

# Initiatives and Activities to Improve Integrated Employment Outcomes

**Accomplishments Report  
2019–2020**



# Accomplishments Report 2019–2020

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## State Employment Leadership Network

The SELN is a place for states to connect, collaborate, and create cross-community support regarding pressing employment-related issues at state and federal levels for individuals with developmental disabilities.

The SELN was launched in 2006 as a joint program of the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services and the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston.



[www.selnhub.org](http://www.selnhub.org)



## Staying Focused

*Our work has been and always will be about supporting all individuals, especially those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, to have the opportunity and experience of working, earning a living, and being fully included citizens of their communities.*

*Events over the past year have presented unfamiliar challenges to everyone, personally and professionally. However, the need to continue strategically addressing employment systems change is more important than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic has also initiated unprecedented creativity in reshaping supports and experiences, suggesting new pathways to personal outcomes and a stronger system of employment and related supports.*

*As we learn to manage within the confines of the pandemic, the fluctuations of the economy, and the realignment of business demand, we must keep the focus on ensuring that individuals with disabilities have the same opportunities as those without disabilities. States are in the best position to create real, lasting, and quantifiable change through solutions tailored to the economic and employment realities within their communities, especially for Americans with disabilities.*

***“By supporting the aspirations of all Americans who want to work, we will strengthen our workplaces, economy and communities.”***

*—Presidential Proclamation on National Disability Employment Awareness Month 2019, issued September 30, 2019.*

*We commend our state partners and those working tirelessly to stay focused and support individuals!*

*Sincerely, Rie and Suzzanne*

Suzzanne Freeze, ICI

Rie Kennedy-Lizotte, NASDDDS

## MISSION

In coalition with state IDD agencies, the SELN seeks to transform employment policy, strategy, and expectations to increase the number of individuals with IDD engaged in their communities and working in competitive integrated jobs in the general workforce.

