

RRC: Employment & Disability, January 2010

## Article: Employment Support in Perspective

Some Suitable Answers - Rob McInnes

1. **Experience with the world of work** – Traditionally people with disabilities have been considered unemployable, excluded from the world of work, isolated from real workplaces, segregated in “vocational programs” and generally been restricted from effectively participating in the workplace.
2. **Sheltered Workshops** – Non-profit businesses set up to provide real, but segregated employment for people with disabilities – just like a real job but employs only (or predominantly) people with disabilities.
3. **“Work crews” and “enclaves”** – These are essentially the same concept. Involves groups of people with disabilities working together as a unit in community settings and workplaces (e.g. a dozen people with disabilities working together in the corner of a manufacturing plant or a crew of five people with disabilities working as a clean-up team in a downtown area.)
4. **Presumption of Employability** - Supported employment presumes that everyone is employable - that there are jobs suited to every individual’s interests and abilities. However, the right supports are needed to discover/develop those job opportunities and help the person succeed in the workplace.
5. **Supported Employment** – A process that enables people with severe disabilities to work in regular workplaces through careful job matching and ongoing on-the-job training and support services.
6. **Business – Rehabilitation partnership** - Because people with disabilities are proving themselves to be productive and valuable employees, businesses are increasingly interested in partnering with rehabilitation programs to meet their hiring needs.
7. **Caretakers and Facilitators** – As “caretakers”, human services personnel, sought to directly provide all the services needed by their clients with disabilities. As “facilitators” they work towards using resources already available in the community to meet those same needs. (e.g. instead of having a job coach responsible for orienting a new employee to the workplace, they engage a coworker to do that as a “mentor” to the new employee.)
8. **Transition through the Continuum** – Traditional segregated programs have been ineffective in preparing people with disabilities for competitive workplaces and relatively few people ever “graduate”.
9. **Human Service Intervention** – Many traditional service models have minimized the participants’ connections to their communities, given them atypical life experiences and offered them lowered expectations for lifetime accomplishments and normative life experiences.
10. **Grouping People** – Grouping people with perceived differences together stigmatizes them more individually and increases the

- obstacles to acceptance and integration within the workplace for each individual.
11. **Integration is not passive** – Simply being physically present in a workplace does not constitute true integration. Social acceptance and inclusion do not necessarily follow just being “present”. It can take proactive effort to help an individual find true belonging.
  12. **Intrusiveness** – When providing employment support to individuals in workplaces, human services providers should look for methods that are minimally intrusive and draw less undue attention to themselves and their client – methods that appear familiar and commonplace in the workplace – rather than odd or unusual
  13. **Charity to Empowerment** – Rehabilitation services are increasingly being seen less as benevolent services offered to the underprivileged and more as services designed to assist people with disabilities to achieve their rightful place as contributing and productive members of society.
  14. **Businesses as clients** – In the realm of employment, rehabilitation programs have a need and an obligation to meet the needs of both their job-seeking clients as well as the hiring/staffing needs of their employers.
  15. **Human Service functions already in business** – Many of the “services” that human services job coaches used to provide to their clients in their new workplaces actually duplicated or replaced resources that are already present in many work sites. (e.g. many workplaces typically have seasoned coworkers serve as mentors to train new employees and to acclimatize them to the workplace routines and culture.)
  16. **Public Resources** – Only limited resources are available to prepare and support people with disabilities to successfully participate in the workforce. Waiting lists are common. To use the limited resources wisely, it is important to deliver services cost-effectively. One way to do this is to enhance training and support resources that are already present in the workplace rather than duplicating those resources.