear with me. We know it is important to connect with the legislature and help them understand our situation. We do a good job of putting people out there to describe the situation. But legislative analysts want to know what the numbers are and not just the experience. Spend some time collecting data if you don't have it. **What are your agency's major costs?** Usually one is staff wages and benefits. **What goes into the wages they earn?** Billable time, mileage, any other benefits that go in, and **how does that reflect how they spend their time?** **Are they doing tasks and activities reflective of the cost to pay them?** **Are they in other services**

**and not aligned with why you hired them and their skills? Thinking about what are the things that you can better align in other resources? Physical space or services you may not want to continue to support because there are not many people in them ?** Some people may not want to go back where they were receiving services or may want to do a different service type than they did pre-covid. Agility in business is a different skill set.

**Provider Discussion Summary:**

- Providers are business savvy and would be happy to help share this information.
- I visit with providers in the area regularly, if you are struggling with meeting client needs meet with your support coordinator. It may be that you are not using the correct service code or rate. Many are not meeting needs and try to back out of underfunded rates to meet current needs. Information we submit to RFS is not fluff. I understand being a business owner. We want to be fair with businesses and individual needs and DSPD. Work with your support coordinator to make sure rates are appropriate.
- To both points, rates are a part of it. Looking at person-centered services is challenging. We have been collecting data and reporting to the legislature religiously over the last 7 years. All funds have gone directly to DSPs. We are at the point that inflation has far surpassed where we are at and causing organizations and our industry to be depleted of staff. No people are coming in the door. This means when people leave we don't have new bodies to replace them. As we consolidate to keep programs open it is really straining on the program.
- Agreed. I have Tried to get clients into programs and there are challenges due to housing costs, staffing, etc. It is a major struggle to meet needs. When a provider cannot meet needs the person may need to move from the area, which they usually don't want to do.

**Jean Winsor** - I appreciate the business savvy here and know that is not common. If you can't make payroll, that is a scary thing.

**Jeanine Zlockie** - We could continue this all night. Do we want to continue this focus? This seems to be the most salient point that all want to discuss and we should delve into it deeper.

**Jean Winsor** - Some shared their agency plan in more detail on what they have done. If anyone else has anything to share with us from their organization or UACs, that would be really helpful. SELN is charged with helping the system in Utah figure out how to rebalance resources, both people and capital, in the system. We are not getting the nut of the problem. We don't have the power to change rates, but have worked with other states to help connect goals with funding and that without it we can't meet goals, for provider organizations and the state. We can't say we value integration and not put our money where our mouth is.