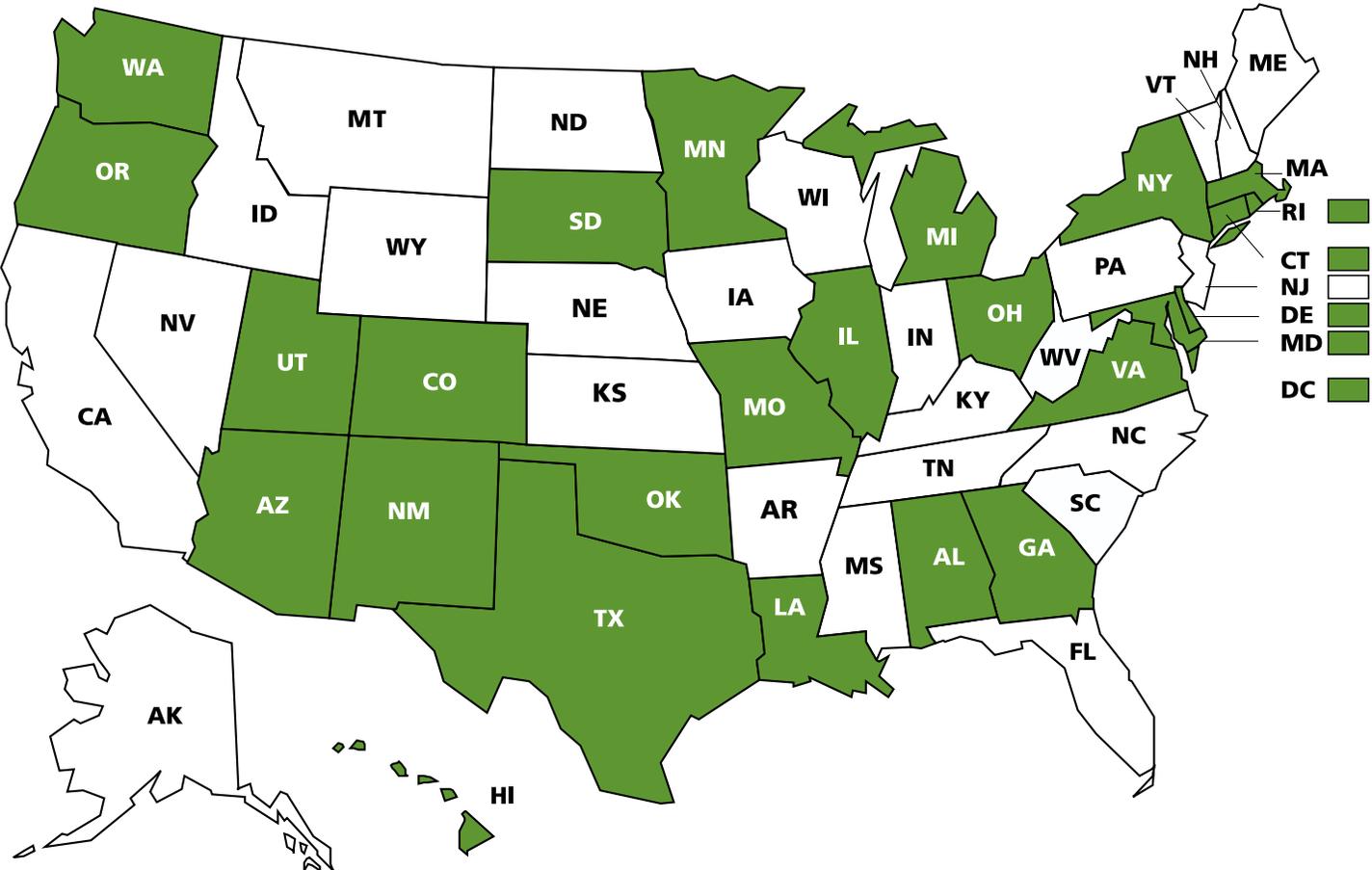
## VISION

SELN will be a catalyst for systems change to ensure opportunities and access to competitive integrated employment and community engagement for all individuals with IDD.



## 26 Member States

(as of 6/30/2020)



It is the dynamic interplay of all the elements that leads to long-term systems change.

# HIGHER-PERFORMING FRAMEWORK



The Higher-Performing Framework, developed through extensive experience and research conducted within states, is used to guide the SELN's strategy for system improvements. The elements represent practices and outcomes to develop and sustain high-performing integrated employment systems. This graphic demonstrates the factors that, when working together, can lead to better integrated employment outcomes. It is the dynamic interplay of all the elements that leads to long-term systems change.



## ELEMENTS OF HIGHER-PERFORMING EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM

### Leadership.

Clear and unambiguous commitment to employment in individual community jobs, from top leadership through all levels in the system. Local and state-level administrators are identifiable as champions for employment.

### Strategic Goals and Operating Policies.

Employment is identified as the preferred outcome in state IDD policy, and is supported by program goals and operating practices that are clearly designed to achieve that objective.

### Financing and Contracting Methods.

The outcome of employment in integrated community jobs is emphasized and supported through the state's resource allocation formulas, reimbursement methods, and rate-setting practices.

### Training and Technical Assistance.

Investment in the development and maintenance of a strong, competent workforce. Skill-building emphasizes an expectation for employment across job coaches and developers, supervisors, key employment staff, case managers, job seekers including young adults who are still in school, and families.

### Interagency Collaboration and Partnership.

Building relationships with advocates, families, businesses, civic groups, and key state and local agency partners (vocational rehabilitation, education, mental health, state Medicaid agency), with the goal of removing barriers to employment supports.

### Services and Service Innovation.

Service definitions and support strategies are structured and aligned to facilitate the delivery of employment supports to all individuals with IDD regardless of the intensity of their needs. Non-work supports encourage individuals to become involved in typical adult life activities, building employment skills, such as community service and volunteering opportunities.

### Performance Measurement and Data Management.

Comprehensive data systems are used to measure progress, benchmark performance, and document outcomes. Information is gathered on key indicators across employment and other related systems and is used to evaluate and track results, inform policy, and improve provider contracts and service agreements. Data are shared with other state agencies to report results and improve quality.



