

# Employment Specialist Competency Work Group

## May 29, 2009

### **A Call to Action:**

As part of the activities under the current Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG), we are exploring whether it is possible to develop a statewide Job Developer Competency Model. Exploring this option comes at a time when the MIG has brought several service groups together to carry out the following:

### **Strategic Priorities from the Granite State Employment Project:**

- 1) Outreach & partnership with employers
- 2) Employment & transition services for students
- 3) Enhancing staff training & development opportunities
- 4) Employment & data collection, analysis & application
- 5) Enhancement of Policies, Rules & Funding Arrangements for Employment Services

*Part of the promise under the GSEP was that there would be statewide infrastructure, including well-trained staff that provides high quality employment supports and services to individuals with disabilities.*

As we move into the second half of the grant cycle, it is very clear that we are all committed to being more responsive and sensitive to the Business Community. Feedback from employers has raised the primary issue as having a more coordinated approach to outreach to employers. As part of this effort, we recognize that all of our service systems approach job development differently and sometimes rather haphazardly. While it is unrealistic to think that we can create a system where only one entity will contact employers, it has prompted us to begin conversations on how we can better ensure our employment staff is properly trained and communicating with employment staff across service sectors as an attempt to be more responsive to employers and ultimately more successful in our outreach.

To this end, Linkabilities and the Institute on Disability have worked together with key partners to develop a Job Developer Competency Model for the Nashua region. We would like to explore the possibility of further developing this regional model into a statewide model that would meet the competencies needed across systems. Below you will find a synopsis from David Hagnar on the work of the Nashua regions Job Developer Competency workgroup.

Please keep in mind that these are just starting points for discussion. Ideally, this model could lead to regional Job Developer Networking Groups across systems. Achieving this ideal, would require that professionals were exposed to the same competency requirements and foundation knowledge of the field. It would also allow new inroads to be developed on coordinating contacts, sharing information and meeting employers'

needs locally. From this vantage point, we can begin to create statewide infrastructure that is responsive to employers and professionals.

**Nashua's current status as reported by David Hagnar:**

- Staff providing employment services should have a set of recognized competencies
- A list of 52 competencies were developed covering both job development and job Support
- Training have been offered in Nashus that relate to these competencies (IOD and LinkAbilities cosponsored)
- A portfolio process was developed that allows people to document competencies that they have obtained in a variety of different ways, including staff training sessions but also competencies they obtain on-the-job, from self-study, etc. The list and the process are at [www.cepnh.org](http://www.cepnh.org).
- 8 people have been certified to date (we require 49 out of 52 competencies, i.e. 95%)
- The goal is to ensure that there are real and substantial benefits to being certified, such as through the website's members-only pages

**Further development of the process should include:**

- "Ownership" of the process and the competency list by a statewide group
- Funder buy-in to recognize certified professionals (e.g. 2-tiered fee structure)
- Possible ways to subsidize training after the MIG ends (e.g. an IDA initiative?)
- Can these competencies be incorporated into state rules addressing training requirements for employment staff

And could also involve researching and making evolving decisions over time regarding:

- Should there be levels of certification (e.g. basic qualifications, mastery level, etc.)
- Should there be sub-categories such as job development, job coaching, and/or specialized qualifications for serving different disability groups.
- Should there be certification maintenance requirements (similar to NAWDP- National Association for Workforce Development Professionals)