



January Webinar Questions and Answers

Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement: A Collaborative Approach to Programs for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Their Families

The webinar recording, slides, transcripts, and plain language summary can be downloaded at <https://ncapps.acl.gov/webinars.html>

Q: How did you encourage participation in the engagement sessions and get a good representation from stakeholders? Any tips or tricks to offer to ensure you get everyone to the table?

A: Families and self-advocates were proactive in approaching the State to explore a managed long-term services and supports (MLTSS) program with an emphasis on employment and community for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We were actively engaged with families and self-advocates representing diverse perspectives and support needs from the earliest of conversations about Employment and Community First Choices. Working across agencies – with the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Department on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities – and engaging advocacy partners such as The Arc Tennessee provided a rich opportunity to build on engagement efforts in communities across the state. At multiple phases of the process, meetings were held at regional locations across the state, and webinars were conducted along with online survey processes to ensure access to both information and opportunity to provide input. We also worked closely with the advocacy community in an effort to ensure all perspectives were represented and to ensure program development updates were communicated broadly. Engagement of self-advocates early in the development phase and ongoing through implementation was important, especially as critical decision points were reached along the way. Continual engagement activities provided self-advocates and families with ongoing insight into the progress of the work, including ways that their feedback was used in a meaningful to shape the program. Two examples are a Stakeholder Input Summary summarizing initial input, and a Concept Paper providing a high level overview of proposed changes, with additional opportunities for input *before* a waiver amendment was drafted. Demonstrating this responsiveness to expressed needs was (we think) one successful approach to ensuring stakeholders continued to return to the table and stayed engaged.

Q: How do individuals and families make informed choices about choosing a managed care organization (MCO) to enroll in? Do they have access to information to compare MCOs on how they do on person-centered planning, employment outcomes, etc.?

A: Tennessee has a beneficiary support system to include a choice counseling resource when a person is enrolling in Employment and Community First Choices or during change periods when people may choose to change MCOs. During the choice counseling process people will learn more information about the MCOs to inform enrollment decisions. Data shared does not currently include performance on person-centered planning or employment outcomes, although we are working on defining metrics that could be shared.



Q: What is the age range of people in Employment Informed Choice? Are any of them attending public school?

A: We serve people through Employment and Community First Choices across the age spectrum, including people who attend public school and who are interested in employment or other post-secondary opportunities. We collaborate with the public school system and with vocational rehabilitation to promote a coordinate effort for students. We work with parents and other state agencies to provide resources to promote successful transitions, including early conversations on options for life after school.

Q: One of the largest barriers is medical supports for employment - how do you address this?

A: Employment and Community First Choices is an integrated MLTSS program. MCOs are responsible for coordinating the full range of benefits a person needs, including supports to address medical needs. Direct support and other services can be provided in the community or on the job to foster engagement opportunities for all.

Q: Please address issues related to inclusion of stakeholders from culturally diverse communities. Additionally do you have any person-centered curriculum that includes discussion on intersectionality and bias?

A: We strive to ensure a diverse perspective is represented in stakeholder engagement efforts, which may include advisory board meetings, community events, surveys, or other forums. Understanding and honoring a person's wishes and preferences, unique identifiers, and past experiences, including how those experiences may shape a person's perception of access to the community or to employment opportunities, is encompassed in the vision of person-centered thinking and practices that we strive to promote and uphold. Additionally, the trainings care coordinators and support coordinators receive include person-centered thinking and practices as well as cultural and disability competency. However, we are always open to additional resources or approaches that would provide a better experience for those taking part in LTSS programs, so we are open to you sharing more information with us!

Q: Do you have any guidance on how to be person-centered in written communications such as emails/online Information & Assistance requests?

A: I am sorry, we do not have any state-developed materials to share related to this topic. These skills have been developed through ongoing person-centered thinking and planning training as well as the CQL accreditation process in person-centered excellence.

Q: Any information for individuals with severe intellectual disability? what happens after they finish school?

A: We believe that every person is capable of working, regardless of the severity of their disability. An array of 14 different employment supports (including pre-employment services) meet each person where they are and help them move forward along the pathway toward competitive integrated employment or self-employment. As part of our person-centered approach to services, we begin by focusing on a person's strengths and goals for their life. During the person-centered planning process or in conversations with the person or their family even before the person-centered planning meeting, the



support coordinator would ask questions to gain more information about the person's wishes and work with them on person-centered goals, supports needed, and other details to support the desired path forward which may include integrated, competitive employment, post-secondary opportunities, or other opportunities for community engagement and participation. By prioritizing students for enrollment who want to plan and prepare for competitive integrated employment, we can begin these processes early. A written MOU with our Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and a strong working partnership with our State Department of Education allow us to best align resources to meet each person's needs, regardless of the severity of their disability.

Q: Where has Tennessee struggled or had success with moving people into community employment? In our area we have many individuals interested in competitive integrated employment but a long vocational rehabilitation waitlist, a lack of vocational training providers, and a lack of available jobs that result in bottlenecks and confusion.

A: Many factors and efforts have contributed to the positive outcomes we have experienced with Employment and Community First Choices to date. Having dedicated Employment Specialist positions with the MCOs has been instrumental in promoting employment opportunities broadly in our communities. Working across state agencies has been imperative to ensure an aligned vision for employment for people with disabilities; several multi-agency initiatives, such as TennesseeWorks and Expect Employment, underscore Tennessee's commitment to integrated, competitive employment opportunities. While much progress has been made, many opportunities still remain to alleviate stigma and preconceptions regarding people with disabilities and their abilities to gain and retain employment.

Q: Has the Quality Improvement in Long Term Services and Supports (QuILTSS) program been launched?

A: The trainings for direct support workers and other providers mentioned as part of the QuILTSS Institute are in the pilot phase with full implementation to follow this year. For more information about the QuILTSS Institute, visit <https://quiltss.org/>.

Q: Can Wanda share anything more about the credentialing process for the people planning together program?

A: Originally TN participated in the credentialing process by Support Development Associates (SDA) (Michael Smull and company). Currently the Office of Accreditation and Person-Centered Practices headed by Courtney Kelly in the Tennessee Department of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities credentials and administers the People Planning Together Project in collaboration with the Council on Developmental Disabilities. Here is a video from the website:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVBq_y0Bf6U&feature=youtu.be . Courtney is an excellent resource on the project and credentialing and can be reached at Courtney.T.Kelly@tn.gov.

Q: Is there a link to access those trainings [listed on Stephanie's slides toward the end of the presentation]?

A: While we do not share specific, proprietary training resources used by the MCOs, the training requirements the MCOs must cover in training for the support coordinators and care coordinators are



NCAPPS

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listed in the Contractor Risk Agreement – the agreement between TennCare and the MCOs. The agreement can be accessed at

<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tenncare/documents/MCOStatewideContract.pdf>

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