A key benefit of SELN membership is the opportunity for state IDD systems to explore issues beyond their state boundaries, to network, and to exchange informational resources. The SELN provides a platform, as the engine of change, to cultivate cross-systems changes. The aim of the SELN is to work with states to more effectively improve system structures and increase opportunities for individuals with IDD to enter competitive integrated employment regardless of support needs. The SELN serves as a trusted advisor, sharing advice and guidance on key strategic decisions to improve employment outcomes and increase community-based options for individuals during their non-work time.

A critical aspect of providing technical assistance to SELN member states includes hosting conversations of significance. Our technical assistance focuses on sharing the knowledge and resources most needed to improve community-based integrated employment. During the 2019-2020 membership year, our member states experienced the same unexpected changes as our country at large. Our SELN work pivoted to support member states on how to keep momentum going toward employment outcomes.

### Core events and ongoing activities



**BUSINESS MEETING**



**ANNUAL IN-PERSON MEETING**



**MONTHLY NETWORK MEETINGS**



**ONLINE COMMUNITY**



**WRITTEN AND ONLINE PRODUCTS**



**RECURRING CALLS**

- ▶ Annual business meeting with state leads to set upcoming membership year agenda
- ▶ Annual in-person meeting with member states to network and explore systems change
- ▶ Monthly network meetings to share relevant and timely discussions and resources
- ▶ SELN Hub online community to access active dialogue and posted materials
- ▶ Routine development of written and online products
- ▶ Recurring calls with member state teams on strategic priorities (typically monthly)

**The SELN serves as a trusted advisor, sharing advice and guidance on key strategic decisions to improve employment outcomes and increase community-based options for individuals during their non-work time.**



## 2019–2020 activities

### Annual Meeting 2019: Performing While Transforming

#### Featuring:

- ▶ Neil Romano, Chairman, National Council on Disability (NCD)
- ▶ Ralph Lollar, Director, Division of Long-Term Services and Supports, Disabled and Elderly Health Program Group, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- ▶ Mark Shultz, Commissioner, Rehabilitation Services Administration, US Dept of Education
- ▶ Barb Kleist, University of Minnesota
- ▶ Michael Gamel-McCormick, Disability Policy Director, U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging

### September Network Meeting

#### Career Pathways Drives Inclusive Apprenticeship and Partnership Systems

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- ▶ Kirk Lew, Supervisory Policy Advisor, Youth Team, U.S. Department of Labor—Office of Disability Employment Policy
- ▶ Carolyn Jones, Senior Policy Advisor, Youth Team, U.S. Department of Labor—Office of Disability Employment Policy

### November Network Meeting

#### Using Staff Stability Data to Drive Improvement in Employment Supports

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- ▶ Mary Lou Bourne, Chief Quality and Innovation Officer, NASDDDS

### January Network Meeting

#### Expanding Integrated Community-Based Employment

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- ▶ Ralph Lollar, DLTSS Division Director, CMS
- ▶ Rie Kennedy-Lizotte, NASDDDS
- ▶ Jeanine Zlockie, NASDDDS

### February Network Meeting

#### Volunteering and Unpaid Work for People with Disabilities

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- ▶ David Hoff, Program Director, ICI

### March Network Meeting

#### State IDD Systems' Flexibilities for Day and Employment Services During Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

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- ▶ NASDDDS and ICI staff

### April Network Meeting

#### Considerations for State IDD Systems Toward Stabilization and Restoration of Day and Employment Services

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- ▶ Duane Shumate, Director of Youth Transition/Employment, Missouri Department of Mental Health—Division of Developmental Disabilities
- ▶ Stacy Collins, Community Life Engagement Manager, Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities



## May Network Meeting

### Progress Toward Reopening our Service Systems

- ▶ Regina Chace, Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Services
- ▶ Amber Burke and Ken Cabral, Connecticut Department of Developmental Services

## June Network Meeting

### Employment and Day Supports During States' Reopening Phases

- ▶ Duane Shumate, Director of Youth Transition/Employment, Missouri Department of Mental Health—Division of Developmental Disabilities
- ▶ Tracey Cunningham-Martins, Rhode Island Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH)

## SELN Hub COVID-19 page with resources organized by strategic need:

- ▶ Information for employment and day service providers
- ▶ State COVID-19 recovery plans (in particular the day program and vocational/employment options)
- ▶ General information on related issues for all providers
- ▶ Funding and service billing information for all providers
- ▶ Business information for all providers
- ▶ Helping self-advocates understand COVID-19 and returning to the community
- ▶ Information for individuals and families
- ▶ Information for case managers
- ▶ National and state resources

## Building Connections

SELN state contacts are routinely encouraged to reach out to network colleagues with questions seeking important lessons learned and the devising of new strategic initiatives. As we manage and lead through the pandemic, conversations highlighted the tensions around:

- ▶ Balanced opportunities for individual choice in where to and what to do versus solely protection from harm and reduction of risk
- ▶ To what degree residential service provider organizations have latitude to dictate when and where people can go for day activities and employment
- ▶ Choice-making in the current environment and supporting people to make informed decisions
- ▶ The role of group supported jobs in achieving employment goals

## Data-Driven Decision-Making

The SELN was founded on the belief that all state IDD systems must have a robust service and outcome data system, capable of collecting, analyzing, and reporting on individual and systems-level data. The system should include a strategy for sharing the resulting information with a wide range of partners through an ever-active quality management loop.

The process of collecting and using data is important to systems change because:

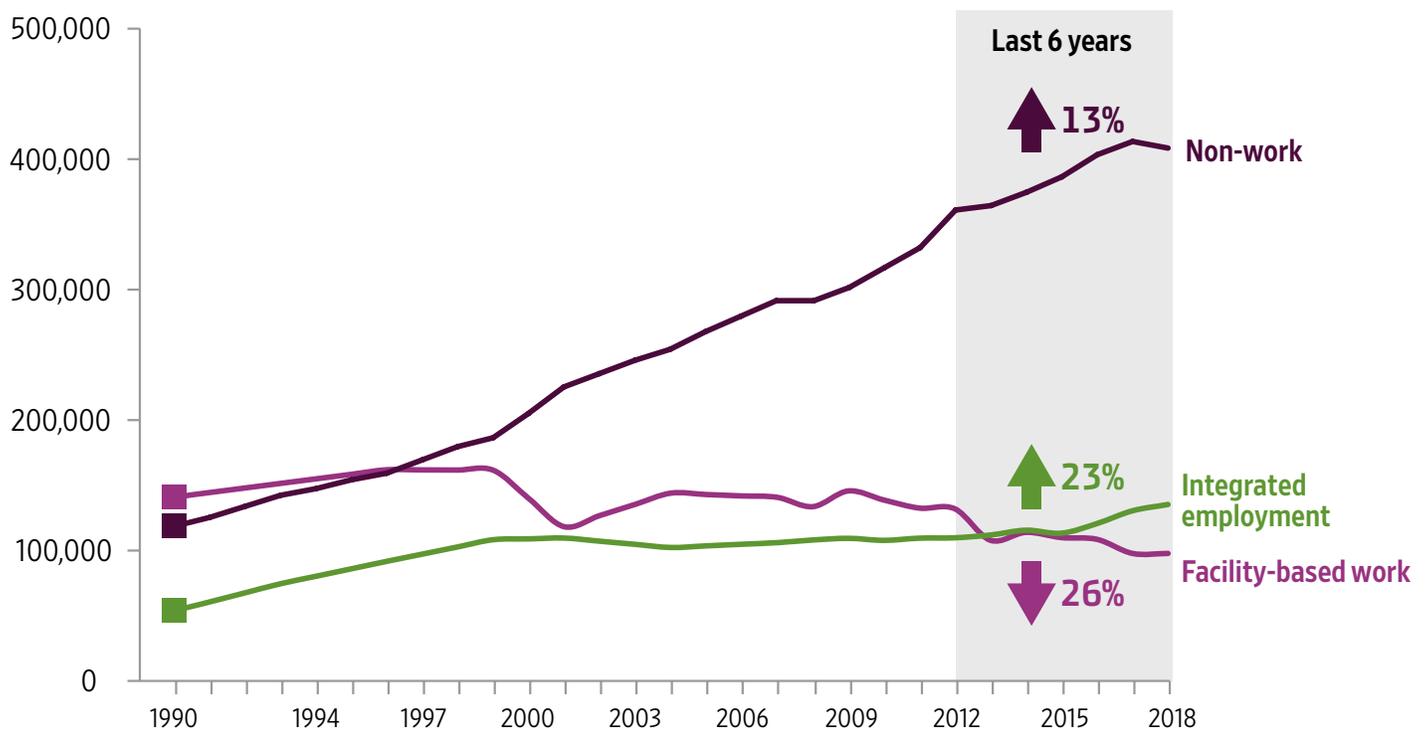
- ▶ Data shows progress in achievements and areas of need for future work.
- ▶ Data tells the story that motivates strengthening community-based employment.
- ▶ When used effectively, data can lead to strengthening policies and budgets.

Maintaining a focus on performance metrics over time is challenging. Therefore, the SELN team dedicates significant resources to guide and coach states in developing service and outcome data systems.



## Chart 1: Number in Employment and Day Services

This chart illustrates how three categories of supports have changed over time: non-work services, facility-based work, and integrated employment. Our member states focus on those services as indicators of the shifts taking place in our field. We study the influences of changes in policy, training, organizational change, leadership, strategic goal setting, funding methodologies, and collaborative partnerships. Our research is possible only with individual and system-level data from state systems across the services reflected in this chart.



Source: ICI National Survey of State IDD Agency Day and Employment Services 2019

As states revise service types and craft new definitions to create distinct pathways to inclusion and integration goals, our data analysis must keep pace with the changes. State data submissions in the past five years reflect clearer distinctions between what does and does not count as employment. The more detailed definitions of individual integrated employment are leading to services and outcomes previously counted as integrated employment now being reclassified to other service types. This in turn drives future discussions about related services, including other day supports and residential options. By teasing out this level of detail in both services and outcomes, decisions can be made on changes to critical allowable and billable activities.

**“Quantitative data is so incredibly important. If we just focus on human services /caring for people /providing the best services, also incredibly important, if we runaway with those things, I don’t think we are doing justice.”**

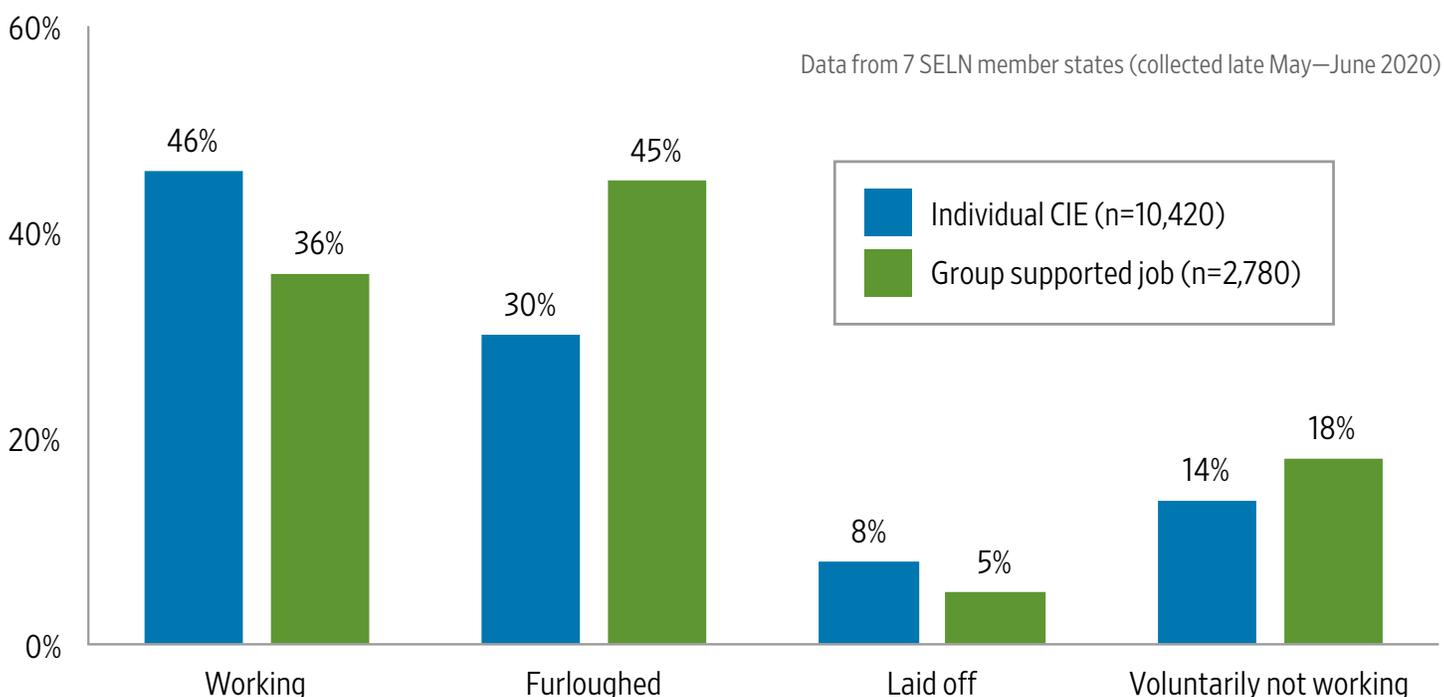
—Staci Jones



## Chart 2: Employment During COVID-19. People who continued working after March 1.

### Data Users Group (DUG) meeting – May 2020

SELN member states often discuss the critical nature of performance management and why data should drive decision-making. Performance management and measurement is a key element in the Higher-Performing Framework, and a pillar in strategic initiatives. The May DUG meeting provided an opportunity to talk about survey data across seven states analyzed to understand employment trends during the pandemic. People remained working and continued to pursue their employment goals. Provider agencies and state systems rallied to meet business needs and ensure individuals could stay working or return to work safely. The discussion informed states about the status of day and employment services as services gradually reopened.



### Preliminary results

Individual competitive integrated employment (CIE) range for percent still working

- ▶ 32% to 55%

Group supported employment (SE) range for percent still working

- ▶ 14% to 63%

Individual CIE range for percent voluntarily not working

- ▶ 6% to 22%

Group SE range for percent voluntarily not working

- ▶ 7% to 29%

### Members joined for a discussion of:

- ▶ What factors are being considered as your state plans to scale up services?
- ▶ What key information sources are available?
- ▶ What do those sources reveal?
- ▶ What is needed to inform resource planning and strategy?



While the 2019–2020 membership year took a course very different from how we all thought it would play out, the drive and determination of individuals seeking to work and earn competitive wages has not waned. Hearing the stories of struggle and success fuels our work each and every day. Member states turned to the SELN to inform their efforts prior to and after the start of the pandemic. All states are now in the position to determine priority shifts in light of this changing environment.

As a trusted advisor, the SELN provides steady continuous improvement guidance to member states. There will always be factors that put states at risk of falling off course. SELN member states make a commitment to seek out and pursue strategies to increase integrated employment outcomes through all types of headwinds.

We encourage you to read the state profiles available at [www.selnhub.org/accomplishments](http://www.selnhub.org/accomplishments) which tell the story of real-time investments in improving employment outcomes across the country. These state profiles document activities at the forefront of systems change, with infographics highlighting data driving these actions. States are seeking to make swift and lasting systems change, and their work provides powerful lessons to our field in how to support widespread improvement in employment outcomes.



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