



Testimony to the Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities (ACICIEID) Seventh Meeting

Members of the Advisory Committee, my name is Julia Bascom and I serve as Vice-Chair on the Board of the Collaboration to Promote Self-Determination (CPSD). On CPSD's behalf, I thank you for this opportunity to testify today.

CPSD is an advocacy network of national disability organizations working together to bring about modernization of the federal system of services and supports for persons with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The crux of our work is to promote major systemic reform of the nation's disability laws and programs. Thus, the work of ACICIEID to identify ways to advance competitive integrated employment is of vital interest to CPSD.

For the consideration of the Advisory Committee, CPSD would like to offer comments on transition to employment generally, and on the specific promise of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) for promoting effective transition to employment.

The ideal culmination of special education services for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and other significant disabilities can and should be a competitive integrated job and a clear career path. We know enough now to make transition to competitive integrated employment more the norm than the exception. There have been clear demonstrations of how this can happen and there is research pointing to the interventions that most clearly lead to post-school competitive employment. Among the factors that contribute to this outcome are work experiences during high school and interagency collaboration focused on this outcome.

WIOA, if certain tenets of it are broadly adopted, has the potential to significantly improve the adult employment prospects of youth with I/DD and other significant disabilities. In particular, there is the expectation that vocational rehabilitation (VR) and schools collaborate on behalf of commonly served youth well before projected school exit. There are five categories of VR Pre-Employment Training Services (PETS) identified in WIOA for this purpose. These categories include: job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling for post-secondary education opportunities, work place readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy.

Of these five categories, only one – work experience – has been supported by research as having any influence on post-school employment. Thus, CPSD is concerned that, unless guidance and regulations emphasize work experience as the first preference of service, VR service resources

will be directed to ineffective activities and that youth with the most significant disabilities will be relegated to group oriented “readiness” activities that have previously been shown to be overused and unlikely to ever lead to competitive integrated employment.

CPSD strongly urges the Advisory Committee to render recommendations that:

1. The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) issue guidance to state VR agencies that work experience is the preferred PETS
2. Congress include only evidence-based PETS in future re-authorizations of WIOA
3. Congress include work experience as a required educational service in re-authorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for youth with significant disabilities

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony.